

Illinois Educator Preparation Groups Respond to New Ratings Report

This statement is written on behalf of the Illinois institutions of higher education that prepare educators and the organizations within Illinois that represent the diverse perspectives of educator preparation institutions in response to a recent report rating schools of education in our state.

Our institutions have all worked cooperatively with the Illinois State Board of Education, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the national professional association (AACTE) and the accrediting organizations (NCATE and TEAC) to prepare qualified school personnel for Illinois children and youth, especially those in high poverty districts that deserve the best possible teachers. We have always embraced meaningful and relevant accountability for the work that we do, and we have supported the State Board's efforts, as well as those of our own institutions, to evaluate the effectiveness of our respective graduates, particularly their ability to positively affect student-learning outcomes.

We write to express our concerns about the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) study of Illinois educator preparation programs. These significant concerns have been expressed by university and college leadership in every state that has been subjected to similar NCTQ evaluations, including those in Colorado, Indiana, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, Florida and Wyoming. As in Illinois, the reports issued on the quality of educator preparation programs in these states have been based on a superficial review of documents. NCTQ's methodologies are faulty, narrow in focus, and emphasize static inputs rather than outcomes of actual candidate performance. The reports, both at the state and institutional level, all follow this template without including meaningful feedback.

The NCTQ, in seeking to make itself a national arbiter of education reform, has designed its own self-styled "standards" and utilized an unstable methodology to ensure it can obtain "findings" that will allow it to discredit colleges of education and the Illinois State Board of Education, just as it has attempted in other states. Though it claims otherwise, the work of NCTQ shows a clear anti-higher education agenda. It has neither been approved as an accrediting body by the federal government or any state board of education, nor is it seen as a fair, unbiased, expert evaluator by any professional education organization.

The NCTQ study purports to evaluate the program designs of a sampling of educator preparation programs in all Illinois institutions, for the most part, simply through the examination of a small, selectively chosen set of course syllabi from each institution. NCTQ analyzed programs utilizing a set of standards they themselves designed, standards that have not been endorsed by the major professional educational associations that are home to our nation's finest researchers. Further, NCTQ standards have shifted as they have "applied" them in different states. These shifting standards not only lack stability, but also lack basic scientific research support. Indeed, they are not aligned to existing standards developed through decades of careful research. We should highlight the [September 2010 Review and Critique](#) by Eduventures, Inc., a highly regarded industry leader in research and consulting for higher education institutions, which cites NCTQ's study as failing to make the connection of research-based standards with specific candidate outcomes.

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The following is a list of specific concerns about NCTQ's study of Illinois preparation programs:

- The process for selecting and analyzing data was simplistic and narrow in focus, and did not follow appropriate, credible research protocol.
- The research base for the standards is scant, and the focus is on measuring program inputs rather than program outcomes, such as teacher candidate performance.
- Recognized professional standards, such as those adopted by states and/or accrediting bodies, were not used in this review process.
- The standards proposed by NCTQ were unavailable at the time institutions first started this process, and rubrics and/or decision rules underlying ratings continue to be withheld.
- Archived websites/course syllabi were used for the review at some institutions, which resulted in NCTQ basing findings on misinformation.
- In multiple instances, course syllabi or other materials from the wrong institutions were used as part of the review.
- Within some institutions, NCTQ staff requested materials from programs not part of the original review.
- Factual errors, including institutions' names, were not corrected in subsequent NCTQ drafts.
- Initial drafts submitted for review contained multiple errors, and, though NCTQ invited institutional responses, the final study fails to reflect all corrections to those errors.
- It appears that reviewers had difficulty understanding the content of some course syllabi and how this content related to NCTQ's required standards.
- The credentials and experience of the reviewers were not disclosed, so it is difficult to determine the credibility of the reviewers.

Advance Illinois commissioned the NCTQ study in Illinois. Although we respect Advance Illinois' attention to educational issues in the state, we would have welcomed more open and direct communication in the selection of the organization conducting program review. In essence, NCTQ's approach is analogous to evaluating the quality of restaurants by only requesting that menus be mailed to the evaluator—without sampling the food or visiting the site. The effort has only served to divert valuable time and resources away from the important work of preparing teachers and assessing teacher quality through evidence of student learning.

We embrace meaningful assessment of our educator preparation programs and recognize that, in order for this to occur, we must employ rigorous research standards and examine multiple data sources. Unfortunately, such actions were not taken in this instance and, therefore, this report should be disregarded. Nonetheless, we look forward to working with all of our constituencies to appropriately address the critical need to prepare quality educators for the state.

Associated Colleges of Illinois (ACI)

Council of Chicago Area Deans of Education (CCADE)

Illinois Association for Teacher Education in Private Colleges (IATEPC)

Illinois Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (IACTE)

Illinois Association of Deans of Public Colleges of Education (IADPCE)

The above organizations encompass all 53 Illinois institutions of higher education that prepare educators.

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For official comment, press inquiries, or interviews, please contact:

Bette Bergeron, Ph.D.

Chair, Illinois Association of Deans of Public Colleges of Education (IADPCE)

Dean, School of Education, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

bberger@siue.edu

(618) 650-3353

Deborah Bordelon, Ph.D.

Co-Chair, Council of Chicago Area Deans of Education (CCADE)

Dean, College of Education, Governors State University

d-bordelon@govst.edu

(708) 534-4050