

Recommendations from a deep inquiry into Teacher Education at UW-Madison

Submitted for APC Review and Feedback
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DEEP INQUIRY CHARGE

Preparation of teachers for P-12 settings is a longstanding tradition of UW-Madison's School of Education (SoE). As a research-intensive university with nationally recognized faculty and staff serving talented students, we are well positioned to prepare competent, critically reflective, educators to work toward equity in diverse and multicultural settings. We are also well positioned to prepare the next generation of scholars to be leaders in teacher education. As a leading school of education, committed to excellence, it is incumbent upon us to continuously examine our practices, context and outcomes to ensure we are offering the highest quality academic programs and maximizing our influence. In the realm of teacher education, this means continuing to offer world-class teacher preparation programs, continuing to prepare graduate students to be teacher educators and teacher education researchers, and continuing to produce research and scholarship that challenges chronic and systemic inequities in our P-12 schools and influences the national discourse on the preparation of teachers.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, an inquiry, conducted during the 2016-17 academic year, focused on **two key questions**:

What are current state and national **trends and issues** in teacher education?

Given these trends and issues, how might we best advance teacher education at UW-Madison?

DATA SOURCES

To address these questions, Professor Kimber Wilkerson and Dr. Mary Klehr conducted interviews of national leaders in teacher education, facilitated focused small-group discussions, surveyed school-based and university-based teacher educators, reviewed teacher education research literature and policy briefs, examined national teacher education conference proceedings and position papers, reviewed annual reports prepared by UW-Madison SoE for the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), surveyed peer institutions' teacher education themed centers, and conducted an environmental scan of articles published in education media that pertained to teacher education. In order to situate our findings in our UW-Madison context and build from past inquiry work, we also considered: external program and unit reviews, SoE and department policies and mission statements related to teacher education, teacher education program requirements and enrollment histories, alumni survey responses, workload estimates, staffing patterns and enrollments for required teacher education courses,

and minutes from meetings of the Coordinating Council of Professional Educators (CCPE) and the Re-envisioning Teacher Education effort conducted in 2014-15. Summaries of data are available in an electronic appendix to this report accessible in UW Box.

TRENDS AND ISSUES IN TEACHER EDUCATION

The last decade has seen significant challenges to higher education's leadership role in P-12 teacher preparation. Outside entities have questioned the efficacy of university-based teacher preparation programs (e.g., the National Center for Teacher Quality [NCTQ] now "grades" preparation programs). State and national legislators have taken steps to deemphasize the authority of higher education in the assessment of teacher candidates by mandating that graduates from teacher preparation programs also pass external tests of knowledge and skills prior to licensure (e.g., the Wisconsin Foundations of Reading Test) and by proposing the creation of high-stakes evaluations of teacher preparation programs (e.g., proposed Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA] regulations).

In addition to these challenges, Wisconsin, like many other states, is experiencing a teacher shortage. Contributing to this situation, fewer young people are choosing education as a career and teachers are leaving the profession at faster rates than they have in the past. In Wisconsin, teacher shortages are most acute in the areas of special education, early childhood, ESL and bilingual education. Both urban and rural school districts have been severely impacted by difficulties in hiring and retaining qualified educators. Shortages of licensed teacher applicants for P-12 teaching positions means that more and more districts are hiring teachers on emergency licenses. In the 2015-16 school year alone, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) issued 1,969 emergency educator licenses and permits. By diminishing access to well-qualified teachers, the increasing reliance on emergency licenses compromises the education of legions of students across our state, many of whom are already disadvantaged in other ways.

A parallel concern to the state-wide trend of hiring teachers with little to no formal preparation is that our teaching workforce in Wisconsin is woefully lacking in diversity. Despite clear benefits of a diverse teaching workforce for students from all racial backgrounds and identities, fewer than 5% of Wisconsin's teachers are people of color, and nationally, teachers of color leave the profession at even faster rates than their White peers.

In response to these challenges, Wisconsin P-12 administrators and legislators are following the national trend in pushing for expedient solutions in the form of hiring flexibilities and alternative pathways to teacher licensure. Wisconsin's recent approval of the poorly rated, online American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence as a pathway to educator licensure is a prime example. Across the country, school districts are creating their own pipeline programs to create more direct pathways for diverse groups of district employees to enter the teaching profession. Independent teacher preparation programs developed by social entrepreneurs like Teach for America aggressively recruit college students of color to join their

ranks, and Relay Graduate School of Education, another alternative preparation program, proudly claims success with candidates of color.

While these kinds of alternative pathways to licensure gain traction, university-based teacher preparation programs are working to renew their investment in high-quality programming in ways that build on their distinct ability to synergistically connect theory, content, and clinical practice with ongoing research and scholarship. Examples of innovation that stem from these connections are plentiful: Ball State University recently received recognition from AACTE and the Southern Poverty Law Center for exemplary culturally responsive, community-based programming; UCLA's *Center X* now provides master's level students with paid yearlong residency experiences that focus on instructional equity in low-income schools and communities and provides induction support for new teachers; Harvard's *Teaching Fellows* program offers a one-year intensive pathway to becoming a secondary teacher, incorporating paid part-time residency experiences at networks of schools across the country.

ADVANCING TEACHER EDUCATION UW-MADISON

As the #1 public school of education in the country, home to the #1 department of Curriculum and Instruction and the #7 Special Education program, with sizable resources and expertise already devoted to teacher education, UW-Madison has the capacity and experience to be a leading authority in teacher education, speaking to the issues and challenges identified at local, state and national levels. Past efforts to shift our teacher education practices to meet the needs of our P-12 constituents and our own students are numerous. Within the last ten years we overhauled our secondary education program into a 14-month master's program with all content area tracks also leading to a license in ESL; we also created an early childhood program and a new elementary education option, both with dual licensure in ESL. We developed a dual major, dual licensure program in special education and elementary education and created a master's level special education program that prepares teachers to work with students with significant intellectual disabilities and autism. We have nurtured and grown a Partner School Network, created an experimental high school pipeline program (i.e., T.E.E.M. Scholars), and collaborated with local districts to create a licensure pathway for paraprofessionals as a means to help diversify the local teacher workforce.

Despite these successes, our yearlong inquiry revealed teacher education programs marked by a lack of cohesion, cross-program communication and coordination. Faculty and staff responsible for teacher education programming report feeling like they are working in isolation and are underappreciated for their work. University- and school-based teacher educators alike encouraged creation of a platform for robust dialogue between teacher education programs, field sites, partner schools, and staff across different departments and units to address common challenges and issues—including challenges related to recruitment and supporting teacher candidates of color. Survey respondents called for solutions to unify programs and prevent marginalization of smaller programs. Teacher candidates and our P-12 partners similarly experience deficits in consistency of communication and expectations across semesters, cohorts, and programs. Faculty who are directly involved with administrative

aspects of programs identify their involvement as time-consuming. While our teacher education programs are definitely a source of pride and highly valued by our SoE and local P-12 communities, the delivery of those programs is also a source of frustration. Much of this results from the highly-decentralized oversight of teacher education programs on our campus.

PROPOSED CENTER

Challenges inherent in our current, diffuse system of supporting and overseeing teacher education, nationwide changes in regulations that affect teacher education, as well as shifts in public perception of the desirability of teaching as a career and the lack of diversity among the teaching workforce in Wisconsin, require continued evolution on our part. As a result of the recent inquiry, we recommend the establishment of a cross-disciplinary **Center for Teacher Education**¹ to support research and innovation in teacher education, as well as state-of-the-art, mission-driven preparation of P-12 teachers on our campus and beyond. The creation of a center will advance UW-Madison's leadership and impact in the field of teacher education, serving as an incubator for teacher education practices that have the potential to promote more equitable outcomes for P-12 students as well as providing support for and connections between our research, policy advocacy and preservice preparation of teachers.

The center's overarching purpose will be to transform and uplift the preparation of teachers to promote educational equity in P-12 public schools – in Wisconsin and nationally. To this end, the center will have four focus areas: (1) supporting research to inform and improve teacher education; (2) providing leadership to inform teacher education policies; (3) promoting the development and research of new teacher education programs; and (4) supporting and strengthening the quality of UW-Madison's existing teacher education programs.

The four focus areas are expanded below.

Focus Area #1: Research

The Center will support research to inform and improve the preparation of teachers who are well-equipped to promote equity in educational outcomes for P-12 students. In order to support Research – the center will:

- a. Create an intellectual hub for teacher education research that involves faculty, academic staff, school-based teacher-educators and students (e.g., sponsoring talks, writing groups, colloquia, conferences)
- b. Monitor and communicate teacher education-related funding opportunities.
- c. Provide targeted incentives and grant writing support to faculty, staff and students interested in applying for support consistent with the center's mission. Grant proposal submission and the management of any post-award funds will be handled by existing infrastructure (i.e., WCER).

¹ Actual name of center to be determined at a later date.

Focus Area #2: Policy

The Center will provide leadership to inform teacher education policies that contribute to equitable educational outcomes for P-12 students. In order to support Policy leadership – the center will:

- d. Actively monitor state and national policies that affect teacher education. Provide policy updates in a regular communication.
- e. Organize forums for discussion of state and national teacher education policy.
- f. Provide support for faculty, staff and school-based teacher educators to serve on and lead state and national committees and organizations that represent the interests of teachers and/or teacher educators, including WACTE, AACTE, and AERA Division K.
- g. Maintain regular communication with state legislators, DPI leadership, and UWSA's education liaison.
- h. Facilitate an ongoing process to engage faculty and staff in the development of SoE policy statements in response to legislative and regulatory policy proposals.

Focus Area #3: Development of New Teacher Education Programs

The Center will promote the development and research of new teacher education programs that are high quality, grounded in research, and focused on equity. In order to promote the development of new teacher education programs – the center will:

- i. Identify priority areas for the development of new teacher education programs.
- j. Facilitate an ongoing process to incentivize the development of innovative programs that address the needs of Wisconsin schools.
- k. Facilitate and support research/evaluation of new programs.
- l. Serve as an incubator for experimental certification (non-degree) programs.
- m. When appropriate, serve as the administrative home for non-degree certification programs.

Focus Area #4: Supporting Existing Teacher Education Program

The Center will provide support to strengthen the quality and consistency of UW-Madison's existing teacher preparation programs. In order to support existing UW-Madison Teacher Education programs – the center will:

- n. Serve as the liaison to DPI for UW-Madison educator certification programs.
- o. Manage all aspects of field experience placements.
- p. Carry out continuous improvement activities, including organizing regular meetings of point persons for all teacher education programs; professional development for faculty, staff, supervisors and cooperating teachers; program evaluation; and annual data retreat.

- q. Provide student recruitment services for all teacher education programs.
- r. Assist with the preparation of grant proposals requesting funds to support preservice teachers.
- s. Serve as the liaison to our P-12 teacher education partners.

TIMELINE FOR NEXT STEPS

FEB 2018: Present proposal to SoE Academic Planning Council

MAR-APR 2018: Appoint implementation team to enact recommendations; Create position descriptions and post position vacancy listings as necessary.