



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, OFFICE OF THE DEAN

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January 15, 2010

Ms. Kate Walsh  
National Council on Teacher Quality  
1341 G Street NW, Suite 720  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Walsh:

As the Deans of the Colleges of Education, Engineering, Liberal Arts, and Natural Sciences at The University of Texas at Austin, we write this letter in response to your letter of October 27, 2009 to Dean Justiz regarding the NCTQ study of teacher preparation programs in Texas. Our four colleges enjoy unique and award-winning collaborations in the preparation of teachers, which are guided by research and innovation in practice. As academic leaders in a top-tier research university with a very large teacher preparation program, we care deeply about our programs and have worked hard to nurture innovative and productive programs situated across our colleges which are compatible with state requirements and which draw upon the considerable strengths in each college to prepare large numbers of talented and committed new teachers. In doing so, we have often chosen to set aside long-standing practices and standards which have not proven effective.

Our efforts over the last twenty years to transform teacher preparation have yielded numerous examples of reformed practice that have helped us break the mold of traditional professional preparation. We have taken great pains to incorporate multiple field experiences in close partnership with area schools and experienced and trained mentor teachers, to emphasize strong content knowledge, to draw upon our widely recognized strengths in reading instruction, to integrate professional preparation through a sequence of courses over several years, and to emphasize research based practices for effective instruction of all children.

Two examples of these reformed programs are worth noting. Our elementary teacher education program requires a rigorous academic major in human learning, rather than a generic interdisciplinary degree. We also require numerous content

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courses in elementary subject areas and a series of at least four semesters of field experiences that integrate in real classroom settings effective practices of instructional design, assessment, classroom management, and use of instructional technology, rather than in separate courses. Our secondary math and science teacher preparation program, UTeach Natural Sciences, has received national recognition as an innovative cross-college program. Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama have repeatedly cited this program as a model for innovative teacher preparation; and it has also been recognized by leading corporate and foundation supporters of STEM educational reform. UTeach was even lauded in your June 2009 report Tackling the Stem crisis: Five steps your state can take to improve the quality and quantity of its K-12 math and science teachers. With large-scale support from both public and private sponsors, this program is now being replicated at more than fifteen other institutions in ten states. And last year we received a five year \$12.5M NSF MSP award to develop a model for preparing teachers and developing courses to add engineering to the high school curriculum, the only such award in the nation.


We have been working diligently to transform teacher preparation from previous models to be aligned with our best understanding of the needs and expectations of PK-12 schools, teachers, students, and communities. Therefore we are disappointed that your ratings methodologies involve comparing teacher preparation programs to standards that have been in use for decades to assess higher education programs, including counting courses and credit hours, requiring narrowly-defined teaching methodologies, and seeking separated rather than integrated development of effective teaching practices. It appears that the strengths of our programs, which represent real reform and have garnered national acclaim, are not recognized because we have already transformed our programs from the traditional model of the last century. In this sense, we were pleased to see that your preliminary assessment of our programs found them largely incompatible with your standards.

The University of Texas at Austin has a strong record of embracing accountability measures, and our faculty are among the nation's leaders in educational research. We welcome external studies of our teacher preparation programs and see them as opportunities to improve our practices. However, we are convinced the study you are conducting offers little hope of leading to real and effective reform, and instead seems to promote traditional approaches to teacher education. The finding that our

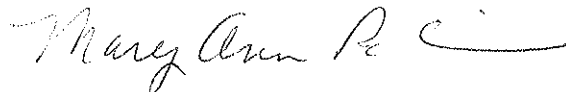
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UTeach program fails to pass this survey's old-fashioned definition of quality will be added to the list of favorable recognitions this program has received from the White House, from the fifteen institutions across the country that are replicating the program, and from the private and public sponsors who continue to support its development.

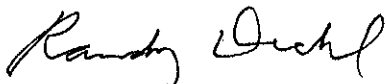
Sincerely,



Manuel J. Justiz, Dean  
College of Education



Mary Ann Rankin, Dean  
College of Natural Sciences



Randy Djehl, Dean  
College of Liberal Arts



Gregory Fennes, Dean  
Cockrell School of Engineering

- c. Governor Rick Perry
- Lt. Governor David Dewhurst
- Senator Florence Shapiro
- Commissioner Raymund Paredes
- Commissioner Robert Scott
- Dr. Larry Faulkner
- Chancellor Francisco Cigarroa
- President William Powers
- Provost Steven Leslie