Response to Findings of the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ)

January 10, 2013

> *NCTQ's methodology is a paper review of published course requirements and course syllabi against a check list that does not consider the actual quality of instruction that the programs offer, evidence of what their students learn, or whether graduates can actually teach.*[1]

Moreover, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education observes that:

> *This [NCTQ] review is a public relations campaign. It does not seek to improve teacher preparation, nor is it a helpful or reliable guide for parents, prospective teacher candidates and the public. NCTQ promotes to the public that its goal is to help improve teacher preparation. Yet NCTQ outright refuses to make rubrics available publicly or individually to institutions to show where programs did and did not meet standards. It does, however, make recommendations to policy makers on how they should regulate preparation programs. If NCTQ's goal was to help improve teacher preparation, rubrics should be released so that programs could utilize that information.*

All of the teacher preparation programs at UA hold specialized accreditation through CAEP (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, formerly known as NCATE, http://caepnet.org/), which is the accreditation required by DEED. CAEP-accredited institutions meet rigorous standards for *both* curriculum and student learning outcomes. CAEP is nationally regarded as the most rigorous accreditor of education programs. However, NCTQ does not consider CAEP standards to be sufficient.

The University of Alaska response to the 2013 National Council for Teacher Quality (NCTQ) reviews is divided into two sections. First we address the review of Alaska state policy and then we specifically address the review of University of Alaska teacher education programs. A summary of national comments on NCTQ and the NCTQ process was prepared by Diane Hirshberg at the Center for Alaska Education Policy Research and is included in the appendix.

[1] Strauss, Valerie. 2013 "Why the NCTQ teacher prep ratings are nonsense." *The Washington Post, June 18, 2013.* Reporting the comments of Linda Darling-Hammond, chair of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education at Stanford University.

undergraduate teacher preparation programs in Alaska are insufficiently selective, failing to ensure that candidates come from the top half of the college-going population. That NCTQ report is discussed in the following section.

NCTQ Ratings on University of Alaska Teacher Education Programs: Issues and Responses

The first edition of the *NCTQ Teacher Prep Review*, an evaluation of more than 2,000 teacher education programs in colleges and universities around the country, was published on June 18, 2013 (http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/Teacher_Prep_Review_2013_Report). Given that UA programs are largely based on state teacher preparation policies that NCTQ already rated as deficient, it is no surprise that UA's three programs were not highly rated. Nationally most teacher preparation programs did not meet NCTQ expectations. Of the 2420/oBxf (ṁ)10.1(s)-2(

Summary of NCTQ Ratings and UA Responses to NCTQ Critiques.

Note: NA=Not Applicable. NR=Not Reviewed by NCTQ.

Elementary Education			
NCTQ Key Criteria	UAA	UAF	UAS
Selection Criteria: The program selects teacher candidates of strong academic caliber. The standard evaluates admissions requirements for teacher candidates to determine if they help ensure that programs are drawing from the top half of the college-going population. Prospective teachers should have above average SAT or ACT scores, or at least a 3.0 grade point average (GPA).	No Stars	Two Stars	UAS had no Elementary Education report from NCTQ; there is no explanation fre avo exhav 0 0 0 1 Tw s

		options: BIOL 104x Natural History of Alaska; OR BIOL 100x Human Biology and CHEM 100x Chemistry in Complex Systems; OR PHYS 115x Physical Science GEOS 101x The Dynamic Earth; OR GEOS 120x Glaciers, Earthquakes and Volcanoes The three courses that the students choose equate to 12 credit hours that span life, physical, and earth sciences. In the final internship year, teacher candidates complete a three-credit course ED 479 Science Methods & Curriculum Development.	
Student Teaching: The program ensures that teacher candidates have a strong student teaching experience. The standard examines programs' standards for selecting cooperating teachers, programs' role in the selection process and the frequency with which the programs' supervisors observe and provide written feedback to student teachers.	No Stars	No Stars	
	NCTQ requires *weekly* visits and is apparently, not willing to consider that UA monthly visits are of longer duration. Weekly visits are unaffordable for UA candidates who teach in communities that are not accessible by road. UA teacher education programs use a variety of strategies to enrich the experience including but not limited to, Skype observations of interns in their classrooms, weekly seminars and classes where common issues, concerns and experiences are shared and analyzed. All UA teacher candidates are carefully placed with mentor teachers with a minimum of 3 years experience and a track record of success. Placements are based upon university faculty recommendations and approval from site administrators. Placements are year long and interns are observed, evaluated and counseled by university faculty as well as cooperating teachers.		
Other Criteria			
English Language Learners: The program prepares elementary teacher candidates to teach reading to English language learners.	No Stars	No Stars	UAS had no Elementary Education report from NCTQ; there is no explanation from NCTQ for this omission.
	UAA teacher preparation programs have explicit course work related to ELL.	NCTQ apparently was looking for a specific course in this area. UAF does not have one specific course designated just for teaching reading to ELL students, but strategies for working with ELL students are part of our required reading courses. UAF needs to make sure this is clearly evident in our syllabi.	
Struggling Readers: The program	No Stars	No Stars	

prepares elementary teacher candidates to teach reading skills to students at risk of reading failure.	UAA teacher preparation programs have explicit coursework related to teaching reading within a range of contexts and with a range of students.

		Elementary students are required to use this lesson plan template and it was submitted to NCTQ. UAF also submitted samples of the required lesson plan templates and the rubrics used to assess lesson plans for several of the methods courses. Integrating technology is a requirement that occurs in all courses.	
Assessment and Data: The program trains teacher candidates in how to assess learning and use student performance data to inform instruction. Coursework and assignments representing the culmination of a candidate's preparation are examined to check that elementary and secondary teacher candidates have an opportunity to practice developing their own assessments, analyzing student assessment results and applying their analysis to lesson planning. We also check to see that candidates have an opportunity to practice analyzing student data in teams, because schools are increasingly fostering a collaborative approach to teaching.	NA Teacher candidates complete "key assessments" in each required course of the teacher preparation programs. These submissions are reviewed and graded using college wide rubrics and standards and stored in a college wide "task stream" based system.	No Stars UAF submitted syllabi, assignments and rubrics that demonstrated that these criteria are met in nearly every intern year course. UAF will include far more than requested syllabi this year – UAF will attach copies of all required major assignments and the rubrics used to assess them.	
Equity: The program ensures that teacher candidates experience schools that are successful in serving students who have been traditionally underserved.	themselves, very diverse. We take pride in serving all learners and in preparing our teacher candidates to meet the needs of their students.		
Outcomes: The program and institution collect and monitor data on their graduates.			

Common Core High School: The program ensures that teacher candidates have the content preparation necessary to successfully teach to the Common Core State Standards.	One Star All UAA Secondary candidates have a degree in their content area and are required to take and pass the PRAXIS II test of content knowledge.	No Stars All UAF secondary candidates are prepared in a variety of classes, especially General Methods and Content Methods classes, to successfully design and teach lessons based on Alaska's Common Core	No Stars

		Student Learning: Classroom Climate: 1. Creating a climate that promotes fairness. 2. Establishing and maintaining rapport with students. 3. Communicating challenging learning expectations to each student. 4. Establishing and maintaining consistent standards of classroom behavior. 5. Making the physical environment as safe and conducive to learning as possible.	
Lesson Planning: The program trains teacher candidates on how to plan lessons. Requirements for all culminating assignments, such as those pertaining to the content of lesson plans used in student teaching, are examined to ensure that elementary and secondary teacher candidates must demonstrate that they can make the necessary adjustments to accommodate diverse students and to use technology effectively.	No Stars As with all of the UAA teacher preparation programs, candidates in the secondary education program are required to submit and pass key assessments in each of the required courses in the teacher preparation curriculum. These kew37.12 35[e(-h2.1(ed)-2.1(ep(h)-2.8(c4157 T7.12 3tT)-5(hsTc 0.00-0.001 Tw 9.96 -0 TD [(as)2.3(s)ddpar)-2.12.4(k)2.3(eya t)1.1(i)n [illegible] dem)-1.)2.3(eya)1(o)]TJ TJ [(t)1.1(ec)2.4(t)1.1(i)3.2(v)2.4(3)-11.1(ec).3(1.157 TD [(a [illegible] and pas)1(o)]quired to sheher ies i..2(v) Q d.1n 1.157 TD [(ac)2.3(c)lnd pas anr .ud3.2.2(gr)-2.1s igi ar.	No Stars	No Stars

assessments, analyzing student assessment results and applying their analysis to lesson planning. We also check to see that candidates have an opportunity to practice analyzing student data in teams, because schools are increasingly fostering a collaborative approach to teaching.		candidate's individual remarks and responses to his/her students. Finally, candidates must provide reflections based on the efficacy of the lessons.	

Equity:

teacher candidates of strong academic caliber. The standard evaluates admissions requirements for teacher candidates to determine if they help ensure that programs are drawing from the top half of the college-going population. Prospective teachers should have above average SAT or ACT scores, or at least a 3.0 grade point average (GPA).		was not issued for UAF. No explanation was provided by NCTQ for this omission.	was not issued for UAS. No explanation was provided by NCTQ for this omission.
Early Reading: The program trains teacher candidates to teach reading as prescribed by the Common Core State Standards.	No Stars		
Common Core Elementary Mathematics: The program prepares teacher candidates to successfully teach to the Common Core State Standards for elementary math. This standard evaluates the specialized coursework teachers should take to gain the deep conceptual understanding of elementary math topics required to teach to the Common Core Math Standards.	No Stars		
Common Core Special Ed Content: The program ensures that teacher candidates' content preparation aligns with the Common Core State Standards in the grades they are certified to teach.	No Stars		
Student Teaching: The program ensures that teacher candidates have a strong student teaching experience. The standard examines programs' standards for selecting cooperating teachers, programs' role in the selection process and the frequency with which the programs' supervisors observe and provide written feedback to student teachers.	No Stars		
Instructional Design for Special Ed:	Two Stars		

The program trains teacher candidates to design instruction for teaching students with special needs.			
Other Criteria			
Outcomes: The program and institution collect and monitor data on their graduates.	Two Stars		

NCTQ Strategies for Improvement: UA Responses

NCTQ also suggests a set of strategies that they believe would improve the quality of teacher education programs in the state. These are listed below in **bold type**, followed by the relevant UA standards and practices in *italic type.*

- **Make it tougher to get into a teacher preparation program.** *The admission standards for UA baccalaureate level teacher education programs are the same as the admission standards for general baccalaureate admission. At UAF, the requirement is a high school GPA of 3.0 or a high school GPA of 2.5 in combination with an ACT or SAT score indicating minimal college readiness; this is apparently somewhat close to the NCTQ standard, resulting in two stars. UAA and UAS are less selective for baccalaureate admissions, proudly accepting students at all points on the learning continuum and then working with them to ensure that they have the requisite skills and knowledge to be successful in a P-12 classroom. However, for all three universities, students must pass the PRAXIS I examination of basic competencies and have a 3.0 GPA in teacher preparation coursework to become a 'teacher candidate', el haaaurc0.5(a)..4(ur)2(t)11.6(i)-1.8(v)-2(e f)0(s)-2(t)1udard*

colleagues in the K-12 schools and are confident that they recommend only the best teachers. The NCTQ standard includes selecting mentor teachers based on their student's performance on standardized tests; UA does not have access to this information.

- Base state funding on the quality of

Appendix

Critiques of NCTQ from outside of Alaska

In the past year a number of critiques of NCTQ have been published by faculty members and administrators from major universities across the nation. The following is a summary of three of these critiques, written by faculty and