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MEMORANDUM

TO: CSU Presidents
CSU Provosts and Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs

FROM: Sylvia A. Alva, Ph.D. 
Executive Vice Chancellor

SUBJECT: National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) 2021 Teacher Prep Review

This update is regarding a recent email you may have received from Kate Walsh, president of the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), regarding the organization’s annual 2021 Teacher Prep Review. As issued previously, this memo provides background information regarding this request, a critique of the methodology of the review and a description of the evaluation of California State University (CSU) teacher education programs conducted by the Chancellor’s Office Educator Quality Center (EdQ).

Background: [NCTQ is an advocacy group based in Washington, D.C.](#) The organization was founded in 2000 to evaluate and report on the effectiveness of educator preparation programs. Its original purpose, which was closely aligned with the purposes of the Fordham Foundation and the Abell Foundation, was to disrupt, even dismantle, university teacher preparation programs and to encourage alternative strategies for preparing America’s teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2018). The group receives funding from numerous foundations and private donors.

Faulty methodology: NCTQ launched studies several years ago purportedly to evaluate and report on the effectiveness of educator preparation programs. The studies have been criticized for their methodology, which relies heavily on document reviews available online. (For additional information, please see *Reclaiming Accountability in Teacher Education*, 2018, Teachers College Press.)

In completing its studies, NCTQ does not conduct campus visits, systematically interview campus program teams or survey program graduates or employers; thus, the “results” have little relevancy or meaning for program improvement purposes. National leader in teacher education Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond reminds us that the NCTQ studies focus on a paper review of “inputs.” In contrast, California has moved toward accountability systems based on *outcomes*, which include rigorous tests of basic skills, content knowledge and pedagogy. For these reasons, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher

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Education (AACTE), the preeminent national educator preparation organization, recently sent a preemptory letter to all member institutions once again criticizing the purpose and methodology of NCTQ's review (see attached).

CSU Evaluation of Teacher Preparation Programs: All CSU teacher preparation programs are accredited by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), through a rigorous peer review process; some programs are nationally accredited.

All CSU educator preparation programs regularly engage in evaluation and program improvement, including teaching performance assessment, with the support of the EdQ Center. Since 2001, the CSU Systemwide Evaluation of Teacher Preparation Programs administered by the Center has enabled CSU academic administrators and campus faculties to monitor the effectiveness of, and make needed improvements in, the preparation of K-12 teachers for California's public schools. Results are shared across the CSU Education Deans group in order to identify and expand the use of best practices.

The Center conducts three comprehensive surveys of graduates based on current state content standards. One survey is conducted upon completion of the program, a second survey is conducted after graduates have taught for one year and a third is conducted among employers (typically principals) after graduates have taught at their school for a full year. The surveys consistently show that most CSU graduates consider themselves well prepared to teach their content area subjects and that their employers consider them highly prepared.

Summary: NCTQ's evaluations have resulted in little meaningful improvement in teacher preparation and it is recommended that the CSU continue its previous practice of not participating in these evaluations.

For additional information, please contact Dr. Zee Cline, interim assistant vice chancellor, Educator Preparation and Public School Programs, at zcline@calstate.edu.

SAA/zc

- c: Mr. Steve Relyea, Acting Chancellor
Dr. Robert Keith Collins, Academic Senate CSU
Dr. Alison M. Wrynn, Associate Vice Chancellor, Academic Programs, Innovations and Faculty Development
Dr. Zee Cline, Interim Assistant Vice Chancellor, Educator Preparation and Public School Programs
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AACTE Response to 2021 NCTQ Report

We at AACTE are dedicated to serving as a national voice and resource on behalf of the educator preparation profession. In anticipation of the National Center on Teacher Quality's (NCTQ) release of yet another round of flawed ratings for educator preparation programs, AACTE re-asserts its long-standing belief that the NCTQ model of program evaluation lacks the multiple-accountability, science-based measures necessary to assess teacher preparation program quality legitimately and accurately.

NCTQ evaluations methods are superficial, subjective, and short-sighted. NCTQ ignores more useful, revealing, available data such as federal Title II disclosures and science-based performance reports published by many states, and instead bases its conclusions on course catalogs, syllabi, observation forms, degree plans, and student teaching/district agreements, without direct dialogue or input from faculty. As such, the ratings NCTQ assigns programs are nothing more than shallow, incomplete, and subjective interpretation.

As a case in point, for the recent set of ratings on admission standards, NCTQ used institution-wide ACT/SAT score means for many of the institutions. As you know, these scores are not necessarily the scores for students in the teacher education programs, given that, at the institutional level, such scores only reflect the status of students when they are admitted to the institution. Because not all the students admitted persist in the program, scores at the time of admission to the institution tell nothing about the scores of those who do persist to program admittance and eventually to graduation.

Additionally, we believe NCTQ's superficial evaluative methods can have potentially counter-productive consequences. In the forthcoming report, NCTQ will administer ratings against program diversity and admissions standards. Given the quality of NCTQ's previous work, we do not anticipate that any ratings assigned in the newest report will accurately reflect the work being done by programs to address these challenges.

AACTE's work in this area, in partnership with our members, reaches beyond program diversity and seeks to impact the broader PK-20 landscape. The unprecedented challenges of remote and hybrid learning environments have undoubtedly required innovative approaches to preparing teacher candidates for a vastly different instructional context. It has also reaffirmed the need to prioritize preparing teacher candidates to address the systemic racism that exists in our education system. We do not expect NCTQ to capture and accurately reflect the innovations undertaken by institutions to address these challenges.

Together, we can combat the subjective and potentially harmful work of NCTQ. AACTE encourages its members to share their own research, grounded in data-driven decision making, and evidence demonstrating the efficacy of their programs with their local and state communities. AACTE will continue to lead conversations at the national level and elevate the great work happening at our member institutions across the country. We believe we must collectively engage in open dialogue about what quality educator preparation looks like while pushing for greater transparency and objectivity in the NCTQ review process.