

MACTE Position Statement

NCTQ/U.S. News & World Report National Review of Teacher Education Programs

The Missouri Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (MACTE) is a member organization representing all two and four year institutions of higher education in Missouri that prepare teachers and leaders for Missouri public schools. On January 25, 2011, deans and directors of schools of education across the United States received a request to participate in a nationwide assessment of the quality of teacher preparation programs at four year institutions of higher education. The MACTE Executive Board, in consultation with many of its member institutions, expresses deep concern about the nature, process, and prior record of the NCTQ review of teacher education.

MACTE members share concerns around the following issues:

- **Questionable methodology:** The methodology proposed for the study does not meet credible standards in the research community. NCTQ tends to use only written material such as syllabi and handbooks. NCTQ does not practice transparency to allow the larger research community to evaluate the research design or implementation.
- **Quality of standards:** The standards developed by NCTQ for the study do not appear to be rigorous nor do they match current trends in reforming teacher education. For instance, there is no acknowledgement of recent reports on clinical preparation of teachers and of contributions from cognitive and developmental sciences to teaching.
- **Input instead of output measures:** Teacher education nationwide has moved from input measures, looking at courses and experiences, to output measures, looking at actual performance in classrooms and impact on student learning. The NCTQ study almost exclusively collects input data to make its judgments on the quality of teacher education programs.
- **Unclear source of judgments:** Previous NCTQ state-wide studies of teacher education programs had many evaluative statements reported that do not reveal the source of those judgments. It is unclear how many or what techniques evaluators employed to arrive at the ratings or judgments made. Some judgments appear to show bias against education schools.
- **Ignoring accreditation requirements:** The NCTQ standards and measures do not address state and national accreditation requirements under which teacher education programs must function. Missouri teacher education programs all participate in improvement-oriented state accreditation processes which are based on evidence of K-12 student learning. Unlike the NCTQ study, Missouri's rigorous accreditation model goes beyond counting syllabi and handbooks to determine program effectiveness. Many programs also voluntarily fulfill national accreditation standards which emphasize the assessment of teacher performance. Teacher education programs are already under a significant resource load to provide the ongoing assessment data required for accreditation as well as federal reporting requirements.
- **Punitive response to non-participation:** NCTQ does not allow programs to withdraw from the study, but instead notes that institutions who do not participate will be rated as having failing programs.
- **Lack of responsiveness in prior reports:** Teacher education programs in Texas and Illinois, where NCTQ did previous studies, report that their responses to preliminary feedback on their methods and conclusions were not included in the NCTQ reports.

Based on these points and others, many MACTE institutions have elected to not participate in this study. We welcome constructive research that improves the education of teachers in Missouri and hope NCTQ can work on research in collaboration with accrediting agencies.

Recently NCTQ wrote to one of our members – a teacher education college – encouraging participation in the NCTQ survey whose results will be published in U.S. News and World Report. In that email the author stated “While I don’t know how our review of the school will turn out, I do know that the public perception of education schools is that they are uniformly bad.” That is untrue. The public, generally, doesn’t think about education schools. The people who do think about education schools are politicians, public policy makers and lobbyists. To the extent that they think education schools do a poor job that perception is based on a veneer of knowledge perpetuated by groups like NCTQ who have a political agenda. When surveyed, School Principals and Superintendents actually rate newly prepared teachers highly. Missouri does such a survey and over the past year 85% of principals rate the overall quality of their beginning teacher’s university-based teacher education program as good or very good.

To outsiders the political agenda looks legitimate. Raise teacher preparation standards. In a fashion very similar to ‘No Child Left Behind’, this is quite defensible. Just raise standards and then all problems will go away – all teachers will be well prepared. The problem is, the standards that NCTQ has created are not based on sound research and assume that teacher education institutions control the conditions under which they operate. This is also untrue.

NCTQ has been, by their own account, examining “programs in hundreds of education schools nationwide over the last six years” and their ‘standards’ were developed during that time. They did not start out with standards; they created them according to their own agenda. They claim to simply provide information but they have done so in a coercive way from outside the profession. NCTQ is really the “public who perceives that teacher education is uniformly bad” and they are trying to gather evidence to prove their preconceived notion. In this environment we, the undersigned choose not to participate in their ill-conceived ‘research’.