Response to National Council on Teacher Quality

Dear Friends of Education,

On June 17 the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) (see description attached) will release ratings of teacher education programs across the state and nation. The Oregon University System chose not to participate, but institutions were compelled to do so through the open records laws with incurred costs charged to NCTQ.

The PSU Graduate School of Education is dedicated to continuous improvement and seeks rigorous external review through state and national accreditation for all of our teacher education programs. National accreditation involves extensive self-study, outside review of the assessment of our students and programs, and an intense onsite review that includes interviews with students, faculty, and preK-12 educators.

National accreditation is voluntary, but we seek it because we want to be accountable to our constituents and the state, and we want to continuously improve our work. In 2015, we will undergo an accreditation visit and will be among the first universities in the nation and the first university in Oregon to be reviewed under the new and much more rigorous standards of the Council for the Accreditation of Education Professionals. We are not required to be reviewed under the new standards, but we are doing so because we want to meet the higher standards and demonstrate leadership in the field.

Highlights of the GSE Teacher Education Programs

Student Profile
- All students enter our programs with baccalaureate degrees in academic majors with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher. The average undergraduate GPA of our students is 3.46
- The average age of our students is 37 and most have worked for years in fields other than education, including: business, social services, health care and law
- All students must pass basic skills and content examinations before being recommended for licensure in the state of Oregon
- Teacher education students spend an entire academic year working in classrooms as they complete their university coursework

Alumni
- In the last two years alone, GSE alumni received the following awards:
  - Oregon Superintendent of the Year
  - Oregon High School Principal of the Year
  - Oregon Middle School Principal of the Year
  - Oregon Elementary Principal of the Year
  - Oregon Teacher of the Year
  - Oregon Special Education Teacher of the Year
  - Oregon Librarian of the Year
  - Washington State Teacher of the Year
  - U.S. Department of Defense District Teacher of the Year
  - Onpoint Teacher of the Year
  - Miller Teaching Award

Programs
- The GSE seeks to create a more effective and efficient system of professional preparation and professional development through significant partnerships with local schools. Efforts include All Hands Raised (includes 6 school districts, institutions of higher education, and community organizations) in Multnomah County, the Portland Metro Education Partnerships (includes 11 school districts and 10 universities), and the Portland Metro Teaching and Learning Coalition (a project funded by Chalkboard).
- The GSE has received two prestigious national awards for exceptional programs that address diversity:
  - The Southern Poverty Law Center Exemplary Culturally Responsive Teacher Preparation Award, 2012
The American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education Best Practices in Support of Diversity, 2005

For more information see our website. Should you have questions please contact me at hitz@pdx.edu or call 503-725-4697.

Randy Hitz, Dean

Objective Description of National Council on Teacher Quality


"Eduventures is not an advocacy organization and therefore does not evaluate or proffer opinions on the merits of an organization’s claim. As a research and advisory firm, we seek to provide usable insight into key trends and important forces shaping the contemporary higher education landscape to inform the strategic decision-making of higher education leaders.” p. 3

"Based on analysis of publicly available NCTQ organizational data, Eduventures has reached the following conclusions about NCTQ’s explicit objectives, tactics, and success metrics:

- NCTQ is not designed to be an objective evaluator of teacher preparation programs. NCTQ is a social change organization, not a research organization.
- NCTQ’s approach intentionally seeks to close some teacher training programs. Success for the National Review of Teacher Preparation means teacher training programs conform to NCTQ’s standards of quality or they are forced out of business.
- NCTQ explicitly uses public opinion, rather than research, to achieve its goals. The NCTQ theory of change involves the selection of winning and losing teacher training programs and the use of media channels in order to shape market demand for specific teacher training programs by influencing public opinion.” p. 5

For more on the history of NCTQ see this blog from Diane Ravitch. Diane Ravitch is Research Professor of Education at New York University and a historian of education.

The following quote comes from a position statement by the Oregon Association for Colleges of Teacher Education:

NCTQ is not an accrediting organization and has no official status in the professional field. It is a self-appointed group with very specific ideas about how state policy should govern teacher preparation programs. As individual institutions, and as a professional organization, we are actively engaged in the dialogue and debate around these issues with those who agree and those who disagree with what any one of us may think. Such exchanges, undertaken openly and in the spirit of constructive dialogue, are the basis for program improvement and the advancement of the profession. NCTQ has not entered the debate on these terms, however. The organization has created a grading and ranking system the results of which will be promoted publicly as a fair, informed, and accurate evaluation of teacher preparation institutions—whether institutions agree to provide the data necessary to make these judgments or not. Indeed, NCTQ has promised to fail institutions who do not cooperate: “And in cases where we cannot get documents needed to make ratings, NCTQ will declare that the institution failed to meet the standards in question” (http://www.nctq.org/edschoolreports/national/faq.jsp#1_2, emphasis in original). This form of coercion is made effective by the collective apprehension of institutions that this element of NCTQ’s process is unlikely to be communicated in an effective way to the public when the rankings are published. This is not authentic accountability; this is a form of external pressure applied by a self-appointed interest group to motivate policy changes that they support. Whether one agrees or disagrees with NCTQ’s agenda, to pursue it in this way is unethical and unacceptable to us as professionals in the field.