

# Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

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## MACTE Minute November 13, 2015 Basic Skills Testing

The MACTE Executive Committee takes this opportunity to extend our deepest thanks to Erin Doan, Alex Liuzzi, [JoAnn Van Aernum](#), Nels Omstad, and Emily Busta for the helpful updates they provided Minnesota teacher educators at last week's Fall Congress. We appreciated how they specifically focused on critical issues we have presented over the past year and also how they were so generous with their time to address individual program questions. The highly challenging work you are doing to inform our legislators is applauded and was recognized by all in attendance.

One issue that continues to dominate policy discussions is that of basic skills testing. We feel this issue—and not out-of-state licensing—is the major barrier to diversification of the Minnesota teacher educator workforce. MACTE is not opposed to testing requirements, although we are opposed to poorly constructed tests and the imposition of arbitrary cut scores. As you go forward with standards and rule setting, we present three items for your consideration and review.

1. One of the difficult discussions we have avoided regarding the basic skills is perhaps one of the most necessary. What does the state of Minnesota define as Basic Skills? Who defines this and where is it documented? The legislative language is vague at best and leads to individuals defining the term for themselves. A well thought out and defined basic skills exam with shared outcomes would lead to an exam that can be used fairly to assess beginning teacher candidates.

2. Please also define what you consider to be college and career ready. In the MNSCU system, an ACT score of 19 is deemed to be college ready. Thus, an ACT cut score of 22 exceeds what our state institutions have defined as college ready. Denying access to candidates who meet this criterion could be viewed as discriminatory practice.

3. Finally, please ensure that you are setting cut scores that reflect performance averages of particular subgroups, such as candidates of color, ELL and international candidates, and candidates from low socioeconomic groups. For example, we know the average ACT score for candidates of color ranges between 17 and 18, compared to the current ACT cut score of 22. Furthermore, when test items address concepts alien to one's culture--as is the case on the MTLE, we know this results in depressed scores.

In a time when we face teacher shortages and are attempting to recruit more diverse teacher candidates, we must ensure that we provide the greatest access to our profession. We realize fully the legislative challenges you face, and we are ready to work with you to face these challenges.

Thank you.