

Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

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MACTE is energetically engaging with PELSB's initiatives around Unit and SEP rule revision, but we were also intrigued to see a draft goal of "elevate the profession of education" (8-22-2019 PELSB document). While we appreciate how much is on your plate(s), we urge continued work on celebrating and elevating the profession of teaching. Indeed, a recent Forbes article (Sept. 5) argues that instead of deliberating a "teacher shortage," we need to focus on elevating the experience of teachers in schools. It is the quality of our teachers' experiences in schools that is key if we want the entry point – teacher licensure -- to be an attractive portal to a lifetime vocation in education.

On September 13, we had a lively discussion with a representative of the Minnesota Education Equity Partnership. Like that organization, we are committed to diversifying Minnesota's teacher profession, particularly as the gap between the number of diverse learners in our state, nearly a third, and our teaching force, 4 percent or less, persists. We know, and we believe PELSB recognizes, that teacher preparation has a critical role to play in helping us create a diverse, culturally responsive teaching workforce in Minnesota. We are pleased to see this reflected in new Unit Rule language that emphasizes culturally competent and responsive training in preparation programs, as well as language that asks provider institutions to adequately account for the processes and initiatives facilitating diverse candidates entering via our admissions processes. We look forward to continued partnership toward these goals.

A portion of our discussions has centered around support for rural teacher education. Recent American socio-political dialogue has often centered on divisions and differences between urban America and rural America. And while these perceptions and comparisons are fascinating, we think Minnesota is a case study of these settings having more in common than not. We are excited to see news stories of highly educated professionals, business people, and artisans returning to rural communities (Minnesota was featured in one such story in the New York Times). There are challenges, though. Pairing teacher candidates with rural schools includes the realities of travel time, expense, distance from family and support networks, and to be frank, often insurmountable conflicts around housing. The result is a loss in opportunities to pair interested teacher candidates with schools outside of morning commute distances. Urban and suburban placements for student teaching often do not reflect this challenge, as many candidates have relatives in the dense urban areas of our state. While our member EPP institutions are set across the state, representing both urban and rural contexts, we think that it is a moment to think about teacher preparation for rural schools as an area for investigation, advocacy, partnership, and ultimately, funding.

We remain committed to high standards for faculty qualifications and applaud the efforts within the

MEMBERS: Augsburg College ▪ Bemidji State University ▪ Bethel College ▪ Bethany Lutheran College ▪ Capella University ▪ College of St. Benedict/St. John's University ▪ College of St. Catherine ▪ College of St. Scholastica ▪ Concordia College ▪ Concordia University ▪ Crown College ▪ Gustavus Adolphus College ▪ Hamline University ▪ Martin Luther College ▪ Metropolitan State University ▪ Minnesota State University, Mankato ▪ Minnesota State University Moorhead ▪ Normandale College ▪ North Central University ▪ University of Northwestern – Saint Paul ▪ Southwest Minnesota State University ▪ St. Cloud State University ▪ St. Mary's University of MN ▪ St. Olaf College ▪ University of Minnesota–Crookston ▪ University of Minnesota–Duluth ▪ University of Minnesota–Morris ▪ University of Minnesota–Twin Cities ▪ University of St. Thomas ▪ Walden University ▪ Winona State University ▪

new Unit Rule, but members have mixed feelings about strict numerical guidelines, given the variety of ways that faculty members arrive in higher education preparing teachers, and given the demands of hiring and staffing for mandated courses.

Changing the faculty credentials for methods coursework to requiring three years of classroom teaching in scope and licensure, an increase from the current requirement of one year, changes the job requirements for current faculty so that those with many years of teaching experience at the P-20 levels may no longer be qualified. These faculty may have taught many years at a different scope or licensure and would become ineligible to keep jobs in which they've worked for many years. Using a hypothetical example to illustrate the consequence of the change would be a professor who taught high school math for 7 years and later taught a year of math as a teacher of record at the elementary level who would no longer be eligible to teach elementary math methods under the rule change despite having also been a teacher educator for 10 years. Leaders in higher education in Minnesota have reiterated the goals of higher education to offer a robust and research-oriented professoriate in line with the mission of many of our institutions. A doctorally-educated faculty with a robust background in theory, research, and practice is the gold standard of teacher education.

Second, we are mindful of a hiring burden for higher education and believe the stated qualification is inconsistent with an emphasis on a diverse workforce in teacher education and our licensed teacher workforce. It is already common to have smaller pools of diverse candidates for jobs; changing the requirement to three years of classroom experience in scope and licensure would make these candidate pools even smaller. Candidates with diverse experiences might not be offered a teacher prep faculty role based on new qualifications. Three years of licensed teaching and a PHD or EdD. is a tough, ten-year bar to clear. We are concerned about a rule that would make the waiver (or not meeting the standard) a default solution. The stated qualifications create challenges and burdens in hiring for our institutions, burdens that will disadvantage Minnesota teacher education.

In closing, on behalf of MACTE, we thank you for your work, and we look forward to continued partnership on behalf of Minnesota's learners.