



# OHIO UNIVERSITY

The Gladys W. and David H. Patton  
College of Education and Human Services

January 28, 2011

Dear Partners in Education:

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As you may know, *U.S. News and World Report* recently announced a partnership with the National Council for Teacher Quality (NCTQ) to rank teacher preparation programs nationwide. According to the press release, they will rate the quality of more than 1,000 teacher training programs across the country. The state of Ohio has long been committed to holding its education programs to the highest level of accountability. While we welcome rigorous, standards-based research to improve our programs, we have serious concerns with NCTQ's methods, which is why we will not be participating in the study.

The NCTQ is a private organization that styles itself a teacher-quality research and policy group "working to ensure that every child has an effective teacher." While NCTQ maintains that the organization provides "comprehensive research," its methodologies are questionable at best. As the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) has noted, NCTQ's research efforts use "methodologies that do not meet the standards of basic scientific research."

The NCTQ solicits teacher preparation programs for course syllabi, which they then compare to a set of arbitrary—that is, not evidence-based—standards to determine the quality of a program. This approach disregards the fact that teacher education is an output-driven profession; it reveals a complete disjuncture between NCTQ's methods and those of recognized accrediting bodies and calls into question the validity of its findings.

Sharon P. Robinson, president of the AACTE, said in recent statement that "NCTQ has produced several reports over the years focused on measuring program inputs through public document reviews rather than measuring the actual outputs of programs through sound research methods." This critique of NCTQ's input-driven methods is echoed in a 2010 Eduventures report: "The main problem with such an analysis [is] formulating conclusions about the quality of the end product of a teacher preparation program—prepared teachers—solely by analyzing the quality of the course materials."

The Eduventures report also identifies a number of inputs that NCTQ does not account for in its studies, inputs that have been proven to have a profound effect on teacher quality. These include, but are not limited to, faculty/quality of instruction, student support structures, duration and quality of field experiences, and teacher induction programming.

With regard to NCTQ's questionable standards, Eduventures notes, "Rather than providing evidence, the rationale NCTQ provides for many standards appears to be opinion-based, and, in some cases, the rationale includes broad generalizations that many experts would



recognize as untrue.” Eduventures analysts conclude that NCTQ’s “methodology flaws ultimately limit the validity of the study’s conclusions and make the findings somewhat unreliable.”

Ohio University’s Patton College of Education and Human Services was recently contacted by NCTQ to participate in a review of our elementary (early childhood) undergraduate professional internship experience. The NCTQ’s review and subsequent findings associated with the program do not accurately reflect the standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and Ohio’s state requirements for educator preparation programs. Although NCTQ claims that the evaluation incorporated information received from us, including documents and responses to its original request, we have no record of submission of documents from our college. The NCTQ also claimed to have surveyed principals whose schools house our student teachers, but we have no knowledge of such a survey ever taking place. Their practices are misleading and, in my opinion, unethical.

Ohio University believes that all educator preparation programs should be held to the same nationally recognized standards, so that all prospective teachers are prepared to educate all children effectively. For that reason, certification rules and standards are developed by legislatures and state departments of education, not by private agenda-driven organizations such as NCTQ. In reality, NCTQ is not a recognized accrediting body, and we are not accountable to its arbitrary “standards.”

We *do* hold ourselves accountable to the standards of recognized professional nonprofit associations, such as NCATE, which the U.S. Department of Education recognizes as a specialized accrediting body for schools, colleges, and departments of education. NCATE is composed of more than 30 professional and policymaking organizations representing millions of Americans. Schools and programs accredited by NCATE are required to undergo a detailed external review. During the review, the school or program must provide evidence that its teacher candidates meet the rigorous standards set for the teaching profession before they are recommended for licensure, including evidence of student learning. Just recently, The Patton College received official full continuing accreditation from NCATE through 2014.

Colleges of education across the nation have been actively engaged in expanding partnerships with K–12 schools, strengthening relationships with arts and sciences, and preparing nontraditional students for new careers in teaching. Ohio is in the forefront of that endeavor. As summarized in the attached op-ed on behalf of 13 Ohio public universities, 35 Ohio private institutions, and the Ohio Association for Colleges of Teachers Education (OACTE), Ohio is becoming a national model for improving the performance of teacher education programs. This op-ed was sent statewide on Jan. 26. Indeed, Ohio will soon become the first state in the nation to establish statewide metrics to monitor the performance of educator preparation programs. We believe that teacher preparation programs in Ohio need to be held to high standards and that we are accountable for meeting those standards, so long as the standards are based on sound scientific and ethical principles for research.

Sincerely,



Renée A. Middleton, Ph.D.  
Dean



March 14, 2011

Dear Educators and Friends of The Patton College:

I am writing to you again with an update to my letter of [January 28](#), which addressed the decision of *U.S. News and World Report* (USNWR) to publish the grading of teacher preparation programs. These rankings come from the National Council for Teacher Quality, a self-appointed group with the aim of informing the public about the extent to which university-based teacher preparation programs in the United States meet a set of “input” standards (textbooks, syllabi, courses, etc).

Although the USNWR decision has created quite a stir in the media, institutional and professional accountability for the work of teacher preparation programs has a relatively long history and plays an increasingly prominent role in safeguarding the education of the nation’s schoolchildren. Responsibility for accreditation of teacher preparation programs formerly rested with the departments of education of the individual states and later, in the mid-1950s, came under the jurisdiction of national professional accrediting bodies. Since that time, professional accreditation has moved away from input models and now embraces outcome models because the latter are much more direct in evaluating the work of teacher preparation programs. In addition to satisfying the criteria for national accreditation, educator preparation programs at all Ohio colleges and universities also must comply with standards issued by the Board of Regents, and our graduates must meet the requirements for a professional educator license established by the Ohio Department of Education.

More than a decade ago, Ohio’s public and private institutes of higher learning came together to establish the Teacher Quality Partnership, a voluntary effort to link the performance of the teachers we graduate to the quality of our education programs. More recently, we have worked with the Board of Regents to develop Ohio’s Educator Preparation Metrics, which include such indicators of quality as new teachers’ ability to demonstrate student growth and the placement of graduates in hard-to-staff school districts. And as mentioned in the op-ed sent to you on January 28, the new Teacher Performance Assessment will measure each beginning teacher’s preparedness and effectiveness and will provide universities, colleges, and school districts with the ability to track the teachers they prepare—through the clinical phases of their preparation programs through their completion of Ohio’s Teacher Residency Program.

Through the combination of self-assessment, participation in Ohio Board of Regents evaluations, and compliance with the standards set by national accreditation bodies, Ohio’s colleges and universities demonstrate their active engagement with a rigorous system of quality control. This system represents an honest, fair, and effective method for rating teacher preparation programs.



Furthermore, it differs in important ways from the input methodology employed by the NCTQ. Notably, this organization has neither grounded its survey in research nor demonstrated how its standards support quality in teacher preparation. Measurements of quality in teacher education programs can be useful, and indeed valuable, but only if they are founded on evidence-based standards and carefully consider the outcomes of those programs: qualified and effective teachers. The degree to which an institution's admissions policy and course offerings conform to a checklist of arbitrary criteria is no substitute for real-world data and analysis. Education professionals from around the country, including the [chancellors of the university systems of California, New York, and Maryland](#) and the president and provost of Columbia University's Teachers College, have expressed reservations with the NCTQ survey's focus on inputs and its lack of analysis, as have the [Ohio Association of Colleges of Teacher Education](#), [all 53 teacher education institutions](#) in the state of Illinois, [the State University System of Florida and its Board of Governors](#), and the [Association of American Universities](#).

In response to the national criticism, the NCTQ has agreed to modest changes in methodology and reporting. The survey, for example, now will include value-added scores of students in the classrooms of program graduates. Value-added data, however, are not available for all states, and the resulting apples-to-oranges comparison will serve only to cast further doubt on the accuracy of the proposed rankings. And while the NCTQ originally indicated that institutions declining to participate in the study would be identified as having "*failed* to meet the standards," the organization now says that nonparticipating colleges will receive an "estimated" ranking. So, in the absence of data, they will formulate a guess about an assigned grade. We believe that the students and families of Ohio deserve better than a guess.

As I stated in my previous letter, Ohio University will not participate in such a flawed study. Institutions and professional educational organizations from across the nation have invited USNWR and the NCTQ to work collegially to strengthen the survey and its methods, and we remain optimistic that they will accept this invitation. In the meantime, if you would like to view Teacher Quality Data on Ohio University's candidates, please visit [http://www.cehs.ohio.edu/about-coe/ncate/teach\\_cand\\_quality.htm](http://www.cehs.ohio.edu/about-coe/ncate/teach_cand_quality.htm). We are proud of the work of our students and graduates, and we welcome the opportunity to share their achievements with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Renée A. Middleton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "M".

Renée A. Middleton, Ph.D.  
Dean