

Statement by James Cibulka and Frank Murray on NCTQ Ratings and CAEP Accreditation

February 17, 2011

As you are probably aware, a debate has emerged among respected leaders of major institutions that prepare many of our nation's teachers about how institutions should respond to the recent announcement of the National Center for Teacher Quality (NCTQ) and *U.S. News and World Report* (USNWR) that they will rank teacher education programs in colleges and universities (but for some unstated reason not those in other organizations). Despite widespread concern among institutions about the adequacy and fairness of the proposed system of rankings, there is also disagreement about whether responsible institutions should participate in what they legitimately believe to be a flawed system of evaluation.

We have considered carefully how we, as the accreditors for our profession, should contribute to this discussion. To begin, we do not believe it is appropriate for us to criticize specifics of the proposed ranking system or to speak to the pros or cons of institutional participation. As we will review and accredit many of the same institutions that will be ranked by NCTQ/USNWR, our work must remain totally independent. How an institution fares in the ratings or even whether it decides to participate with NCTQ/USNWR at all can have no bearing on our accreditation decisions, and there should be no appearance of entanglement. We will fairly consider for accreditation both those that participate in the NCTQ/USNWR ratings and those that do not. We shall consider the case for accreditation solely in terms of the evidence supporting satisfaction of the NCATE standards, TEAC principles and standards, and once CAEP is in operation, CAEP standards. Moreover, as potential targets of the NCTQ/USNWR rating system ourselves, we should not be advising you whether to participate.

We do believe, however, that it is very appropriate for us to speak about the value of accreditation for our profession and for our nation's students. The credibility of our performance as accreditors has been questioned by NCTQ as one reason that there is a need for this planned teacher education rating project.

In a recent web seminar, NCTQ President Kate Walsh incorrectly stated that NCATE President Jim Cibulka (among others) agrees with her view that teacher education in schools of education is broken. To be sure, we do often say that teacher education programs can be improved. For example, NCATE has convened two national expert panels on important issues in educator

preparation during the past year, and those panels have released reports with some widely praised recommendations. These recommendations for significant changes in the way we prepare teachers have nothing to do with conferring failing grades, as NCTQ would assert, but with undertaking reforms to the system of preparing teachers which address the contemporary needs of our nation's P-12 schools as effectively as possible. Both reports cited many exemplary practices in preparation programs upon which to build in making needed changes. We reject the dichotomous reasoning that says because problems exist and are being addressed, that an entire system is failing. Indeed, such an assertion calls into question the purported objectivity of the NCTQ rating system.

It is also the case that accreditation can be improved as a lever for improving the performance of our profession. In many respects accreditation has been an effective, positive influence in establishing standards and quality principles for the education profession, but accreditation can and must do more. NCTQ misconstrues our commitment to improving accreditation and to preparing teachers more effectively as an acknowledgement of a failing system. Such logic misses an important point about professional values and discourse. As members of the profession that prepares teachers and other school professionals, we are naturally committed to making improvements and addressing the problems we all face in the preparation of educators. Accreditation, however, has a dual mission of quality assurance and program improvement. These two missions have co-existed in dynamic and productive tension for a century and a half. Thus, the profession, through its accreditation enterprise, seeks to identify quality programs and also to be responsive to new research knowledge, to promising practices, and to the changing needs of our nation and its educated citizenry.

We also believe that the NCTQ/USNWR paper-review ratings of the nation's education schools is less reliable than the extensive work already accomplished by NCATE and TEAC, because accreditation entails standards and principles vetted and accepted by leading scholars and practitioners, site-visits, and expert review panels. Accreditation is a more thorough, transparent process and one that also has been examined and endorsed by independent review teams in both the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the U.S. Department of Education.

Our profession has committed itself to create an even more powerful accreditation enterprise, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). In Fall, 2008, the NCATE and TEAC boards appointed a joint team, broadly representative of our profession, to design a new, unified accrediting body for our profession. The Design Team worked expeditiously and with openness and transparency, which is a hallmark of a profession. The NCATE and TEAC boards unanimously approved the creation of CAEP in October, 2010. The new accrediting body will be fully operational by the beginning of 2013.

We have been very clear to our boards and to all stakeholders that we have high aspirations for what CAEP should accomplish. In recommendations to the respective boards, members of the Design Team that prepared the structure for CAEP set out their aspirations. Rather than "merely unifying NCATE and TEAC" they:

"set a much more ambitious goal: to create a model unified accreditation system. Such a system would not merely stand as the traditional bar to unsatisfactory professional preparation. Instead, it would encourage and

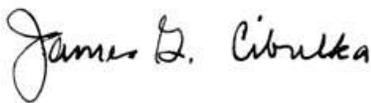
assist all institutions and other entities that prepare educators (“institutions”), even those that already exceed that bar, to go beyond it towards excellence by continuously improving the quality of their completers and programs. CAEP’s goals should be not only to raise the performance of candidates as practitioners in the nation’s P-12 schools, but also to raise the stature of the entire profession by raising the standards for the evidence the field relies on to support its claims of quality. With the great changes currently being proposed and taking place in our field, this is a unique opportunity for us to show the value we add to quality assurance, accountability and the overall performance of the profession.”

Our vision for CAEP is to broaden the number of strong institutions and other providers who are accredited, so that our profession can speak with a unified voice about high quality professional preparation. Also, we believe CAEP can be the profession’s vehicle for documenting performance outcomes for graduates and programs, and for linking these outcomes to P-12 student learning. Accreditation has been a leading proponent of a shift toward a stronger performance-based approach to measuring quality and providing accountability. We share the optimism expressed by the AAU deans in the February 3, 2011 memorandum to Brian Kelly, editor of USNWR, which argues for “robust, valid, and useful assessments of the outcomes, in terms of what aspiring teachers know and can do, and the impact these candidates have on student achievement.” This is the future of accreditation.

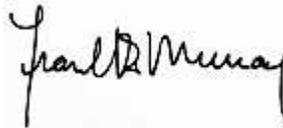
In conclusion, we strongly believe in continuous improvement for ourselves as accreditors as well as for educator preparation providers. As we raise the bar for accredited institutions, there are many strengths and best practices upon which to build. In the long run, our collective efforts to raise performance in our profession will likely be the most effective response to criticisms of us, whatever external NCTQ ratings are.

We believe that it is important to remain united around this goal of excellent performance by participating in the profession’s newly unified accreditation system. We appreciate the widespread support for our efforts to create CAEP. We ask for your continued commitment and engagement to make CAEP the best that it can be and a truly exemplary accreditor among all the professions.

Cordially,



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