



March 16, 2011

Chancellor Charles B. Reed
Office of the Chancellor
The California State University
401 Golden Shore
Long Beach, California 90802

Chancellor William E. Kirwan
Office of the Chancellor
University System of Maryland
3300 Metzert Road
Adelphi, Maryland 20783

Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher
Office of the Chancellor
State University Plaza
Albany, New York 12246

Dear Chancellors Reed, Kirwan, and Zimpher:

With my apologies for so much time lapsing after your February letter to Brian Kelly of *U.S. News & World Report*, I would very much like to respond directly to all of you, in order that I may address your letter's serious misrepresentations about the National Council on Teacher Quality.

If I understand your letter correctly, there appear to be two general issues: first, you believe there are many reasons to distrust the quality of NCTQ's work; and, second, you offer a number of much better metrics for *U.S. News* to consider in the evaluation of teacher preparation programs.

On the first matter, I am troubled by the willingness of three respected university system chancellors to make such blanket assertions about an organization which I presume none of you know well, if at all. While overlooking the many false statements made in your letter might be the pragmatic approach, it is one I cannot take.

In particular, I find it troubling that you have signed on these claims without any specific evidence before you—since I know there to be no such evidence. Given the amount of work we have already done in this arena, surely someone by now should have been able to build a convincing case that establishes the pattern of errors by NCTQ that your letter implies there to be. The fact that no one has done so (and not for lack of effort) is not immaterial.

To be sure, there have been a number of complaints, but always from institutions which received a particular rating over which they took issue. We have always taken great care to review and formally respond to each of these complaints and widely shared these appeals to any interested parties. Even if in the few instances where these appeals yielded specific errors in our analysis, none rose to the level that would have justified your characterization of NCTQ.

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Even a paid consultant such as Eduventures, hired by education school deans to discredit our work in Illinois, uncovered no such evidence, relying on vague and unsubstantiated accusations to discredit us. Unfortunately, as you no doubt have experienced in your own professional lives, such spurious accusations have a way of breathing life into lies, inflicting damage that can be very hard to undo.

You also wrongly assert that we do not provide an opportunity for institutions to correct errors in data, when in fact we provide multiple opportunities for institutions to do exactly that. The deans in Texas refused to engage with us, despite numerous entreaties, including appealing directly to their college presidents and publicly announcing two delays in our schedule to give them more time to change their minds.

The deans in Illinois, on the other hand, engaged freely, leading to an exchange of over 3,000 emails, countless phone calls, and concluding with an offer from our lead researcher of an extended one-on-one conversation with each dean, an offer most took up (we have attached a timetable of these conversations with deans for your review). Oftentimes these dialogues led to a change in ratings; oftentimes it did not, but there is no evidence that the opportunity for dialogue was ever once denied, while there is plenty that it did take place.

The fact that we did not always change a particular rating based on these conversations surely does not license anyone to declare our work inaccurate, as if it were proper for a judge to reach a decision after hearing only one side of the case. Your willingness to declare our work inaccurate places a burden on you to at least first prove it to yourselves.

I would ask you to review the actual publications stemming from these two state reviews, including their 100+ page appendices and challenge you to identify areas of our methodology or data collection which still remain a mystery to you (the Illinois review and appendix is enclosed). In approaching the national review, our level of transparency is unprecedented, releasing the specific evidence used by us to assess if an institution meets the 17 standards. *A clearer roadmap could not have been drawn.*

We have opted to err on the side of transparency, in spite of the substantial increase in costs that comes with that decision. We now have had to add on an audit function to the review so as to verify the authenticity of the documents provided to us.

As to the second general issue, your letter asserts that there are a number of far better options available to *U.S. News*, while expressing considerable disdain for NCTQ's "inputs." You overlook the fact that our standards do in fact incorporate a number of outputs-based measures (Standard 17) including performance assessment data *where it is available* (and it is not nearly as available as your letter suggests). And we are developing the means to include value-added data on any program *for which such data are available* (currently in 3 states).

Even if these metrics were widely available, I might add, we strongly assert that "inputs" should still play a role in any serious effort to evaluate programs. Inputs—which we more appropriately characterize as *standards*—certainly matter a great deal to your deans and faculty, assuming they dedicate much time and thought to the courses and experiences which embody their visions of a well prepared teacher. Why should they not matter to anyone else?

While I relish the idea of being proven wrong, I am afraid I cannot currently share your enthusiasm for the promise of such ventures as the new InTASC teaching standards or the latest reinvention of NCATE to lead to the substantial reform that has been sought now for decades. Neither has moved past the stage of potentially useful theories of action and each, unfortunately, has a decades-long track record that disappoints.

Finally, let me close by saying that we absolutely do not share your perspective on the obligation of institutions to participate in this review. We believe that *publicly* approved teacher preparation programs preparing *public* school teachers have an obligation to participate in any serious, reputable effort to improve the quality of information available to the public, whether that effort is generated by teacher education itself, academia, journalists or policy groups such as ourselves. If NCTQ is obliged to be transparent, then certainly these programs, operating to serve the public good, must be as well.

If our effort turns out to be as unfair or as irrelevant as you have forecast in your letter, institutions will have no difficulty making that case. In fact we are setting up procedures on our own website that will make it easier for them to do just that. However, the belief that participation in this process should be optional, if widely shared, reveals a gap between us that will be hard to close.

Much of the summary documentation for what happened in both Texas and Illinois is attached and I urge you to peruse it if you are ever going to weigh in on this matter again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kate Walsh". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kate" and the last name "Walsh" clearly distinguishable.

Kate Walsh
President

N.B.: Because your letter was so widely circulated, we are posting our response on our website and copying it to others who have written to us citing your letter.

CC:

Mr. Brian Kelly, *U.S. News & World Report*

Dr. David Steiner, Commissioner of Education and President of the University of the State of New York

Ms. Deborah Lodge, Esq., Patton Boggs

Dr. Frank T. Brogan, Chancellor, State University System of Florida

Dr. George Pernsteiner, Chancellor, Oregon University System

Attachment

Illinois Conference Call Schedule

Date	Time	Name	School
10/6/2010	8:00am - 8:30am	Rachel Ragland	Lake Forest College
10/6/2010	10:00am - 10:30am	Norman Lederman	Illinois Institute of Technology
10/6/2010	3:00pm - 3:30pm	Jason Helfer	Knox College
10/6/2010	3:30pm - 4:00pm	Colleen Reardon	Dominican University
10/7/2010	9:00am - 9:30am	Ann Behrens	Quincy College
10/7/2010	9:30am - 10:00am	Bette Bergeron	Southern Illinois University - Edwardsville
10/7/2010	10:00am - 10:30am	Meshelda Jackson	Benedictine University
10/7/2010	2:00pm - 2:30pm	Dr. Jeff Aper	Blackburn College
10/7/2010	2:30pm - 3:00pm	Penelope L Peterson	Northwestern University
10/7/2010	3:00pm - 3:30pm	Nick Digrino	Western Illinois University
10/8/2010	11:00am - 11:30am	Don Wold	Aurora University
10/8/2010	11:30am - 12:00pm	Dr. Nan Gaylen	Millikin University
10/8/2010	1:00pm - 1:30pm	Debra Meyer	Elmhurst College
10/8/2010	2:00pm - 2:30pm	J. Sattler And D. Cantu	Bradley University
10/8/2010	3:00pm - 3:30pm	Robin Leavitt	Illinois Wesleyan University
10/9/2010	9:00am - 9:30am	John Gambro	University of St. Francis
10/9/2010	9:30am - 10:00am	Craig Vivian	Monmouth College
10/9/2010	10:00am - 10:30am	Rebecca Nelson	North Park University
10/9/2010	10:30am - 11:00am	Beverly Kasper	Loyola University Chicago
10/9/2010	11:00am - 11:30am	Jim Miller	Eureka College
10/9/2010	12:30pm - 1:00pm	Kristen Stombres	Judson University
10/9/2010	1:00pm - 1:30pm	Paul Zions	DePaul University
10/9/2010	4:00pm - 4:30pm	Mike Schroeder	Augustana College
10/9/2010	4:30pm - 5:00pm	Karen Wrobbel	Trinity International University