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PRESS RELEASE

**MASSACHUSETTS TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS  
FALLING SHORT IN TRAINING NEXT GENERATION OF TEACHERS**

**National Council on Teacher Quality releases the first  
*NCTQ Teacher Prep Review*, with *U.S. News & World Report* as publisher**

***For the first time, American public will have comprehensive information on the individual  
quality of over 1,100 teacher preparation programs.***

June 18, 2013 (Washington, DC) – Dismal new findings from the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) show that the majority of teacher preparation programs in the United States, including programs in Massachusetts, are not providing adequate training to aspiring teachers, leaving them unable to accommodate increasingly rigorous instructional goals of public schools, according to a new study released by NCTQ and *U.S. News & World Report*.

The ratings, based on a series of recommended practices, show only a handful of schools performing at a high level, while a significant number of programs are effectively failing.

“New teachers deserve training that will enable them to walk into their own classroom on their first day ready to teach, but our *Review* shows that we have a long way to go,” said Kate Walsh, president of NCTQ. “While we know a lot about how to train teachers, those practices are seldom evident in the vast majority of programs.”

“The problem is worse than we thought,” said Brian Kelly, editor and chief content officer of *U.S. News*. “The data show that the academic caliber of many incoming students is quite low, and what they are taught often has little relevance to what they need to succeed in the classroom. Very few

schools meet even a minimum standard of quality when it comes to using the best practices for educating teachers.”

The first edition of the *NCTQ Teacher Prep Review*, an unprecedented evaluation of more than 1,100 colleges and universities that prepare elementary and secondary teachers, was published today in partnership with *U.S. News and World Report*. As a consumer tool, it allows aspiring teachers, parents and school districts to compare programs and determine which are doing the best - or worst -- job of training new teachers.

Thirty-five institutions in Massachusetts were included in the *Review*. Open records requests were required to obtain data from public institutions. In response to the requests, institutions in the Massachusetts State Colleges system initially charged a collective fee of \$22,000. NCTQ successfully appealed this charge with the Massachusetts Supervisor of Public Records. The University of Massachusetts campuses reduced their initial fees upon receiving reduced requests; however, the Amherst campus continues to charge over \$2,000 for the fulfillment of a substantially reduced request. In the end, NCTQ was able to provide comprehensive findings for 14 Massachusetts institutions, and partial findings on the remaining 21 in the sample.

#### **Among the findings:**

- **Highly rated programs** -- Programs at **Fitchburg State University** (undergraduate secondary) and **Gordon College** (undergraduate secondary) are on the *Teacher Prep Review's Honor Roll*, earning at least three out of four possible stars. Across the country, NCTQ identified 21 elementary programs (4 percent of those rated) and 84 secondary programs (14 percent) for the Honor Roll.
- **Selectivity in admissions** -- The *Review* found that **only 24 percent of elementary and secondary programs in Massachusetts restrict admissions to the top half of the college-going population**, compared to 28 percent nationwide. Countries where students consistently outperform the U.S. typically set an even higher bar, with teacher prep programs recruiting candidates from the top third of the college-going population.

Some worry that increasing admissions requirements will have a negative effect on the diversity of teacher candidates. By increasing the rigor and therefore the prestige of teacher

preparation the profession will attract more talent, including talented minorities. This is not an impossible dream: 83 programs across the country earn a Strong Design designation on this standard because they are both selective and diverse, although no such programs were found in Massachusetts.

- ***Early reading instruction*** – **Just 13 percent of evaluated elementary programs in Massachusetts are preparing teacher candidates in effective, scientifically based reading instruction**, an even lower percentage than the small minority of programs (29 percent) providing such training nationally. The state should find this especially alarming given that Massachusetts requires elementary teacher candidates to pass one of the most rigorous tests of scientifically based reading instruction in the country.
- ***Elementary math*** – A mere 19 percent of evaluated elementary programs nationwide provide strong preparation to teach elementary mathematics, training that mirrors the practices of higher performing nations such as Singapore and South Korea. **Just 18 percent of the evaluated elementary programs in Massachusetts provide such training.** As with reading instruction, this is an especially alarming finding given the emphasis Massachusetts has placed on adequate preparation in elementary math and the excellent stand-alone mathematics test required for teacher licensure.
- ***Student teaching*** – Of the evaluated elementary and secondary programs in Massachusetts, **89 percent entirely fail to ensure a high quality student teaching experience**, in which candidates are assigned only to highly skilled teachers and receive frequent concrete feedback. 71 percent of programs across the country failed this standard.
- ***Classroom management*** – **None of the limited sample of evaluated Massachusetts elementary and secondary programs earn a perfect four stars for providing feedback to teacher candidates on concrete classroom management strategies** to improve classroom behavior, compared to 23 percent of evaluated programs nationwide.
- ***Content preparation*** – **9 percent of Massachusetts' elementary programs earn three or four stars for providing teacher candidates adequate content preparation**, compared to 11 percent of elementary programs nationwide. The results are better at the high school level, **with 73 percent of Massachusetts' secondary programs earning four stars for**

**content preparation**, compared to 35 percent nationwide.

- ***Outcome data*** – **Only 4 percent of Massachusetts' evaluated programs earn four stars for collecting data on their graduates**, compared to 26 percent of evaluated programs in the national sample. 46 percent of Massachusetts' evaluated programs entirely fail this standard, compared to just 17 percent that do so across the country. The state does not connect student achievement data to teacher preparation programs, administer surveys of graduates and employers or require administration of teacher performance assessments (TPAs), and programs have not taken the initiative to collect any such data on their own.

“If we really want to help all teachers succeed, we not only need to change what happens in the schools where they work, we must also address the preparation of the next generation of teachers,” said Walsh. “With the advent of the Common Core State Standards, the bar in this country is being raised on students, requiring the highest quality teacher preparation. What may have worked even five or ten years ago in teacher prep has to be reevaluated.”

She added: “By giving consumers the power to make more informed choices, we can help them become the engine for driving change. As we’ve seen in most other sectors, informed consumers are hard to ignore.”

NCTQ issued a consumer alert for 112 elementary programs and 51 secondary programs, meaning that those programs did not earn a single star. Three programs in Massachusetts received a consumer alert.

In addition to using the well-established *U.S. News* platform to help aspiring teachers find the best program for their training, NCTQ will be working with SearchSoft Solutions, the leading K-12 education market provider of Human Resources software. SearchSoft’s cloud-based technology platform is currently used by thousands of schools across the country to more efficiently hire highly qualified teachers and administrators. In fall 2013 SearchSoft will release new functionality integrating NCTQ program ratings into applicant screening software, enabling school districts to factor in the quality of teacher applicants’ training into hiring decisions.

NCTQ also suggests a set of viable strategies for public officials that would improve public

monitoring of program quality and hold institutions more accountable:

- Make it tougher to get into a teacher preparation program.
- Make it tougher to be recommended for licensure.
- Hold programs accountable for the effectiveness of their graduates by using data on novice teacher effectiveness.
- Make program approval — and re-approval — contingent on passing rigorous on-site inspections.
- Require institutions to place their student teachers only with classroom teachers deemed to be effective.
- Base state funding on the quality of teacher preparation provided by institutions.
- Set a fixed limit on the number of licenses in each teaching area that will be issued each year.
- Lower tuition for high-need areas such as special education and STEM preparation programs.

### **How the *Review* was conducted**

NCTQ's standards address four critical areas of teacher preparation: 1) the selection criteria used by the institution for admitting candidates, 2) preparation in subject areas, 3) practice teaching, and 4) evidence of institutional outcomes. The full set of standards can be found at [www.nctq.org/teacherPrep/ourApproach/standards](http://www.nctq.org/teacherPrep/ourApproach/standards).

The *Review* includes information on 1,130 institutions, almost all of which house multiple programs (elementary and secondary, graduate and undergraduate), and which together graduate 99 percent of the new, traditionally trained teachers each year.

NCTQ plans to update the *Review* ratings annually and add to the current set of standards. Each standard takes about two years to develop, in collaboration with a technical panel comprised of international and domestic experts on teacher education, faculty and deans from schools of education, statistical experts and PK-12 leaders.

The *Review* is financed by contributions of \$4.8 million from 65 private foundations across the country including eight in Massachusetts. It was also broadly endorsed by PK-12 educators, with

support from 24 state chiefs, over 100 district superintendents, the 65-member school districts of the Council of Great City Schools, and almost 80 education, children's, civil rights, and business advocacy groups across 42 states and Washington, DC. Endorsers in Massachusetts include Mr. Mitchell Chester, Commissioner of Education; Dr. Carol Johnson, Superintendent of Boston Public School; and the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education.

"The findings echo what teachers themselves have been saying about the quality of their preparation and should be a wake-up call to school districts, states and teaching programs," said Evan Stone, co-founder and co-CEO of Educators 4 Excellence. "It's time to dramatically rethink how we prepare educators for the classroom so that the skills they obtain in teaching programs are aligned with the real world experiences they will face. Teachers are driven to succeed for their students and want to be held accountable, but it's increasingly clear they lack the training and support necessary to reach their potential."

To access the national report: [http://nctq.org/dmsStage/Teacher\\_Prep\\_Review\\_2013\\_Report](http://nctq.org/dmsStage/Teacher_Prep_Review_2013_Report)

For findings and program ratings in Massachusetts see:

[www.nctq.org/teacherPrep/findings/stateFindings.do?state=MA](http://www.nctq.org/teacherPrep/findings/stateFindings.do?state=MA)

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### ***About NCTQ***

*The National Council on Teacher Quality advocates for reforms in a broad range of teacher policies at the federal, state and local levels in order to increase the number of effective teachers.*

*We are committed to lending transparency and increasing public awareness about the four sets of institutions that have the greatest impact on teacher quality: states, teacher preparation programs, school districts and teachers unions.*