A Closer Look at Selection Criteria
Secondary Undergraduate Programs

Key Finding: Only a quarter of the 717 programs evaluated ensure that they draw most of their aspiring teachers from the top-half of the college-going population — including 88 programs that are both selective and diverse.

Why teacher prep programs should have strong selection criteria
Sixty years of research and evidence from nations whose students outperform American students demonstrate that raising the selection criteria of teacher preparation programs will help improve the effectiveness of new teachers. This analysis examined the admissions requirements for undergraduate teacher candidates to determine if the requirements help ensure that programs draw from the top half of the college-going population. Programs earn an A or better if they ensure that their candidates come from the top half of the college-going population, as measured by whether the institution housing the program is selective or whether the program takes proactive measures to set high admissions standards. Programs earning an A+ do this while maintaining a diverse teacher candidate cohort, proving that selectivity need not come at the expense of diversity.

For more information about analysis and program grades, including how programs’ GPA requirements are evaluated, see the Methodology in brief and Understanding program grades sections below.

How likely are undergraduate secondary programs to select aspiring teachers from the top half of students?
(N=717 undergraduate secondary teacher prep programs)
Paths to being a selective teacher prep program

Half of programs (53 percent) are housed in institutions that are highly or moderately selective (earning an A or B), based on their average SAT or ACT scores or other measures, such as Barron’s ratings. Programs that are housed in less selective institutions must take active steps to ensure that they predominantly admit aspiring teachers from the top half of the college-going population. Only a fraction of all programs (4 percent) are proactively selective, admitting cohorts of teacher candidates with high standardized test scores or setting a high minimum GPA for admission despite being housed in a less selective institution. However, nearly half of all programs (43 percent) do not take these measures, to ensure that their incoming candidates are among the top half of college students.

Comparing programs

The 2014 Teacher Prep Review found 36 percent of programs were sufficiently selective. Since then, we have raised the criteria for this standard to reflect new research and accreditation standards, and now 26 percent of programs are sufficiently selective.

One area of progress is in the minimum GPAs programs set for admission. We evaluated programs’ GPA requirements only if they did not earn an A for the selectivity of their institutions. For this reason, we collected GPA data for only a subset of programs. Of those, we collected these data in both 2014 and 2016 for 298 programs. A comparison of these data reveals that 54 programs now require at least a 3.0 GPA for admission into the program, compared with 30 programs in 2014, representing a small but notable improvement. These programs are among those taking additional steps to ensure that their teacher candidates meet acceptable admissions standards.

The distribution of grades for undergraduate secondary programs is virtually the same as for undergraduate elementary.

1 These programs earn an A or B based on the selectivity of their institution.
2 These programs earn an A or B based on the selectivity of admission into the teacher prep program.
3 These programs earn a C or lower on Selection Criteria.
4 For more on how and why this standard has changed, visit a brief on this topic here.
5 Programs can also demonstrate that the cohort average GPA is high.
6 While programs only earn a C on Selection Criteria for setting a 3.0 GPA minimum, this finding nonetheless represents a positive trend of programs moving toward a higher bar for admissions.
A closer look at diversity

Programs that are selective and diverse earn an A+

Programs earn an A+ when they are both selective and maintain a level of racial diversity that is the same or greater than that of the institution itself, or of the teacher workforce in the state. Previously, programs could earn an A+ (then called Strong Design) through two pathways: by being selective and racially diverse compared with the diversity of the institution or by being selective based on multiple measures (GPA and standardized test scores). Of the 186 programs that earn an A on selection criteria, 88 programs earned “Strong Design” status based on this updated measure of selectivity and diversity, as opposed to 44 programs in 2014.

Select and diverse programs

AZ  Arizona State University  NY  Barnard College
AZ  University of Arizona  NY  CUNY – Hunter College
AR  John Brown University  NY  College of Mount Saint Vincent
CA  University of Redlands  NY  Columbia University
FL  University of Central Florida  NY  Manhattan College
FL  University of Miami  NC  Guilford College
IL  DePaul University  NC  University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
IL  Knox College  OH  John Carroll University
IL  University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  OH  Miami University of Ohio
IN  Goshen College  OH  University of Cincinnati
IN  Indiana University – Bloomington  OH  University of Dayton
IN  Purdue University  OR  Linfield College
IN  Saint Mary's College  OR  University of Portland
KS  Benedictine College  PA  Arcadia University
KS  Newman University  PA  Bucknell University
KY  Asbury University  PA  Elizabethtown College
KY  University of Louisville  PA  Grove City College
MA  Boston College  PA  Juniata College
MA  Mount Holyoke College  PA  Messiah College
MA  Simmons College  PA  Misericordia University
MA  Stonehill College  PA  Pennsylvania State University
MI  Calvin College  PA  Saint Joseph’s University
MI  Michigan State University  PA  Susquehanna University
MN  College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University  PA  University of Scranton
MN  Gustavus Adolphus College  PA  Villanova University
MN  St. Olaf College  RI  Providence College
MN  University of Minnesota – Duluth  SC  College of Charleston
MN  University of Minnesota – Morris  TN  Freed-Hardeman University
MN  University of Northwestern – St. Paul  TN  Lipscomb University
MN  University of St. Thomas  TN  Maryville College
MO  Maryville University of St. Louis  TX  LeTourneau University
MO  Rockhurst University  TX  Rice University
MO  St. Louis University  TX  St. Edward's University
MO  University of Missouri – St. Louis  TX  Texas Christian University
MO  Westminster College  TX  Texas Southern University
MO  William Jewell College  TX  University of St. Thomas
MO  William Woods University  UT  Brigham Young University
MT  Carroll College  UT  University of Utah
MT  Montana State University  VT  Saint Michael's College
NE  Creighton University  VT  University of Vermont
NE  University of Nebraska – Lincoln  WA  Seattle Pacific University
NJ  College of New Jersey  WA  Western Washington University
NJ  Seton Hall University

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Methodology in brief

We look at admissions requirements to see if aspiring teachers are strong students — in the top half academically of college-goers. For undergraduate programs, we note the average SAT/ACT scores of the university overall, the minimum required GPA to enroll in the teaching program, and the average GPA of the program’s students upon enrollment. Click here to read more.

Understanding program grades on Selection Criteria

A+ The program is both selective (highly likely to draw almost all potential teachers from the top half of students) and diverse, as measured by:
- an institutional average SAT or ACT score in the 70th percentile; other measures of selectivity such as Barrons rankings of “most competitive”; or, a program average SAT or ACT scores at the 60th percentile and
- its relative diversity compared to the diversity of the institution or the state’s teacher workforce.

A The program is highly likely to draw almost all potential teachers from the top half of students, as measured by:
- an institutional average SAT or ACT score in the 70th percentile or better, or by other measures of selectivity such as Barrons rankings of “most competitive;” or,
- program average SAT or ACT scores at the 60th percentile.

B The program is likely drawing a majority of potential teachers from the top half of students, as measured by:
- an institutional average SAT or ACT score in the 60th percentile or better, or by other measures of selectivity such as Barrons rankings of “highly competitive;”
- program average SAT or ACT scores at the 50th percentile;
- minimum GPA requirements of 3.3; or,
- cohort average GPA requirements of 3.5.

C The program likely draws a moderate number of potential teachers from the top half of students, as measured by:
- an institutional average SAT or ACT score in the 50th percentile or better or by other measures of selectivity such as Barrons rankings of “very competitive;”
- minimum GPA requirements of 3.0; or,
- cohort average GPA requirements of 3.3.

D The program likely draws a small number of potential teachers from the top half of students, as measured by:
- Barrons rankings of “competitive;” or,
- minimum GPA requirements of 2.75.

F The program is unlikely to draw more than a few potential teachers from the top half of students, as measured by:
- the institution not requiring an ACT or SAT score, Barrons rankings of “less competitive” or “noncompetitive;” or,
- minimum GPA requirements of less than 2.75.