



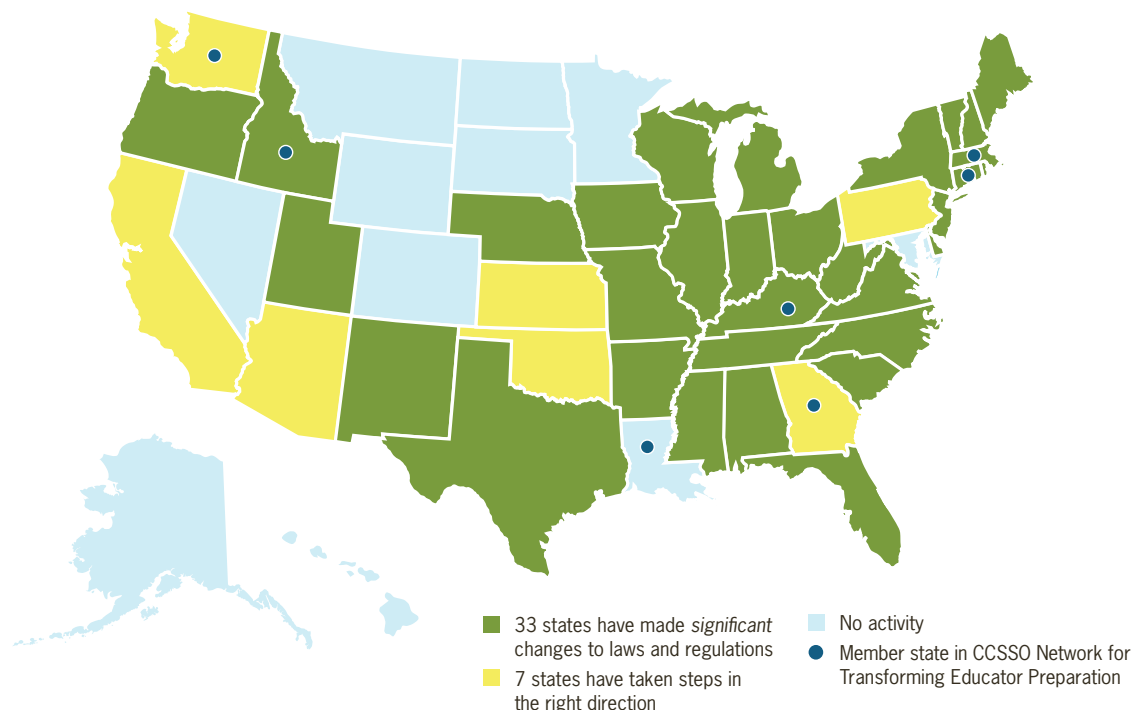
I. Introduction

One year ago, NCTQ released the first edition of the *Teacher Prep Review*, sparking a national debate over how to improve what is at best a mediocre teacher preparation system in the United States. More than 1,000 news stories were published within 48 hours of the report's release. The report clearly struck a chord, shedding light on how much work needs to be done to give teachers the training they need to be classroom-ready upon graduation.

What happened after the media frenzy around the release died down is more important. The *Review* succeeded in moving to the top of the public agenda the need to reform teacher preparation as a way to strengthen our educational system. The drum beat was steady and persistent. A month after the *Review's* release, four California superintendents penned a passionate op-ed calling the *Review* "a roadmap for improvement." In September 2013, *New York Times* columnist Joe Nocera argued that teacher prep is precisely the reform movement on which people should be focused, followed just a month later by Bill Keller, who used our well-coined term "industry of mediocrity" as the title for his own op-ed about teacher preparation.

Teacher preparation has also become an agenda item for state school boards and legislatures, with 33 states passing significant new oversight laws or regulations and another seven states starting to make inroads over the last two years (see textbox on page 9). In addition, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is currently leading an initiative to help seven states develop stronger program approval standards. In terms of changes that have been achieved, Delaware and Rhode Island are standouts, both raising the bar of entry into the profession. It has been a refreshing turn of events, given that teacher preparation had been largely sidelined as an issue, even though the broader issue of teacher quality had been the "hot" topic in education reform for much of the decade.

Fig. 3 Big movement on the state teacher prep policy front



In the last two years, 33 states made significant changes in teacher prep policy and another 7 states made minor policy changes. The level of activity is all the more noteworthy as there was almost no activity in at least the preceding six years, when NCTQ started tracking this issue. For example, in 2009 not a single state required elementary teacher candidates to pass a strong multi-subject content test that would not allow a high score in one subject to compensate for a low score in another. Now 19 states have adopted such a test.

The Obama Administration has also acted, announcing in April 2014 its intention to beef up accountability measures for teacher preparation and restrict grant money only to high-performing programs. Education Secretary Arne Duncan noted, “Programs that are producing teachers where students are less successful, they either need to change or do something else, go out of business.”¹

The Review did not fade quickly from public attention largely because it resonated with the experiences of many educators who felt their own preparation had failed them. Esther Cepeda, formerly a Chicago teacher specializing in bilingual education and now a columnist, asked “What other profession, effectively, tells its graduates that they can live on love?”² Maria Mendez, a Miami-Dade public school teacher, pointed out that “classrooms are changing; the teaching profession is changing and traditional teacher prep has done little to keep up.”³

The generally low ratings earned by most institutions in the first Review fueled an already tense relationship between NCTQ and much of the field of teacher education. A healthy and civil debate can and should be had about our methodology, including our data collection methods and our insistence that institutions cannot “opt out” of participating. So too should there be a public debate about the standards that form the basis of the Review, the research behind them, and whether they collectively capture what truly matters. NCTQ welcomes ongoing feedback about our approach from all interested parties, including, and especially, the higher education community.



Improving teacher preparation is now a big priority for states

Although teacher effectiveness policies have dominated states' attention over the last few years, states are now turning their focus to teacher preparation policies. In fact, 33 states made significant improvements to their teacher preparation policies in the two-year period, 2011-2013.

- 8 states (**Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Indiana, Kentucky, New Jersey, New York** and **North Carolina**) made improvements that helped them to earn a full letter grade higher in the *2013 State Teacher Policy Yearbook* than in 2011.
- **Rhode Island** made so much progress that it improved by two full letter grades — from a D+ to a B+ — in that interval.

What kind of changes are states making?

Increased screening for entry into teacher preparation:

- **29 states now require a test of academic proficiency as an entry requirement** for teacher preparation programs, up from 21 states in 2011.
- In **Delaware**, new legislation unanimously passed that raises the state's admission standards to the highest in the country, also strengthening standards and accountability requirements.
- **Rhode Island** adopted new standards for teacher preparation programs that require that each cohort or class of candidates scores in the top half and ultimately the top third of college entrance exam-takers.

Improved testing of content knowledge:

- **The District of Columbia and 18 states (Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Vermont** and **West Virginia)** now require an elementary content test with separate passing scores for each core subject as a condition of licensure. In 2009, *not a single state* had such a requirement.
- **Iowa** now requires that middle and secondary teachers pass comprehensive content tests as a condition of licensure.

Ensuring that teachers know how to teach early reading:

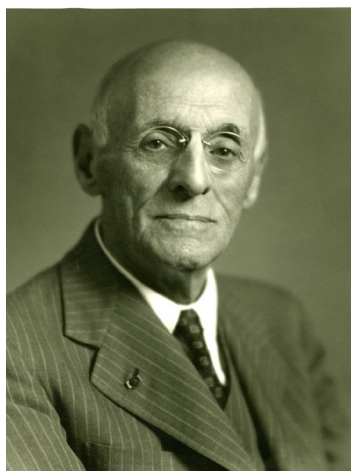
- **17 states** now require assessments to ensure that elementary teacher candidates understand effective reading instruction. The new states are **California, Florida, Indiana, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, West Virginia** and **Wisconsin**.

Making the student teaching experience matter:

- **32 states** now require the student teaching experience to be an adequate length, up from 29 in 2011. The new states are **Delaware, Georgia**, and **Missouri**.
- **5 states (Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Rhode Island** and **Tennessee)** now require that student teachers only be assigned to cooperating teachers who have been found to meet some measure of effectiveness, up from 2 in 2011.

Setting measurable expectations for programs:

In **North Carolina**, value-added data that connect student achievement data to preparation programs is now part of programs' report cards. Ten states now connect student achievement data to teacher preparation programs.



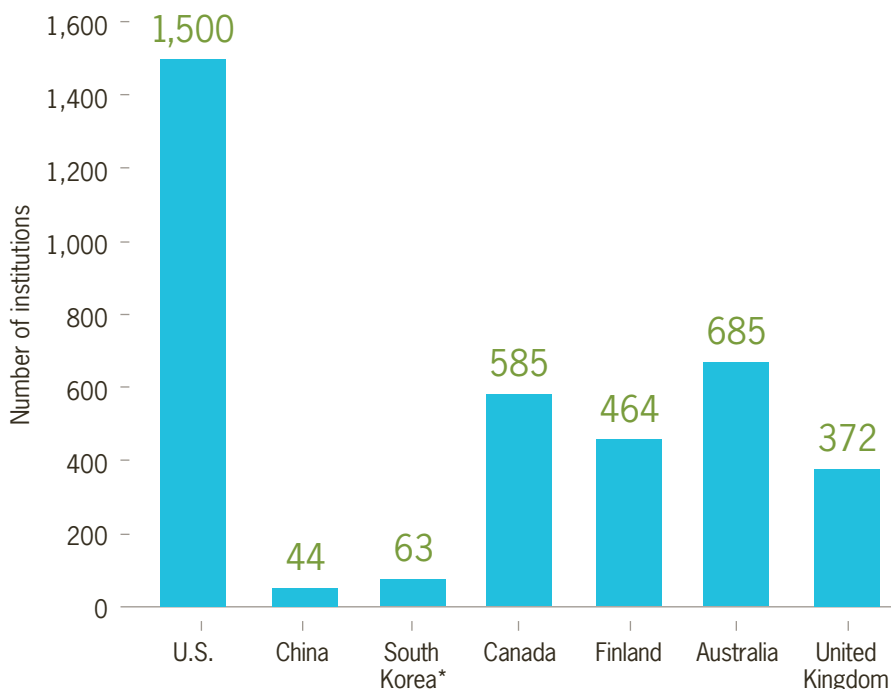
The model for NCTQ's *Teacher Prep Review* is the famous 1910 "Flexner Report" in which Abraham Flexner, a former school headmaster, rated all 155 medical schools in North America. His painstakingly graphic critiques pointed to massive problems. Ten years later, a third of such schools were closed or merged with other institutions. More important, a substandard system of medical training was transformed into the world's finest.

Nonetheless, the *Review's* overall finding that four out of five teacher preparation programs are weak or even failing has not come as a big surprise to most of us, including many teacher educators, even if our methodology was seen as wanting. As John Merrow of the PBS Newshour observed, "It's a little bit like going to the doctor for your physical and she says, 'oh you don't have to bother coming into the office. Just walk by my window.' In this case the patient, teacher education, is limping and coughing badly, and the doctor probably can say something is wrong."⁴ In 2010, Nancy Zimpher, Chancellor of the State University of New York system, said that the teacher preparation field needed to be turned "upside down."⁵ And Sharon Robinson, president of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), recently stated that "if we [teacher prep] weren't so embattled on all sides, I would have to be out there inciting its reform."⁶

We recognize that the very elements that make the field so ill at ease with and ferocious in its criticism of NCTQ's *Review* also make this work so meaningful. Unlike any of the numerous past critiques of the field, NCTQ did not grant programs the luxury of anonymity. Following in the footsteps of Abraham Flexner, whose famous 1910 study of all 155 medical schools in North America revealed that all but one did a substandard job training doctors, the *Review* names names. Shining such a harsh spotlight on programs is highly motivating to them. But teacher educators understandably felt that the tactic opened them up to criticism that verged on the personal.

NCTQ believes that the more closely institutions look at NCTQ's methodology, the more they will see that we share much common ground. Our analyses of the root causes of the field's weaknesses and our proposed solutions are strikingly similar to their own assessments. To begin, there is general agreement that, as currently structured, the enormous size of the field makes it all but ungovernable. With just shy of 1,500 U.S. institutions of higher education (IHEs) housing an average of five relatively autonomous teacher preparation programs (one might even call them fiefdoms, so independent are their operations), there are simply too many institutions in the business of preparing teachers for *any* effort to enforce reasonable standards to succeed — unless we can fully engage the unparalleled power of the marketplace. Only by arming aspiring teachers and school districts with the knowledge necessary to distinguish among programs can the field be moved in the right directions.

Fig. 4 Number of distinct institutions preparing teachers for primary/secondary system, adjusted to the U.S. population



* For South Korea, the number of institutions refers to elementary only. For sources see endnote #7.

Even after adjusting for population differences, the U.S. generally has many times more institutions involved in teacher preparation than do other countries. For example, Canada has 60 percent fewer institutions per capita. NCTQ does not include 343 institutions in the Review because collectively they produce less than 1 percent of the nation's traditionally trained teachers — some of them graduating only a couple of teachers a year.

Looking within our borders, the field of teacher education stands out for its poor governance. Other professional fields use a strong accreditation system to bring order to member institutions. In engineering, nursing, medicine, law and accounting, training institutions cannot be viable without accreditation, because their graduates simply would not be employable. Yet professional accreditation has not been able to gain a foothold in the field of teacher education. It may be the only field of professional study in which it is genuinely a matter of institutional choice, and not necessarily an attractive one, to seek accreditation.

In spite of herculean efforts over a period of two decades by NCATE⁹ and TEAC¹⁰ (the two recently merged teacher accreditation bodies) to make accreditation mandatory, more than half of all programs remain unaccredited. The fact that unaccredited institutions can attract students and those students are just as likely to get teaching jobs as those graduating from accredited institutions is a tremendous source of frustration in the field. The primary challenge for the new accrediting body CAEP¹¹ is to make accreditation relevant and

Though only about half as big in both land area and population, Singapore provides a useful comparison with New York City. That country relies on a single school of education to meet its demand for new teachers. New York City, on the other hand, hired its new teachers for the 2012-2013 school year from no fewer than 300 schools of education across the country.⁸

More than half of the teacher preparation programs in the U.S. currently lack professional accreditation, relying only on their college's or university's general – and insufficiently focused – accreditation status to certify their quality.

therefore highly desirable. Starting from such a low level of participation, CAEP's immediate path forward is a difficult one; but if it can make headway in the face of fierce criticism by some of the most important figures in the field, its long-term role could be secured.

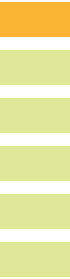
Finding common ground in other areas is harder, but not impossible.

Many teacher educators and others from the higher education community do not believe that an organization like NCTQ, one that is outside the academy, should have the right to review programs within. We accept our share of responsibility for a relationship that has sometimes been contentious; our resolve to complete the *Review* has been relentless, and not always sufficiently sensitive. As outsiders, we do not always observe the academy's conventions, and that undoubtedly contributed to a mistrust of our motivations, particularly among leaders in the field who considered themselves in its vanguard, but whose programs may have received a low rating.

But it is important for these institutions to know that NCTQ believes deeply in a system of teacher preparation based primarily in higher education. We strive for the highest degree of accuracy and reliability in our evaluations and want to work collaboratively with the field to improve it.

Take the controversial issue of whom to allow into teacher preparation programs. All participants in this debate (including NCTQ at times) have tended to retreat into hardened positions, inflaming rather than resolving this sensitive and complex issue. Some emphasize the importance of intelligence and would limit how intelligence should be measured to a narrow band of college aptitude tests. Opposing arguments from others, at least taken to the only possible conclusion, appear to suggest that the smarter someone is, the less likely he or she is to love children and belong in teaching. Our own view, much evolved over time and nicely aligned with the new CAEP standards, is that teachers should be reasonably smart. However, after that threshold is passed, there doesn't seem to be much evidence that someone qualified to enroll at Harvard is going to be any better in the classroom than someone who has a solid B average and attends the local college.

Varying camps are also closer on the issue of analyzing the collective results of program graduates, as measured by student test scores, to assess program quality. Although we don't go as far as some critics who argue that such data are invalid, we believe that high-stakes decisions about programs cannot be made solely on the basis of test scores of graduates' students, any more than the data should be used alone for the purpose of evaluating K-12 teachers. For one thing, the statistical power of models using test score data can do



little more currently than identify the very best and the very worst programs, shedding little light on the mass of programs in the middle. But even more important, outcome data alone can't tell program personnel or regulators what they need to do to improve.

Evaluating preparation programs based on student results is an important reform, but it is a limited reform, as most preparation programs achieve relatively similar statistical outcomes. We have evidence of what strategies work in educator recruitment, selection, and preparation. Comprehensive approaches will thus address not just statistical measurement but also the quality of what actually goes on in preparation programs day in and day out.

– John White, Superintendent of Education
Louisiana

“Ed reformers” and teacher educators: two sides of the same coin?

What may not be appreciated is that our position runs counter to cherished beliefs found in our own tribe of the education reform movement. Although education reformers may welcome NCTQ's harsh critique of teacher preparation, they have tended not to share our position that formal teacher preparation *can* and *should* matter. Paradoxically enough, the fact that new teachers enter the classroom ill-prepared for what awaits them, while acknowledged by all as unfortunate, serves the political agenda of both teacher education and education reformers alike.

Both teacher educators and reformers tend to propose solutions that begin *after* the candidate has graduated and becomes the teacher of record (e.g., increasing supports, adding more professional development, and finding less challenging placements). Critics of teacher preparation argue that teaching can only be learned on the job, that learning loss and high attrition can perhaps be mitigated, but not much more.

For their part, a substantial portion of teacher educators believe it to be professionally irresponsible to use the time spent in preservice preparation to prepare the novice teacher for a seamless transition from student teacher to teacher of record. A majority of programs studiously avoid any content that suggests that their role is to “train” teacher candidates or to suggest that there is a right (or wrong) way to teach. Anything that might reduce a teacher's latitude and ability to make professional choices in the context of each unique classroom is off the table (which explains the aversion to focusing on any specific curricula). Anything that appears to be focused on training is perceived to increase the risk of a school of education being seen as a vocational entity. As one dean recently put it when talking about preparing teachers to teach to

The fact that new teachers enter the classroom ill-prepared for what awaits them serves the political agenda of both teacher education and education reformers alike.

“Airline pilots don’t say, ‘My first few years of flying I was a wreck.’ That needs to be gone from teacher preparation.”

– Deborah Loewenberg Ball,
Dean School of Education,
University of Michigan¹³

the Common Core State Standards: “We can teach awareness of the Common Core, but prepping kids to teach it moves into job-specific training, which is unrelated to teaching and learning in an academic sense... If we start doing that as teacher-educators, we’re no longer a profession.”¹²

The current dynamic between education reformers and teacher educators is fascinating because both serve the status quo of teacher preparation so well. They are, in effect, different sides of the same coin: the argument by reformers that the profession should be deregulated, allowing anyone with a college degree to teach, relies on the field of teacher education remaining chaotic and ungovernable, refusing to employ the very preparation methods that are likely to improve its impact. On the flip side, because there is now a widespread assumption that the general incompetence of first-year teachers is unavoidable, teacher educators are given license (particularly by state departments of education) to prepare teachers any way they please, regardless of effectiveness or lack thereof.

What’s new in the *Teacher Prep Review*

This new edition of the *Review* arrives, considerably bigger and, we hope, more user friendly, with some important changes:

- Most notably, we have discarded our system of *ratings* for a system of *rankings*, to make it easier for users of our data to assess relative performance of programs in a crowded market. There are now both national rankings and regional rankings, out of consideration for aspiring teachers’ tendency to attend preparation programs relatively close to home. In addition to a program’s ranking, consumers can compare institutional performance on specific standards (e.g., early reading, classroom management). However, we have discarded the cumbersome stars system [★★★★, ★★★★★, ★★★★★, ★★★★★, ★★★★★] of last year’s edition for the more efficient “Harvey balls” [●, ●, ●, ●, ○].
- The number of institutions whose programs we can evaluate on the core components of teacher preparation — selection, content preparation and practice teaching — has increased by almost 40 percent, from 608 institutions with rankable programs to 836 institutions. Unfortunately, for the most part this increase does not reflect an increase in institutional cooperation. We remain optimistic that we can continue to reverse that trend, with more institutions choosing to cooperate for the next edition.
- An important addition this year is our analysis of 85 secondary alternative certification programs. In general, alternate routes, now training one out of every five teachers in the United States, are a popular but poorly



understood pathway. Despite an intentionally different structure in which candidates learn “on the job” as teachers of record, such programs’ most fundamental features can be rated using much the same methodology as traditional programs. The results of this analysis as presented here should eliminate any speculation that NCTQ is out to dismantle traditional teacher preparation in favor of alternative preparation. If anything, our analysis shows that as a whole, alternative certification is more broken than its traditional counterpart.

- Due to many sensible suggestions from teacher educators, we have made adjustments to several of our standards: selection criteria, classroom management and student teaching. We hope that the productive exchanges of this type will become the norm in the future.

We are committed for the long haul to addressing the issue of poor teacher preparation. Problems that took many decades to create will not be fixed overnight. There are compelling reasons for teacher education to transform itself, in spite of the occasional blustery rhetoric to the contrary. Today’s model of teacher preparation leads to widespread dissatisfaction from public school educators, aggravates the poor regard in which the field is held, and, as a consequence, ramps up interference by outsiders. A sizeable percentage of teacher educators are dissatisfied, as well as frustrated, by the many failed but genuine attempts (including those from within) to introduce greater coherence. It remains to be seen how teacher education will be able to shift away from a model of preparation that no doubt helped some faculty thrive within the confines of the academy. However, by integrating classroom readiness with professional readiness, much of what has plagued the field could be mitigated.

The *Review* gains strength by giving prominence to the genuine success stories taking place in institutions that were previously unknown to some of us. The collective wisdom that teacher educators in these settings have to offer will ultimately transform the nation’s beleaguered system of teacher preparation, resulting in little reason for anyone to ever again hire an untrained teacher.

NCTQ Standards for Teacher Prep Review 2014

Standard 1: Selection Criteria.

The program screens for academic caliber when selecting teacher candidates.

Standard applies to: **Elementary, Secondary and Special Education** programs.

Standard 2: Early Reading.

The program trains teacher candidates to teach reading as prescribed by increasingly rigorous state student learning standards.

Standard applies to: **Elementary** and **Special Education** programs.

Standard 3: English Language Learners.

The program prepares elementary teacher candidates to teach reading to English language learners.

Standard applies to: **Elementary** programs.

Standard 4: Struggling Readers.

The program prepares elementary teacher candidates to teach reading skills to students at risk of reading failure.

Standard applies to: **Elementary** programs.

Standard 5: Elementary Mathematics.

The program prepares teacher candidates to successfully teach to increasingly rigorous state student learning standards for elementary math.

Standard applies to: **Elementary** and **Special Education** programs.

Standard 6: Elementary Content.

The program ensures that teacher candidates have the broad content preparation necessary to successfully teach to increasingly rigorous state student learning standards.

Standard applies to: **Elementary** programs.

Standard 7: Middle School Content.

The program ensures that teacher candidates have the content preparation necessary to successfully teach to increasingly rigorous state student learning standards.

Standard applies to: **Secondary** programs.

Standard 8: High School Content.

The program ensures that teacher candidates have the content preparation necessary to successfully teach to increasingly rigorous state standards for college and career readiness.

Standard applies to: **Secondary** programs.

Standard 9: Content for Special Education.

The program ensures that teacher candidates' content preparation aligns with increasingly rigorous state student learning standards in the grades they are certified to teach.

Standard applies to: **Special Education** programs.

Standard 10: Classroom Management.

The program ensures that teacher candidates practice specific techniques for managing the classroom.

Standard applies to: **Elementary, Secondary and Special Education** programs.

Standard 11: Lesson Planning.

The program trains teacher candidates how to plan lessons that enhance the academic performance of all students.

Standard applies to: **Elementary** and **Secondary** programs.

Standard 12: Assessment and Data.

The program trains teacher candidates how to assess learning and use student performance data to inform instruction.

Standard applies to: **Elementary** and **Secondary** programs.

Standard 13: Equity.

The program ensures that teacher candidates experience schools that are successful serving students who have been traditionally underserved.

Standard applies to: **Institutions**.

Standard 14: Student Teaching.

The program ensures that teacher candidates have a strong student teaching experience.

Standard applies to: **Elementary, Secondary and Special Education** programs.

Standard 15: Secondary Methods.

The program requires teacher candidates to practice instructional techniques specific to their content area.

Standard applies to: **Secondary** programs.

Standard 16: Instructional Design for Special Education.

The program trains candidates to design instruction for teaching students with special needs.

Standard applies to: **Special Education** programs.

Standard 17: Outcomes.

The program and institution collect and monitor data on their graduates.

Standard applies to: **Elementary, Secondary and Special Education** programs.

Standard 18: Evidence of Effectiveness.

The program's graduates have a positive impact on student learning.

Standard applies to: **Elementary** and **Secondary** programs in institutions in states with adequate data models.

Standard 19: Rigor. (Fall 2014)

The program holds teacher candidates to the same or a higher level of expectations regarding coursework and grading standards as that to which students in the rest of the institution are held.

Standard applies to undergraduate **Elementary, Secondary and Special Education** programs.