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UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS RANKS AMONG NATION'S BEST, NATIONAL COUNCIL ON TEACHER QUALITY REPORTS

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS EARNS A+ ON SELECTION CRITERIA

Washington DC – Today, the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) released new ratings for 875 undergraduate elementary teacher preparation programs. The latest *Teacher Prep Review* found evidence that the nation's top programs--those that graduate teachers well versed in both evidence-based content and methods of teaching--are not all the nation's best known elite universities, but include the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Although the report only evaluates two undergraduate elementary teacher preparation programs in Alaska, one of these, the University of Alaska Fairbanks, ranks in the 99th percentile nationally. The institution earns an A+ grade on its selection criteria, and A grades in Student Teaching and Classroom Management. In comparison, only three percent of programs evaluated nationally received an A grade in Student Teaching.

Having last released ratings in 2014, NCTQ is able to report strong progress nationally in some areas:

- **Programs are doing a better job teaching reading instruction.** Since 2006, NCTQ has focused on early reading instruction more than any other issue. Now we found the number of programs teaching research-based reading instruction is up to 39 percent, a sharp rise from 29 percent in 2014.
- **A number of programs are adopting tougher admissions standards.** Only a quarter (26 percent) of programs generally limit incoming teacher candidates to the top half of college-goers. At institutions without strong admissions requirements, the number of undergraduate elementary teacher prep programs requiring at least a 3.0 GPA for admission has increased from 44 in 2014 to 71 today.
- **Half of all selective programs are also diverse,** showing that diversity and selectivity can go hand in hand. These [113 programs](#) are recruiting new cohorts of teacher candidates who are more racially diverse than the institution at large or the state's teacher workforce.

NCTQ President Kate Walsh stated that, “The biggest winners here are of course future teachers and the children they will one day teach, but also the programs themselves. They are showing a willingness to change to better meet the needs of public schools. Programs who demonstrate a willingness to adopt an evidence-based model of teacher preparation are leading the way for others to follow.”

Despite these gains, undergraduate elementary teacher prep programs still have far to go, particularly in placing greater emphasis on recruiting students who demonstrate strong academic aptitude. Because teaching is so demanding, teachers need to be agile, quick thinkers and problem solvers, capable of making hundreds of spontaneous decisions every hour. Yet this analysis found far too many programs (44 percent) fail to ensure that their incoming candidates are among the top-half of college students.

“So much of what teachers do in their first years relies on what they learned in their preparation programs,” said Arne Duncan, former Secretary of Education. “I am quite happy to see signs of movement being made by programs and hope they use the results of this *Review* to guide their further improvement.”

Other areas where programs can improve nationally include:

- Elementary Math - There's little movement in this critical area since 2014, with only 13 percent of programs providing coursework that covers the essential math topics elementary teachers need to master.
- Elementary Content - Only a tiny percent of programs (5 percent) require aspiring teachers to be exposed to the full breadth of content needed to teach the elementary curriculum, including literature, history, geography, and science. For the most part, programs either fail to require any courses in the content or allow candidates to select courses from a long list of electives, many bearing no connection to the content taught in elementary grades.
- Student Teaching - Student teaching serves as a capstone experience, offering a teacher candidates a chance to learn and practice under the guidance of a veteran teacher. However, only 5 percent of programs incorporate the elements of a quality student teaching experience. The vast majority of programs (around 93 percent) accept cooperating teachers suggested by a school district, without knowing much about that teacher's effectiveness or mentoring ability.
- Classroom Management - New teachers, in particular, find classroom management consistently challenging. But less than half of all programs (42 percent) give candidates sufficient feedback on their classroom performance.

Another former Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, now President of the University of North Carolina system, also commented, “These findings serve as reminder to me and my colleagues in higher education that we have a tremendous obligation to our public schools and future teachers. We must and can do better.”

This *Review* only analyzed undergraduate programs preparing elementary school teachers in this release. Over the next two years, NCTQ will release updated ratings for undergraduate secondary, graduate and nontraditional elementary, graduate and nontraditional secondary, and undergraduate and graduate special education programs.

To read the *Landscape* report, click [here](#). To schedule an interview with Ms. Walsh, please contact Stephen Buckley at (202) 393-0020 ext. 129.

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About the National Council on Teacher Quality:

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) is a nonpartisan research and policy group, committed to modernizing the teaching profession and based on the belief that all children deserve effective teachers. NCTQ is the nation's expert on the quality of teacher preparation programs and evaluates national teacher education against evidence-based criteria. More information about NCTQ can be found on our website, www.nctq.org

"As an educator, I know that one of the strongest in-school influences on students is the teacher in front of the classroom. As a nation, there is so much more we can do to help prepare our teachers and create a diverse educator workforce. Prospective teachers need good information to select the right program; school districts need access to the best trained professionals for every opening in every school; and preparation programs need feedback about their graduates' experiences in schools to refine their programs. These regulations will help strengthen teacher preparation so that prospective teachers get off to the best start they can, and preparation programs can meet the needs of students and schools for great educators."

--U.S. Secretary of Education, John B. King Jr.