



One Voice for Education



Governor Ralph Northam
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, Virginia 23218

October 19, 2018

Dear Governor Northam:

We, the members of the Virginia Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (VACTE) and the Association of Teacher Educators in Virginia (ATE-VA), who represent all 36 educator preparation programs in Virginia, respectfully request your attention and action to barriers/challenges that are directly/indirectly affecting educator education programs and impeding our efforts to address the teacher shortage across the Commonwealth. We collectively voice our concerns about the following four barriers/challenges: the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), lack of a statewide data collection system, need for a statewide marketing/recruiting campaign, and alternatives to professional assessments.

CAEP is the national accreditation agency tasked with the review, evaluation, and accreditation of all educator preparation programs in the Commonwealth. In 2016, the Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) delegated authority to CAEP for the accreditation of educator preparation programs in the Commonwealth. We knew there would be growing pains associated with the adoption of a new accreditation system; however, we were not prepared for CAEP to be plagued by continued organizational failures. CAEP has failed to provide consistent standards or consistent practices and has had higher than expected costs, poor communications, high turnover of staff, and insufficient capacity necessary to satisfactorily meet its intended purpose. As a result of these impediments, we collectively recommend that the VBOE suspend CAEP accreditation visits for a period of two years. Our hope is that CAEP will use the 2-year window to address the internal issues that are preventing satisfactory operations. Teacher Education Programs in the Commonwealth are committed to providing high-quality training for future teachers. We understand the value of a national accreditation system, and we are eager to demonstrate the grit and rigor required to meet national standards; however, we cannot be silent while our programs are at the mercy of an inadequate process.

Data collection is a vital and necessary part of educator quality and program improvement. We are in desperate need of a statewide data collection system. Over the past five years, educator preparation programs have extended data collection to include three years after students have completed teacher education programs. Current data systems are school-based and do not have the outreach or capacity to collect data after graduation where graduates accept teaching positions across the Commonwealth. A data collection system designed to collect timely data on employment, teacher performance, K-12 student assessment data, which includes data from surveys of program completers and from their employers, would be very beneficial. We believe this data would provide not only an accurate evaluation of teacher

quality but also reliable information that can be used for program improvement and accreditation purposes.

There is a teacher shortage in Virginia, and the demand for new teachers is outpacing the supply. In an effort to increase awareness of the benefits of the teaching profession and careers in education, we recommend funding provided to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to establish a statewide teacher marketing campaign aimed at attracting college students to the profession. Educator preparation programs in the Commonwealth are experiencing reductions in initial enrollment and fewer numbers of completers. All institutions have local recruiting programs to attract potential teacher candidates; however, a statewide campaign would reach a wider audience, promote the positive elements of the profession, and provide contact information for potential candidates.

Becoming a certified teacher in Virginia usually requires paying for and passing tests. Teacher candidates must pass standardized tests for entry into educator preparation programs and pass additional tests to meet certification requirements. If educator preparation programs are going to address the teacher shortage, we must reduce the barriers that prevent potential candidates from seeking teacher certification. We believe both the number and the cost of the required assessments are negatively affecting the number of candidates entering and completing educator preparation programs. We suggest the VBOE consider reducing the number of assessments and/or offer alternatives to required assessments.

We remain dedicated to ensuring that higher education institutions continue to meet the highest standards in the preparation of future educators. We welcome the opportunity to talk about the challenges/barriers or the recommendations noted. While we live the educator preparation process every day, we understand that everyone in the Commonwealth is directly/indirectly a part of the education system, and we hope you will support our goal for excellence in educator preparation.

Sincerely,



Dr. John Blackwell, President
Virginia Association of
Colleges of Teacher Education



Dr. Trina Spencer, President
Association of Teacher Educators in Virginia

Cc: Dr. James Lane, Virginia State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Cc: Mr. Atif Qarni, Virginia Secretary of Education
Cc: Mr. Daniel Gecker, Virginia Board of Education
Cc: Ms. Patti Pitts, Virginia Department of Education
Cc: Dr. Patricia Stohr-Hunt, Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure
Cc: Dr. Karen Gallagher, Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation