



NEWS RELEASE

FOR RELEASE:
CONTACT:

Tuesday, April 19, 2016
Patrick Riccards (@Eduflack)
riccards@woodrow.org | (703) 298-8283

WOODROW WILSON FOUNDATION TO ED: LET'S FOCUS ON FUTURE OF TEACHER EDUCATION, NOT JUST FUTURE OF ONLINE PROGRAMS

Response Offered to Federal Call for Additional Comments on How Proposed Teacher Prep Regulations Can, Should Affect Online Providers

PRINCETON, N.J. (April 19, 2016) – In response to call for additional comments regarding online providers and proposed teacher preparation regulations released by the U.S. Department of Education, Arthur Levine, president of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, provided the following to the Federal Registry:

As the U.S. Department of Education looks to determine the most effective ways to judge online programs—part of its larger effort to improve teacher preparation as a whole—it should do so through the lens of what is best for both the prospective educator and the students who will ultimately be in that teacher's care. Whether a traditional bricks-and-mortar institution or a virtual online prep program, any teacher preparation approach must ultimately demonstrate its effectiveness by showing that its graduates know and can do what it takes to advance students' learning.

The years ahead are likely to bring a dramatic expansion in the number and types of education providers. Building on the existing providers, we will continue to see for-profit and not-for-profit; brick, click, and brick and click; local, national, and international; and combinations thereof.

The convergence of knowledge producers will further spur the growth of non-traditional education providers, including online providers. Today, content and technology companies—publishers, software and hardware makers, media companies, libraries, museums, and universities—are all trying to build their market using the same technologies and creating products that look increasingly like courses. It is only a matter of time before these institutions transition from focusing on higher education reforms in general to transformation of teacher preparation in particular.

The expansion of providers will offer students far greater choice in where, what, and how they study. They can now mix and match more readily, studying at a variety of different traditional and non-traditional institutions with differing areas of specialization, length of courses of study, choice of instructional delivery systems, and cost. This, combined with advances in brain research with regard to learning and the development of software tied to those advances, will permit students to select the course of study most consistent with their personal needs and learning styles. Instruction is likely to be available to students 24 hours a day, seven days a week at the location of their choice—on campus, at home, at work, on the commuter train, on vacation, or in a hotel room. Postsecondary education has historically, for the most part, been provider-driven. In years ahead, however, it will become increasingly consumer-driven, particularly in the manner of media. The growth in online teacher education programs is a given in such a dynamic.

This growth also forces regulators to explore new ways to determine the quality and effectiveness of a program. Today, teacher education is largely time-based. The amount of time in a classroom determines the number of credits earned, which when accumulated in sufficient number results in a degree. While such an approach made sense a century ago, as the Industrial Revolution was hitting its stride, the idea of tying teacher preparation to the clock makes less sense today. We recognize that all people learn at different rates and each person learns different subjects at different rates. The teacher preparation programs of the future will need to better appreciate how the competency-based education model works and how to set high standards for it.

What Does This Mean for the Future of Teacher Education

After these teacher preparation regulations are finalized, additional changes are likely to occur. They may occur by gradual evolution or they may be abrupt, but change is coming. And with impending changes coming through the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, there are several accreditation-specific suggestions the U.S. Department of Education can take into account as it looks at institutions of higher education, particularly online providers:

- Expand the scope of programs eligible for accreditation—whether traditional, blended, or online—based more on the choices and needs of students rather than institutional characteristics such as degree-granting status.
- Follow students’ academic careers to gauge the nature of their educational progress in a system in which they may study with multiple providers.
- Develop common standards for regional accrediting associations so that any provider cannot simply shop for the easiest possibility.
- Develop additional categories for accreditation—meets standards, exceeds standards, substantially exceeds standards—in order to go beyond the floor that accrediting currently establishes. This will help to inform consumers and aid institutions in building capacity. Institutions should receive ratings in key areas such as academics, governance and finances, as well as an overall assessment.
- Place primary emphasis on the outcomes of a teacher preparation program, determining what data institutions should provide to regional accreditors and what information to the public. This could be a vehicle for providing more frequent updates to accrediting bodies and reducing the paperwork, hubbub, and cost associated with accreditation.
- Plan for an outcome- or competency-based system of teacher preparation.

In February 2015, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation offered specific assertions regarding the U.S. Department of Education’s plans for enhancing current teacher preparation regulations. While developed with an eye toward teacher education in general, they are particularly important with regard to blended or online providers. They include the following:

Student Outcomes

- One primary indicator of the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs is student outcomes;
- Particularly for those new to the profession, student learning outcomes can help identify the strong and weak in teacher preparation, while offering important data on how specific programs should be improved to meet student learning needs;
- School districts should hold schools of education and other preparation programs accountable for the quality and impact of their graduates;
- Available data from Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowship efforts in Georgia, Indiana, Michigan, New Jersey, and Ohio demonstrate that strong academic preparation, a rich

- clinical experience, and robust mentoring can boost teacher effectiveness and student achievement;
- Unfortunately, student outcome data collected in many states is woefully insufficient to successfully measure the success of teacher education programs; and
 - ED should further incentivize states to identify, collect, and analyze student learning outcomes for all grades in all core subjects.

Employment Outcomes

- Teachers' departure from the profession and their switching between schools are a significant impediment to student achievement, particularly in high-need schools;
- Teacher retention is an essential component to closing the achievement gaps and improving student learning outcomes;
- Teacher persistence is a top priority for the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, and its programs are focused on providing school districts with a pipeline of teachers prepared in the needed subjects;
- Woodrow Wilson's success in keeping its Fellows in high-need schools is a direct result of ensuring that potential educators gain the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed once they become teachers of record: and
- Long-term success in teacher retention demands educator preparation efforts that focus on a year-long master's degree program, a rich clinical experience that places prospective teachers in high-need schools, and robust mentoring that continues for years after a Fellow has become a teacher of record.

School and School District Satisfaction

- By surveying school principals, school district HR officials, and even parents, those involved in the hiring process can better understand which programs are producing teachers who are improving student outcomes and building a larger community of learning; and
- As with educator evaluations, surveys designed to measure the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs are best left to the states to administer, ensuring they are capturing information that best evaluates and compares those institutions of higher education in their respective states.

Program Review and Accreditation

- The standards developed by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) serve as a strong foundation for the Program Review and Accreditation goals called for by ED.

Flexibility to States

- The federal government makes policy through the Higher Education Act, ultimately relying on states to enact it;
- States' willingness to innovate and lead when it comes to education policy is central to meaningful change and improvement;
- States should be encouraged to work directly with their school districts in efforts to strengthen teacher preparation programs, as local districts can provide valuable information on subject areas where they will most need teachers, programs that have been particularly helpful in filling vacancies in high-need schools, and areas for improvement;

- Under federal policies on teacher preparation, states can and should take bold steps to redesign their teacher preparation programs; and
- Woodrow Wilson Foundation successes in states such as Georgia, Indiana, Michigan, New Jersey, and Ohio clearly demonstrate that states are can bring teacher education into the 21st century, ensuring both improved inputs as part of the preparation process and improved outcomes resulting from it.

The views of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation are based on its ongoing experiences working with states to take specific steps to improve teacher education. The Foundation is currently working with five states to strengthen the pipelines to provide excellent teachers for high-need schools. It is also now working in collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to develop a more effective competency-based teacher education model through its Woodrow Wilson Academy of Teaching and Learning.

For more information on the Woodrow Wilson Foundation's work in teacher education or to speak with Arthur Levine, please contact Patrick Riccards at 703-298-8283 or riccards@woodrow.org.

###

About the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation

Founded in 1945, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation (www.woodrow.org) identifies and develops the nation's best minds to meet its most critical challenges. The Foundation supports its Fellows as the next generation of leaders shaping American society.