

11/19/2020

Dear Dr. Darling-Hammond and Transition Team Members,

Investing in educator preparation is essential for the vitality of our workforce and economy, the pursuit of systemic social change, and a rich quality of life for all. Yet, our nation's educator preparation infrastructure remains in crisis. Personnel shortages, high pre-retirement attrition, underrepresentation, poor compensation, insufficient support systems, and rapid and significant enrollment decline in educator preparation programs characterize only a few such dilemmas. The Covid-19 pandemic has only amplified the significance of these challenges and the urgency with which we must work to confront them.

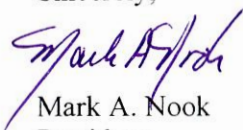
The University of Northern Iowa is a leading educator preparation institution, partnering with schools, districts, and communities to address critical needs while preparing profession-ready educators to make an impact on the lives of young people. Our institution is the predominant contributor to Iowa's educational infrastructure, preparing one-fifth of the state's educator workforce, and educators and districts all across the nation benefit from the groundbreaking work of UNI's Center for Educational Transformation and the scholarship and service of our faculty. We are a strong steward of resources to meet these critical needs; for example, as the nation's seventh largest consumer of the TEACH Grant, we have utilized this program to place more than 1,000 profession-ready educators in the schools that most need them while maintaining a conversion rate that is 40 points below the national average.

We own our responsibility to influence positive and lasting change in research, practice, and policy. That is why we have partnered with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, and the Teacher Education Council of State Colleges and Universities on a ground-up effort to strengthen the federal government's role in educator preparation. To date, our partnership has gathered the input of more than 350 educators, scholars, and presidents and provosts from more than 30 states to develop a policy agenda focused on strengthening the federal government's role in educator preparation. Strategic federal policy action can complement the state's authority to govern its educational enterprise while making meaningful contributions to the growth, diversification, retention, and mentorship of our nation's profession-ready educator workforce.

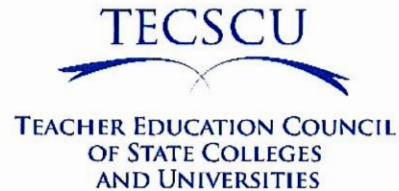
It is our pleasure to introduce this policy agenda to the Education Transition Team. The policy agenda builds on the TEACH Grant, Title IV federal student aid programs, and Title II of the Higher Education Act to advance equity-minded, resonant policy change to equip colleges and universities with the tools to prepare profession-ready educators and help schools address urgent needs.

We welcome a conversation with members of the Education Transition Team as we also work to build a bipartisan, bicameral coalition to achieve significant, lasting change for the success of our nation's educators and the children, schools, and communities they serve. It is our responsibility, and we are ready.

Sincerely,



Mark A. Nook  
President



## Ensuring a Well Prepared and Diverse Educator Workforce

### A New Vision for the Higher Education Act

**Background: Quality educator preparation in America is in crisis.** Rapid and significant enrollment decline in educator preparation programs, early departures from the profession, and significant shortages in high-need subject areas (such as special education, STEM, and ELL) and rural and urban areas name only a few such dilemmas framing the national crisis facing educator preparation. By leveraging federal student aid and the array of programs designed to support educators, the federal government plays a unique and critical role in helping colleges and universities prepare the educator workforce our nation's students, schools, and communities need now and into the future. **These challenges are not new, but our nation is failing to take essential actions required to protect and enhance this critical component to America's social infrastructure.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the crisis with systems of public finance – in both PK-12 and higher education – on the verge of collapse without intervention.. Educator preparation programs are threatened with closures and faculty layoffs while the PK-12 public education workforce has already lost more than 460,000 jobs. **The dilemma of rising demand from the PK-12 sector and shrinking production capacity in our nation's colleges and universities frame a collision course that threatens the future of the high quality education our populace needs for a rich quality of life and to ensure our global competitiveness for generations.** As lawmakers work to respond to the Covid-19 epidemic and enhance our social infrastructure, educator preparation—the work of preparing profession-ready educators—must be a fundamental component of the investments made for the future of our nation.

Since 2019, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, University of Northern Iowa, and Teacher Education Council of State Colleges and Universities have laid the groundwork for a resonant reform agenda on educator preparation. This agenda responds to the critical needs and challenges of our educators and the children, schools, and communities they serve. With the input and support of educators, faculty, government relations professionals, and college and university presidents across the nation, we have cultivated a grassroots policy framework to re-envision our nation's federal architecture of governance on educator preparation. Together, AASCU, AACTE, UNI, and TECSCU are leading a national reform agenda for the future of our nation's profession-ready educator workforce.

Our focus in the proposals below is on changes in the Higher Education Act that will:

- 1) provide incentives to students to enroll in and complete high-quality preparation programs in high need fields at four-year institutions of higher education, particularly students who are currently under-represented in the education profession, and
- 2) authorize investments in higher education educator preparation programs along with critical state and local partners to support and expand innovative and successful practices.

**Proposals:**

**I. Student Financial Aid: Title IV**

**General Provisions**

- Broaden the definition of cost of attendance in the Higher Education Act (HEA), Part F, Section 472 to include an allowance for reasonable costs associated with clinical experiences for students enrolled in an educator preparation program.
- Broaden the current allowance in HEA, Section 472 (13) for the first professional licensure, advanced certifications, or additional endorsements to allow for inclusion of all mandatory assessment fees and credentialing and licensure fees.

**Public Service Loan Forgiveness**

- Modify the teacher loan cancellation program in HEA Section 460 to require the Secretary to make a monthly co-payment for every educator enrolled in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program authorized under HEA Section 455(m) in an amount that, when added to the monthly payment required from the borrower, is equal to the monthly payment amount that would repay the borrower's original balance and accrued interest on the basis of a ten-year amortization schedule. This would significantly address the greatest financial obstacles that turn low- and moderate-income college students away from choosing education as a profession and enable the states and school districts to retain teachers by providing them with real-time financial incentives.
- Mandate annual reports to the Congress by the U.S. Department of Education on the impact of this provision, which shall include data on the participation rate of eligible borrowers, the dollar amount of benefits to participants, and the performance of servicers.

## **TEACH Grants**

### **Provisions to retain:**

- Institutions of higher education must become eligible to offer TEACH Grants.
- Those who utilize TEACH grants are required to teach in high need fields and low-income schools for a total of 4 out of the subsequent 8 years after program completion.
- Only high performing students are eligible for TEACH grants.
- Students are eligible for TEACH grants in all four years of higher education: Freshman, sophomore, junior and senior.
- Students are eligible for TEACH grants in master's programs for up to two years.

### **Provisions to change:**

- Provide a graduated accrual of TEACH Grants for students who complete some, but not all, of the required 4 years of teaching. The loan amount would be prorated based on the number of years of service.
- Provide an extension of up to three years for life events covered under the Family Medical Leave Act.
- Minimize the adverse impact of conversions for all grant recipients by converting TEACH Grants to subsidized, not unsubsidized, loans.
- Provide up to three years of deferment for those whose grants are converted to a loan for grant recipients who are employed as educators but at ineligible schools for meeting the service obligation requirement.
- Provide a reconsideration process for TEACH recipients so they may challenge loan conversion through providing evidence of progress on the service obligation, with ample and appropriate time for the student to obtain and provide the evidence. Should a conversion be found to be erroneous, the loan is converted back to a TEACH grant and the student made whole.
- If a TEACH recipient begins the teaching service obligation in a high need field and low income school, and the field is subsequently removed from the shortage area list and/or the school is no longer a low income school, the recipient can stay in the teaching position and receive credit for it toward the service obligation.
- Impose a maximum threshold on participating institutions for TEACH Grant conversions. Institutions that fail the threshold for three consecutive years would lose eligibility to participate in the program for three years and would need to apply to regain eligibility based on remedial action to prevent recurrence.
- Provide grant recipients flexibility to maintain their benefits by correcting administrative mistakes, missed deadlines, or erroneous paperwork.

- Impose robust administrative oversight requirements and penalties on servicers regarding individual losses of benefits attributable to their failure to properly perform their contractual obligations.
- Mandate annual reports to the Congress to include:
  - The number of grants converted to loans annually
  - The number of grant conversions reversed annually
  - The number of FSA ombudsman contacts and resolutions per year
  - Demographics of recipients including race, ethnicity and gender
- Extend undergraduate TEACH Grant eligibility to five years to enable students to qualify for additional credentials or endorsements.
- Increase the maximum amount of the TEACH award to \$8,000 per year for undergraduates and masters students.
- Do not permit the TEACH grants to be utilized for those seeking an Associates Degree as a terminal degree.
  - Permit the TEACH grants to be utilized for those attending 2-year institutions moving to institutions of higher education to complete an educator preparation program

## II. Title II

No funds provided for any programs in this Title may be used to support a program or system that leads to a full teacher or school leader credential (either licensure or certification) to participants who have not earned at least a Bachelor of Arts degree and have been prepared to be a profession-ready teacher or school leader or other educator.

### **Grants to Institutions of Higher Education; \$500 million authorized**

- Maintain and augment the Teacher Quality Partnership Grant program that is in current law (Title II of HEA).
- Recruitment and Completion Grants which may be used as follows:
  - Programs built to support the needs of underrepresented populations, including first generation students and students with disabilities to ensure completion of the program and entrance into the profession, including services such as:
    - Childcare
    - Cohort support
  - Paying for licensure exams, including re-taking of exams as necessary and the additional preparation to ensure passage of the exams;
  - Partnerships with middle and high schools to develop pipelines into educator preparation programs, with a focus on diversifying the educator profession by recruiting underrepresented populations into the pipeline programs. Options include:

- Developing high school academies with teacher preparation programs tailored to meet the needs of the communities served
    - Connecting middle and high schools to solidify the pipeline of potential educators and crafting scaffolded and supported clinical practice opportunities;
      - Partnerships with community-based organizations to recruit students from underrepresented populations;
      - Partnerships with K-12 to recruit teacher candidates from the classified school employees into the teaching profession.
- Retention of Teachers Grants which may be used as follows:
  - Develop and offer induction and/or mentoring for all novice teachers in high-need school district provided by faculty/staff at IHEs and teacher and school leaders;
  - Develop and offer professional development bringing research to practice for educators in schools of district partners;
  - Develop and offer second endorsement coursework.
- School Leader Professional Development Grants to develop, practice, and support school leaders in:
  - Culturally responsive practices
  - Trauma-informed instruction
  - Preventing and responding to violence in schools
  - Creating an inclusive school for faculty, staff and students, including restorative justice training
- Faculty Professional Development and Training Grants which may be used to develop, practice, and support faculty in a college, school, or department of education in areas of:
  - Culturally Responsive Pedagogy
  - Trauma Informed instruction
  - Creating an inclusive climate for faculty, staff, and students, including restorative justice training
- Consortia Grants to create an academy to support professional development of faculty and staff at IHEs involved in educator preparation;
- Resiliency Grants which may be used to:
  - Expand the use of technology to maximize instruction, for example the use of avatars for clinical practice
  - Reconfigure the educator workforce to develop teams of educators with distributed expertise and unique advancement pathways and roles
- Maintain the Augustus F Hawkins program as it is in current law to support diversifying the educator workforce.
- Maintain the Graduate Fellowships to Prepare Faculty in High Need Areas at Colleges of Education as in current law to support the development of this critical pool of faculty in educator preparation.

**Grants to States – Formula Grant to all states, tribes and territories; \$500 million authorized**

- Grants may be used for the following purposes:
  - Create and expand dual certification programs in special education and general education;
  - Develop or strengthen career ladder positions for educators, such as teacher leaders, with certification requirements and coursework leading to certification;
  - Strengthen and professionalize certification and credentialing so that it aligns with evidence based practices and high professional standards;
  - Develop and implement an equitable state approval system for alternative route program providers and traditional and alternative route programs at IHEs;
  - Support the implementation of evidence-based performance assessments for licensure/certification in the state;
  - Assess the workforce needs of PK-12 across the state and provide the information to institutions of higher education that prepare educators in the state; coordinate and implement a plan to meet the workforce needs in the state in direct partnership with institutions of higher education that prepare educators;
  - Design and implement statewide pre-service residencies for teacher candidates utilizing the model in the Teacher Quality Partnership Grants;
  - Develop and implement a statewide best practice network the preparation of profession-ready educators;
  - Create or expand teaching fellows programs whereby those preparing to be teachers receive tuition waivers in exchange for teaching in one of the identified workforce need areas for a period of years.