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New Accreditor
Gaining Toehold in Teacher Ed.

By Julie Blair

See the accompanying story, "[The Route to TEAC Approval.](#)" May 23, 2001.

Correction: Indiana University canceled its membership with TEAC on May 10 and continues to be a member of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

The Teacher Education Accreditation Council, the self-described renegade that allows programs seeking its approval to set their own standards of quality, has now won a key endorsement: recognition as a national accrediting body by a Washington-based watchdog group.

In a move that supporters say shows the legitimacy of the upstart alternative to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation added TEAC's name this month to its list of more than 25 accreditors deemed worthy of providing rigorous evaluations of collegiate academic programs in their respective fields.

Related stories:

["Ed. Schools Strain To File Report Cards,"](#) March 28, 2001.

"Our critics, while conceding TEAC's clear benefits ... have argued that TEAC's system has nothing to do with accreditation," said Frank B. Murray, the president of the Teacher Education Accreditation Council, which has offices in Washington and Newark, Del. "TEAC's recognition by CHEA has settled that question. The CHEA recognition also gives confidence to our members that they are affiliated with a system that is on the cutting edge of the accreditation field."

["Foundation To Study Preparation of Teachers,"](#) March 21, 2001

Allies of TEAC, incorporated in 1997, have hailed the group as an innovator. They contend that it frees teacher-preparation programs from unnecessary requirements established by NCATE, while keeping programs accountable to tough judges.

["Mo. University Switches Teacher Ed.](#)

[Accreditation Allegiance,](#) April 7, 1999.

The group's many critics, however, argue that the CHEA endorsement does not validate an accreditation model they consider weak. Accountability is lost, they say, when schools are permitted to set their own standards of quality rather than subscribing to those devised by outside experts.

["NCATE Unveils a Plan for Aspiring Elementary Teachers,"](#) Jan. 13, 1999.

Whatever the take on the group, recognition from CHEA that TEAC is a "specialized and professional" accreditor signals that the 4-year-old organization has joined the national stage, said Jane V. Wellman, a senior associate with the Institute for Higher Education Policy, a Washington nonprofit group that promotes access and high quality in postsecondary education.

["Influence of Teacher Education Accrediting Body Grows,"](#) Nov. 11, 1998.

"CHEA has a lot of credibility," Ms. Wellman said of the group formed in 1996 to pass judgment on accrediting agencies, including NCATE, whose own approval is pending. "It certainly gives [TEAC] legitimacy in the world of accreditation, but whether it emerges as the preferred alternative remains to be seen."

["Prominent Teacher-Educator Appointed First President of TEAC,"](#) July 8, 1998.

TEAC still awaits approval from the U.S. Department of Education. Such recognition allows students to receive federal financial aid.

["Alternative Accrediting Organization Taking Form With Federal Assistance,"](#) Jan. 21, 1998.

Meanwhile, it accredited its first three teacher-preparation programs in March. A fourth is scheduled to go through the process later this year, according to Mr. Murray.

Professionalization

["NCATE Accreditation of Ed. Schools Advocated,"](#) Feb. 8, 1995.

Before the launch of NCATE in 1954, no national standards existed for the teaching profession, said David G. Imig, the president of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, which helped found NCATE. For years, teacher-preparation programs were accredited by individual states, regional accrediting bodies, or by the teacher colleges' group, all of which created their own benchmarks and evaluation models. Such a system was perceived by both the public and people in the field as haphazard and lacking in accountability, Mr. Imig said.

["NCATE Analysis of Education Schools To Help Forge Partnerships With States,"](#) March 24, 1993.

NCATE set out to professionalize teaching by writing national standards and accrediting institutions based on their fulfillment of them.

In the late 1980s, it toughened those rules. The move angered and embarrassed some in the higher education community whose institutions failed and were forced to spend sizable sums if they wanted to gain or retain

approval.

NCATE, actually a coalition of 33 professional organizations representing segments of the education community, articulated what it considered the necessary features of high-quality teacher-preparation programs and spelled out the knowledge and skills their graduates should have upon entering the classroom. Several of its member associations write the standards for the 17 program areas reviewed.

Nearly half a century after its founding, NCATE has a significant presence in education. Its members include such influential players as the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the National School Boards Association, and subject-matter groups such as the National Council for the Social Studies and the National Science Teachers Association.

"NCATE is embraced by the profession," Mr. Imig said. "It is increasingly seen as a way to brand your program as high quality."

NCATE currently accredits 525 of the nation's 1,200 teacher-preparation programs; another 100 are seeking approval, according to Arthur E. Wise, its president. Forty-six states evaluate teacher-preparation programs using NCATE standards or benchmarks closely aligned with them. Of those, 28 states think so highly of the system that they require all teacher-preparation programs earn its accreditation. Moreover, newly updated standards put NCATE accreditation more in line with the K-12 standards and accountability movement for the nation's students, Mr. Wise said. (["NCATE Unveils Standards Based on Performance,"](#) May 24, 2000.

Under the new NCATE standards, which took effect this past fall, teacher-preparation programs will have to demonstrate that their students have acquired the knowledge and skills they need to be educators. Schools must, for example, provide assessments showing that prospective teachers meet professional, state, and institutional standards. The old system looked primarily at college curricula, a component of programs still inspected today.

The Auditing Process

TEAC was built on the belief that those academic benchmarks and other requirements established by NCATE are unproved. The NCATE system, the founders of the rival accrediting council say, is also burdensome, especially

for smaller schools that may lack the resources to meet the older group's requirements.

"We think those standards are nothing more than a consensus opinion about how things should be," said Mr. Murray, who led the University of Delaware in Newark through NCATE accreditation when he was the dean of the school of education there from 1989 to 1995. "They have not yet been validated [by research]."

TEAC, instead, relies on "auditing," an external evaluation used for teacher-preparation programs in parts of Asia, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

Auditors evaluate "evidence" produced by schools in an attempt to show whether teacher-preparation programs meet their own goals as well as three basic quality principles outlined by the accrediting body: students have mastered both subject-matter content and pedagogy, the program has in place a valid assessment system to measure that learning, and the school is using its self-evaluation system to better its program.

Accredited programs must also meet the standards for regional accreditation and state program approval, institutional standards for academic degrees, and one or more benchmarks used by the state when awarding licenses.

"We're like the editorial board of a journal," Mr. Murray said. "The author writes an article and says, 'Here's the evidence,' and we evaluate it to see if it is true."

Teacher-preparation programs must be able to set their own standards within TEAC's framework because it allows them to aspire to greatness and encourages meaningful self-reflection, Mr. Murray argues. In his way of thinking, for example, a college that opts to concentrate on producing science and math teachers will likely have higher standards for those fields than schools of education that don't specialize.

TEAC officials encourage schools to think innovatively, Mr. Murray continued, and for that reason, the organization accredits individual teacher-preparation programs rather than entire schools of education, education departments, or institutions, as is the practice of NCATE.

Thus, a college with a strong science or math program may not have a solid program for school psychologists but, under the TEAC system, it can be recognized for the one or two areas of excellence. Other programs inside the

college of education, though, might be rejected.

No teacher-preparation program can set low standards, however, because TEAC requires proof that it is doing a good job preparing teachers, Mr. Murray said.

The first three programs accredited by TEAC provided auditors with students' grades, scores on standardized entrance and exit exams, surveys of graduates' employers, portfolio assessments by faculty members, including preservice supervisors, and information about such related activities as tutoring children and participation in other community services.

Cost Differences

NCATE, in contrast, evaluates schools by looking at an institution's ability to meet six standards.

The Washington-based organization examines the knowledge, skills, and temperament required of future teachers by looking at assessments. It also scrutinizes the program's evaluation system; field and clinical experiences, faculty qualifications, performance, and development; the leadership exhibited; and resources. Evaluation teams also look for diversity within the prospective teaching corps, the faculty, and the children served to judge whether future educators can effectively teach students of varying races, ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic levels.

That diversity component of NCATE caused many smaller institutions to balk. For example, those that could not attract African-American or Hispanic teacher-educators failed to meet that NCATE criterion. Alone, such a deficiency does not disqualify an institution from achieving accreditation. Coupled with other inadequacies, it could.

College presidents also complained that they couldn't afford the expense of undergoing—or earning—NCATE accreditation.

It costs between \$1,600 and \$3,000 annually to belong to NCATE, depending on the size of the education department or college, according to the organization. An evaluation runs between \$10,000 and \$20,000, according to Jerry Robbins, the dean of the college of education at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, which is NCATE accredited. In addition, some institutions have had to lay out significant sums of money to bring their programs up to par.

Annual dues to TEAC are \$2,000 across-the-board, and an audit costs an additional \$1,000 per program.

TEAC "has an innovative approach, ... and it comes out of the quality movement in business and industry," said Peter T. Ewell, a senior associate with the National Center for Higher Education Management in Boulder, Colo., who has expertise in the evaluation of teacher-preparation programs in the United States and overseas. He has also worked with TEAC to evaluate its pilot schools.

"What an audit tries to do is to get inside a program and follow the trail of student records to find out what's really going on," Mr. Ewell said. "It really is a pretty down-and-dirty method."

Bias Toward Big?

The presidents of small, independent colleges helped found the newer accrediting council and continue to be among its most vocal supporters. They believe that NCATE has an inherent bias toward larger schools, said Richard Ekman, the president of the Washington-based Council of Independent Colleges, a TEAC membership organization that includes more than 480 institutions. "NCATE calls for lots and lots of methods courses that go well beyond what small colleges can offer," Mr. Ekman argued. "Yet the graduates from these colleges come out with good, solid content majors in science or natural biology, which is very much in demand by the school districts doing the hiring."

TEAC's approach appealed to Texas Lutheran University, a private institution located in Seguin, outside San Antonio, that had its program accredited earlier this year. TEAC appeared more interested in the quality of teaching and what the school produced than NCATE did, according to Nick Lockhard, the dean of the college of professional studies, who oversees Texas Lutheran's teacher-preparation program.

"NCATE wants you to dot the I's and cross the T's and is interested in the number of volumes in your library and the number of faculty publishing articles," said Mr. Lockhard, whose institution has never been NCATE-accredited. "There are a whole series of 'thou shalts,' but accreditation doesn't necessarily reflect on the quality of graduates that come out of the program."

Even some large institutions with substantial resources find the NCATE

accreditation process vexing. They maintain that the standards are irrelevant or too complicated, and that the paperwork is overwhelming.

"Your manpower is eaten alive because [the process] is so labor-intensive," said Sandra B. Cohen, the director of teacher education for the education school at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. "Yet, we do all this work and meet their demands, but it doesn't give us anything that helps us reflect on our program or really look at ourselves from a point of view that we think is important."

The teacher-preparation program, one of the top in the country as ranked by *U.S. News & World Report*, has been accredited by NCATE for nearly 20 years but opted to earn TEAC accreditation for the first time this year in an effort to participate in a more meaningful evaluation process, Ms. Cohen said. The school will continue to hold dual accreditation for the next few years, she said.

Part of the problem with NCATE in Ms. Cohen's view is that the information collected by evaluators is not fully disclosed in the summary prepared for institutions. NCATE says it does so in large measure to protect the confidentiality of those who provided critical information.

On the other hand, Ms. Cohen said, TEAC allows faculty members and program leaders to listen to many of the discussions regarding evaluation.

Moreover, the NCATE standards are so detailed and so prescriptive, they have become unreasonable, she contended.

"They're choking people in the profession," Ms. Cohen maintained. "There is no way to address these standards equally."

One vs. Two

But critics of TEAC liken its standards-setting approach to a policy that would allow individual public schools to lay out what their students should know and be able to do, without regard to any broader expectations.

By allowing colleges and universities to set their own benchmarks for judging their teacher programs, TEAC is permitting schools to shirk their responsibilities while acquiring national credentials that look good in glossy brochures for prospective applicants, argued Cathy M. Roller, the director of research and policy for the Newark, Del.-based International Reading

Association. Her group has been providing national standards in its subject area for NCATE for 12 years.

"They could say they will set high standards, but will they?" Ms. Roller said of teacher-preparation programs. "At some places, teacher education is considered a cash cow. There's a minimum effort—you give them a degree and a certificate and out they walk."

In contrast, she said, the NCATE standards are high, because the subject-matter associations are demanding the most up-to-date content, pedagogy, and research in their respective fields.

She's not the only critic of the newer accreditor.

"TEAC is not standards-based," said Barnett Berry, the director of policy and state partnerships for the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future. The privately organized blue-ribbon panel, made up of educators, public officials, and business and community leaders, has recommended that all teacher-preparation programs be required to earn NCATE certification. Institutions "set their own standards," Mr. Berry said.

While Mr. Berry recognizes that the NCATE standards are not backed by a broad body of research, he added that "education is a relatively immature field in its identification and use of a codified body of knowledge, ... but if we didn't move forward with what we have now, we wouldn't get anything done."

The need for a single national set of standards is clear, he argued, because without one, the education community will continue to live by different rules, inhibiting the professionalization of teaching.

That is a vision shared by Mr. Wise, who has long preached that teaching won't be taken seriously until it has a mandatory national accountability system.

"Other professions have clearly evolved to have a single accrediting agency," Mr. Wise said. "I think, to an unprecedented degree, the public and policymakers are urging improvement in teacher preparation, and in today's world, that means having K-12 schools as well as colleges meet rigorous standards."

National standards play an important role in improving teacher-preparation programs because they ensure that all programs graduate educators who have

attained at least a competent level of quality, said Bob Chase, the president of the National Education Association.

"With the mobility of society and the workforce today, it seems to me that we should ensure that teachers are the best no matter which school of education they are graduating from," Mr. Chase said. "National accreditation is one way to make sure that is done."

Mr. Murray, however, argues that the TEAC system is superior because it allows teacher-preparation programs to articulate higher standards than those set by NCATE. Schools that set low standards must still meet TEAC's minimum quality principles—standards, he says, that are demanding in their own right. The need for a second national accreditation system is clear, Mr. Murray said, given that fewer than half the nation's teacher-preparation programs have embraced the standards set out by NCATE.

"You wonder why, with a national accreditor available for such a long time, the majority of schools won't bother," Mr. Murray said. "Many of those schools are nationally ranked."

Some don't apply for NCATE accreditation because they are afraid they'll be denied—an embarrassing situation that occurs in one out of every four evaluations, Mr. Wise said. Or, they don't want to spend the time and money upgrading their program, he added.

In any case, more and more institutions are recognizing the value of NCATE accreditation, he said. Even longtime holdouts such as Stanford and Columbia universities are now applying.

While many of the member institutions pursuing TEAC accreditation are small, liberal arts schools or regional institutions, Mr. Murray points to a handful of higher-profile colleges and universities that are now members and are investigating the accreditation process. Cornell University, Indiana University, the University of Michigan, New York University, the University of Iowa, all big players in the production of teachers, are in TEAC's lineup.

In addition, TEAC has earned the endorsement of a number of higher education associations, including the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, and the National Association of Independent Colleges.

No Competition?

Even if interest in TEAC fails to lead many programs to seek accreditation, some observers say that the existence of a second accrediting council has helped to advance the national debate over teacher education and forced NCATE to become more innovative.

"I don't think it is entirely coincidental that [NCATE] has chosen to roll out their new standards at this time," said Mr. Ewell of the National Center for Higher Education Management. "It looks a lot like what TEAC has done."

Mr. Wise, though, says that the new NCATE benchmarks were in development in 1992, long before TEAC got under way.

Despite the comparisons, both organizations dispute the notion they are competing for business.

Mr. Wise points to the limited number of institutions that have joined TEAC and reminds the education community that his organization remains the giant in the field. NCATE has grown by more than 100 colleges since TEAC came on the scene, he said.

And if Mr. Murray is fazed by the more established accreditor, he doesn't let on. "I don't spend the days worrying about what NCATE is doing," said Mr. Murray. "I think NCATE services the field and has helped the field, but that it hasn't been fully successful."



The [Teacher Education Accreditation Council](#) provides information on its [accreditation process](#), plus a directory of [members and accredited programs](#).

The [National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education](#) likewise offers information on its [accreditation program](#) and a directory of its [accredited institutions](#).

The [Council for Higher Education Accreditation](#) provides information on its [recognition policy](#).

PHOTOS: "I think NCATE services the field and has helped the field, but that it hasn't been fully successful," says Frank B. Murray of TEAC.

–Allison Shelley

"Other professions have clearly evolved to have a single accrediting agency," says Arthur E. Wise, the president of NCATE, which was founded in 1954 to set national standards for teacher education.

–Allison Shelley

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Foundation To Study Preparation Of Teachers

By Julie Blair

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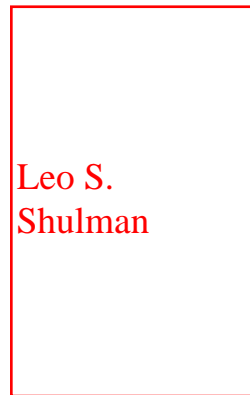
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The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching unveiled a 5-year, \$3- million initiative this month that will bring together some of the nation's top scholars to examine how teacher education classes are taught, how prospective teachers learn, and how their learning is evaluated.

The initiative is one element of a 10-year, \$10 million effort to study the ways in which professionals are trained, said Lee S. Shulman, the president of the nonprofit research organization, based in Menlo Park, Calif. The foundation began the project two years ago and is examining the professions of law, engineering, medicine, social work, and the clergy, in addition to teaching.

"This is the first time that the education of teachers has been examined systematically as part of a larger effort to understand the preparation for professions," Mr. Shulman said. "In the preparation of lawyers and engineers, for example, there are some of the very same problems we thought were unique nightmares to education—they are universal."



Leo S. Shulman

Because each profession uses different strategies to address similar problems, the foundation hopes to identify the best practices used in one vocation and apply them to others, he said.

[Takers Aren't Education Majors, ETS Says,](#) Oct. 24, 2000.

The first task of the scholars investigating teacher preparation will be to look at the ways in which future K-12 educators are assessed, Mr. Shulman said. At least a dozen teacher-preparation programs will be examined, he added.

["Wanted: A Few Good Teacher-Preparation Programs,"](#) May 31, 2000.

"Our challenge is to pull together the very best approaches developed and tried out in an attempt to assess how well teachers are learning their craft," he said. "Then you can begin asking the other questions like 'What are the most promising practices for teaching methods of teaching?'"

'A Big Missing Piece'

["NCATE Unveils Standards Based on Performance,"](#) May 24, 2000.

Some education experts say that the project could generate information essential to improving teacher education and, as yet, unreported in a comprehensive manner anywhere else.

"The whole issue of documenting what it is that teachers should know and be able to do and how they're taught these things is a big, big, big missing piece in policymaking," said C. Emily Feistritzer, the president of the National Center for Education Information, a private research group based in Washington. "Without that data, it is very hard to make sound decisions about what should be done."

Under its late president, Ernest L. Boyer, the Carnegie Foundation produced landmark studies on elementary education, high schools, school choice, colleges, and early childhood education.

The new initiative comes as several groups of researchers are posing similar questions about teacher preparation. "We're going to take some responsibility for bringing them together and helping them sort out the information," Mr. Shulman said. "We want this to be a collaborative effort."

Among the researchers working on the project is Frank B. Murray, a professor of education and psychology at the University of Delaware in Newark and the president of the Teacher Education Accreditation Council, which accredits teacher-preparation programs in about 65 colleges and universities.

Other participants are: Pamela L. Grossman, a professor of education at Stanford University; Carol D. Lee, an associate professor of education at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill.; Gary Sykes, a professor of education at Michigan State University in East Lansing; and Kenneth M. Zeichner, the assistant dean for the school of education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Carnegie Senior Scholar Rose Asera will co-direct the

initiative along with Mr. Shulman.

The Carnegie Corporation of New York is financing the project.

The Carnegie [Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching](#) provides an [outline](#) of its planned five-year study of teacher preparation programs as part of its "Preparation for the Professions" project.

The [U.S. Department of Education](#) conducted a National Conference on Teacher Quality Exemplary Practices in January of 2000, and presents 12 [exemplary programs](#) for teacher preparation.

The [Association for Teacher Educators](#) has adopted a set of [standards](#) of teacher education for its members.

A "[Manual on the Preparation and Certification of Educational Personnel](#)" provides information about preparation programs, state certification requirements and professional practices for the year 2000. From the [National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education](#).

The [National Commission on Teaching and America's Future](#) outlines what it believes are the [Characteristics](#) of a quality teacher preparation program.

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