This general guide to the establishment of student involvement in teacher education decisionmaking includes a section on rationale, a general statement regarding the development of a philosophical base for establishing policy within the context of the goals of the institution, and suggestions for (1) ascertaining the need for a student-faculty committee by gathering data through formal evaluation of student needs, an open student forum, or informal student consensus; (2) working with the power structure to establish a student-faculty committee; and (3) applying change strategy to the committee's organization and the organization of teacher education. Included also is a "Special Note to Student NEA Regional Project Participants," which outlines the roles to be played by local, regional, and national representatives. (JS)

GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING GREATER STUDENT VOICE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

THROUGH A STUDENT-FACULTY COMMITTEE

## A Rationale

"Your college professor...doesn't care what you like, what your own
personality is, or how you want to go about things." (Diane Potter, Student
Impact, May-June, 1968, p.42).

"What I now hear my revolutionary friends saying is that you can't
introduce teachers to new ways of teaching kids by using the old ways of teaching
teachers.  Teachers tend to perpetuate in their classrooms the way in which they
themselves have been taught." (Upward Bound director in Boston, Teacher Educa-
tion:  The Young Teacher's View, NDEA National Institute for Advanced Study in
Teaching Disadvantaged Youth, Project Report/two, p.11).

"If...they (students) are put in a field situation fairly soon, then
they would know the areas in which they needed help.  In that case, I would say
they should have a legitimate and important part to play in planning their own
curricula." (Gloria Bray, Student Impact, May-June, 1968, p.42).

"I feel that all too often academic policies are left up to faculty
groups." (Robert Fussell, Student Impact, April 1968, p.28).

"I see the Student NEA playing a major role in the reassessment of
teacher education programs...(It) can ultimately become the pioneer, the collab-
orator with schools of education in developing new learning experiences for all
the people within the educational community." (Nolan Albert, Student Impact,
May-June, 1968, p.38).

Insensitive professors, earlier classroom experience, irrelevancy of
courses, and lack of student participation in policy decisions--all are contri-
buting factors to the increasing demand for student voice in teacher education.
Students who are preparing to be teachers are concerned about their preparation
process and desire to have their questions answered and concerns met.

In essence, students want to play their representative role in the
teacher education community.  They believe that all of the elements of a commun-
ity should have adequate representation in decisions affecting the total commun-
ity, that those who are asked to comply with decisions should participate in the
making of those decisions.  However, in most cases the democratic idea of equal
claim to power by members of the community has been stunted.  Although major-
itarian democracy may not prevail on the campus, the university, by virtue of
its intellectual freedom of inquiry, still has the substance of a democratic
culture and should assure the members of the institution a role in the decision-
making process that determines the fullfillment of the goals and purposes of
the institution.  However, there is an artificiality about the university
community for it is "deliberately arranged so there is a stratification of

relationships based on experience."[1]  Students feel that a community can
flourish only by drawing on the strengths of its total membership, and that
they as students have a particular expertise that is necessary in the decisions
that will govern the community.

## General Statement

The development of greater student participation in the decision making
process of teacher education must be based upon a consensus by all elements of
the teacher education community that student involvement is important enough to
be considered part of the total democratic and educational process of the insti-
tution, and that it is compatible with the purposes of the university community.
If serious apprehensions exist about the degree to which the policy of involve-
ment constitutes a threat to the primary academic functions of students and the
faculty, the effort to secure involvement will falter at every turn.  On the
other hand, if it is commonly agreed that an opportunity for students to advise
on and share in administrative policy decisions is valuable in building a strong
institution, a strong faculty, and an understanding loyal, and democratically
oriented student body, then there is good chance for success.

Whether a policy of involvement will succeed or fail depends primarily
on two factors:  the care with which a philosophical base for a policy is estab-
lished within the context of the goals of the institution, and the knowledge on
the part of everyone of just how comprehensive it is intended to be.

General approach to student involvement in university decision making

There are two possible approaches to student involvement in university
decision making:  obtaining student representation on existing departmental
committees or creating a new committee with student and faculty representation,
charged with the responsibility of ensuring that students are consulted on matters
of importance to them.  A committee of this second type should be viewed as a
forerunner to a more comprehensive, across-the-board participation of students
in decision making and should be the forum in which such participation is system-
atically planned.

The program should not try to encompass too much at the start.  There
is much to be learned in the first few efforts and a responsibility once taken
cannot be easily or lightly dismissed.

A.  Ascertaining the need for a student-faculty committee.

Before launching an effort to have a student-faculty committee estab-
lished, some basic data should be collected on student opinion regarding the
following:  Are students interested in gaining an effective voice in teacher
education policy decisions?  Why should they?  Do they really lack an effective
voice?  What would be the most effective vehicle for students to have a voice?
How would teacher education be improved if students were to gain an effective

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[1]Report of the Study Commission on University Governance, The Culture
of the University:  Governance and Education.  University of California, Berkeley.
January 15, 1968, p.32.

voice?[2]  Seeking answers to these questions will help determine whether the students on a particular campus really have a contribution to make to their preparation process, and the information will prove valuable in "making the case" for student involvement.

The data should be gathered by a small group of interested students and faculty.  There are a variety of methods that can be used in gathering the needed information:

1) <u>Formal evaluation of student needs.</u>  A random sampling of students in the education department could not only provide data about student interest in having a voice, but could also suggest some areas in need of reform.  Faculty members could be consulted on the design of the questionnaire to be used.

2) <u>An open student forum</u> (e.g. at a monthly SEA meeting).  Holding a meeting expressly for the purpose of dialogue between students and faculty on the preparation process has proved to be an enlightening experience for both groups.  Such candid discussion would suggest constructive reform to meet the total needs of the institution.

3) <u>Informal student consensus.</u>  By listening to students wherever they gather, valuable feedback from students can be obtained.  Although this method is not quite as valid as the other two, it has a certain value since many students will react more candidly in informal gatherings. (STUDENT IMPACT--this Student NEA publication is capturing, for the first time, the opinions of students who are preparing to teach. Although it reflects what education students across the country are saying about their preparation process, some of the information may be germane to particular campuses.  However, it should only be used to supplement data from primary sources--the students on the campus.)

If the information indicates that not all the needs of students are being met and that a formal representation of student opinion is needed, the justification for a student-faculty committee exists.  A variety of methods can be used to select the committee members (i.e. election, delegation of responsibility, etc.).  However, it is important that the individuals chosen be keenly committed to representating student opinion.

B.  <u>Working with the power structure to establish a student-faculty committee.</u>

Since any reform or change of significance will ultimately have to be reviewed by a departmental committee, it is necessary to analyze the power structure.  How does the department make decisions?  Who are the strong leaders in the decision making process?  Which departmental committees are working in what areas?  What are the strengths of the various faculty members?  In short, how are decisions made regarding teacher education, and who makes them?

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[2]Don Roush, Academic Vice President, University of New Mexico, Las Cruces, "How to Gain an Effective Student Voice in Teacher Education," mimeographed, Student NEA Summer Conference 1968, p.1.)

"Decisions are made every day that affect the teacher education pro-
gram. Therefore, it should be relatively easy to examine the decision making
process. For example, assume that there has been a recent change in the cur-
riculum. Trace the decision making process by answering the following questions:
What prompted the change? Who suggested it? When was it first discussed? Who
discussed it? What groups or individuals took action on the change? Who
implemented the change? Such analysis of action will assist in defining the
power structure."[3]

Every group has its own set of values and philosophies which serve as
criteria for priority setting and decision making. Understanding these values
and philosophies will enable you to speak directly to them in seeking your own
objectives. The strengths of the faculty should be known so that every alliance
benefits the cause--rallying to a professor who has no effective voice in the
decision making process will not help your efforts.

Some colleges may already have student representation on current
departmental committees, albeit ineffective. If this is the case, work through
established channels (i.e. the dean, local adviser, an influential professor,
local SEA president) to express why students feel that this representation is
not effective and suggest possibilities for change that would meet the needs as
outlined by the data you have gathered. Some of the reasons for ineffective
representation might be: the method of selecting the student representative;
the frequency of committee meetings; or the possibility that students "rubber
stamp" the administration's ideas rather than suggesting their own for dis-
cussion. If student "representation" has been sanctioned, students should make
sure that it is effective!

In working with the power structure do not try to impose a precon-
ceived plan. Be prepared to work with current projects or ideas from the
administration that could be adapted to your needs. Do your homework and present
your case constructively and positively. By emphasizing the items that you
agree on (i.e. a program meeting the needs of every future teacher, the best
program that will prepare teachers, etc.) an atmosphere conducive to progress
can be developed. Do not be afraid to admit that on certain points you may be
wrong. This does not mean you have to acquiesce the basic philosophy of your
student voice program.

Additionally be prepared for the necessary "red tape," be aware of the
proper channels within the establishment, and work effectively within that
structure. Be able to demonstrate concretely what are the needs of the students
and the willingness of the committee to respond to them.

C. The essentials of the process of change.

The success of any effort to initiate change is directly related to
the commitment of those involved. However, success is also related to the degree
of organization behind the effort. Two basic elements in organization are the
ideas and the individuals promoting them.

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[3]Ibid., p.2.

What makes an idea take root and grow to fruition? There are several conditions: The quality of the idea itself; how well defined it is; effective diffusion (communication) of the idea from individual to individual (e.g., through chapter meetings, dorm sessions, student-faculty "fireside chats," seminars); and the eventual spread of the idea throughout the departmental system.[4]

For purpose of strategy, the individuals involved in nourishing idea from conception to implementation can be viewed as falling into several categories. First there are the change agents, the people who are able to communicate the idea and to influence others. They are the ones who "make it safe for others to follow." Their strategy is basically as follows: a) program the change to fit the cultural values of the system; b) assist people in understanding the need for innovation and in evaluating the idea; c) communicate the idea clearly to assure that people know what its practical implications are; and d) concentrate attention on those who show early interest.[5]

Second, there are the adopters--those who finally implement the idea. They fall into the following categories by degrees of responsiveness to the idea: "early adopters, early majority, later majority, and laggards."[6]

What are some of the main obstacles to effecting change? One is the lack of sufficient data to support the need for innovation. Hence the case for a student-faculty committee must be well documented through student polls and information from Student Impact, from books which support the needed change, from research studies that have been conducted, and from other pertinent materials. Another obstacle is the absence of change agents. If a campus chapter or the staff of a teacher education program lacks change agents, the probability of gaining a student voice in teacher education is slim. However, once a need for student voice has been established, make it known that students will have a platform on which to express their views. It takes only a small core of students and faculty to excite and persuade others. In looking for change agents, make sure they have the time and commitment to do something. They may not be from the local leadership because of their preoccupation with other responsibilities.

After the initiation of the idea, target dates should be established for achievements of the following objectives: gathering of the data; selecting of the student-faculty committee; meeting with administration; identifying action steps for change; evaluating the effectiveness of the committee's work; and publicizing its work in the campus newspaper.

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[4]Ibid., p.3.

[5]Ibid., p.4.

[6]Ibid., p.3.

## Conclusion

The preceding material is only a suggestive way to effect student voice in teacher education via the establishing of a student-faculty committee. It is by no means a panacea to the problem. In order to be successful students will have to use it only as a general guide, for every situation is different. However, in general the answer to the question of how to gain an effective student voice in teacher education through a student-faculty committee is relative to the ability of those involved to defend the challenges of basic assumptions, the ability to analyze the power structure, and the ability to apply change strategy to the committee's organization and the organization of teacher education.

SPECIAL NOTE TO STUDENT NEA REGIONAL PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

In developing this pilot project, it is important to know the roles that will be played by the local, regional, and national representatives so that each will understand the other's responsibility.

LOCAL:

1. Establish student faculty committee on the campus.

2. Submit reports on the status of the project to the regional coordinator, outlining areas in which assistance is needed.

Deadlines:   October 21--initial contact report outlining problem areas
where assistance is needed
December 4--intermediate evaluation
April 7--final evaluation.

3. Use guidelines and other supplementary material to assist in establishing student voice.

4. Keep detailed logs on student efforts.

REGIONAL:

1. Cordinate the project in the six pilot institutions.

2. Act as direct consultant to students in pilot projects.

3. Evaluate status reports and determine needed consultant assistance in problem areas.

4. Develop evaluation process with national office.

5. Submit final evaluation report to the national office.

6. Be responsible for regional financial commitment.

7. Work with state consultant in assisting in problem areas.

NATIONAL:

1. Provide financial assistance to the regional project to cover expenses of regional planning, the cost of consultant help to pilot institutions, special request for money from pilot areas, and a final publication on the project.

2. Provide consultant help and suggestions for additional resources to assist in establishing student voice via the student-faculty committee.

3. Publicize final evaluation so that others may benefit from outcome of the project (e.g., in Student Impact).

4. Provide direct assistance, through personal and professional contacts, to help expedite the communications between student and faculty in the pilot institutions.

5. Develop evaluation process with regional coordinators.