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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the development of the CalStateTEACH program at California State University (CSU), Fresno, a system-wide initiative that is grafted onto the program of individual institutions. It was originally an open university program called CalNet. It was redeveloped during the fall of 1998, when teams of CSU teacher educators helped create a new curriculum. Other CSU teams focused on the need for a student services design for the project and for a web-based communication network. As of the fall of 1999, CSU, Fresno was delivering open learning elementary teacher education curriculum to students across a wide expanse of California. CalStateTEACH is now one of multiple pathways to teaching licensure at CSU, Fresno. The program meets or exceeds all admission procedures in place for the other programs. The central difference between CalStateTEACH and traditional programs is the very limited time preservice teachers spend face-to-face with faculty and among the campuses' physical resources. Planners are being vigilant so the program is not used as a vehicle to return teacher education to an apprenticeship model in which new teachers find vision and theory in short supply. (SM)

CalStateTEACH:

The Origins and Emergence of a State University Distributed Learning Teacher Education Program

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Origins

In 1997, after more than twenty years as professor and, in four Great Lakes area states, as a head of teacher education, I came to the Central Valley of California as dean of one of the state's largest teacher education institutions. In the Midwest, due to flat population growth, I was accustomed to preparing many teachers who moved to the Sun Belt for employment. For immediate employment our Pennsylvania, Ohio and Minnesota teachers headed for Washington, D.C., McAllen, Texas, and Las Vegas, Nevada among other growth areas. In moving to California, however, I experienced a different reality. In addition to a burgeoning population, the Golden State had put in place "class size reduction" for the primary years, suddenly dropping average classroom populations from thirty to twenty. These two factors combined to exacerbate a teacher shortage that already centered on Los Angeles. California's emergency waiver teaching corps grew to 28,000—more than ten per cent of the total teaching force. In high demand fields, such as mathematics, a majority of teachers lacked appropriate content background. Additionally, class size reduction was scheduled to broaden to additional grades as population growth marched on.

Two other essential factors added urgency to the situation, as I understood it. Proposition 13 (the Howard Jarvis referendum) had been California's governing law regarding taxation for schools since 1978 (Schrag, 1998). In addition to dramatically lowering property taxes, "Prop 13" mandated that any property tax increases or other levies for schools would require a two-thirds majority for passage in the legislature or the voting booth. In round numbers this has created a funding average in California that is $1000 lower per student than the national mean. These are unadjusted dollars and this shortfall is aggravated by California's cost of living – one which is clearly above the national norms. Secondly, at the outset of the post-Jarvis era, California was the national model for universal, inexpensive public education through the grades and into community college, California State University, or University of California matriculation. Californians grew to enjoy their reputation as an exemplar of progressive education policy. By the '90s, however, in most significant measures of k-12 quality and resourcing, the Golden State ranked between 48th and 51st, a real blow to the self-esteem of this prosperous and populous state.

In fairness, I believe that Californians underestimate the extra challenge they have assumed during this period by becoming home to approximately 1/3 of all new immigrants to the United States. This influx of immigrants, largely from cultural subgroups that lack a strong educational tradition, has raised the ratio of non-native speakers of English in California schools to 25%

(California Department of Education, 1998). We have found that national tests used to determine achievement and rankings use normative groups whose second language population is as low as 2%. It is also worth noting when assessing the funding picture in California that the owner of a comparable home in a high property tax state such as Minnesota would pay fully twice as much in property taxes per dollar of appraised home value.

This description of background would be incomplete without noting that, although California is famous for its several large metropolitan areas, the state also has a considerable number of small towns and isolated schools. Upon my arrival in Fresno, a metropolitan area of one million in a region that spreads out into rural and mountainous districts, I was quickly buttonholed by rural superintendents about their needs. Principal among their calls for services was the need for teacher education for their unlicensed teachers. Our School of Education and Human Development was operating in a new, high-tech facility extended by some distance learning and several remote sites. We did not, on the other hand, have a truly transportable or distributed teacher education model for rural delivery.

With this in mind and in consultation with others at Fresno State, I planned that during the second year of my tenure I would bring a visiting faculty member to the campus in order to project manage a distance learning teacher education initiative. Funding for such a venture was available due to the Assembly's decision to authorize some supplemental monies for the California State University system to expand its teacher education capacity. These dollars were tied to performance goals which, in our case, meant generating 180 additional full-time equivalent students in elementary education (called multiple subject preparation in California) at the School of Education within eighteen months. (The CSU share of California teacher production had eroded from two-thirds to sixty percent and the Assembly sought to reverse this process.) In my mind, I could address the needs of rural schools while building capacity by moving into a distance learning model, among other efforts.

As a hedge against any erosion of quality in our putative alternative program, I built a second charge into the role of our visiting scholar. This second component was to implement a performance assessment initiative in our teacher education program. This task was in my mind manageable because I had several years of experience in developing and implementing such a PreTeacher Assessment Center (PTAC) while at Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania where we were assessing 450 sophomores per year in the early 1990s. The PTAC design was developed in Pennsylvania by a three-state university consortium based at Indiana University of Pennsylvania under the leadership of Prof. Robert Millward. I should be clear, however, that PTAC is focused on formative evaluation, i.e., the diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses in a candidate through assessment activities and the prescription of remedial activities as appropriate. Although assessment is more often thought of today as a summative accountability measure, I believe it is as effective in an enrichment role guiding supervision and instruction. My desire to bring it to Fresno State in tandem with alternative licensure preparation was aimed at improving

instruction rather than monitoring quality. I take this position because the challenge of ascertaining definitively the quality of a teacher remains a daunting task in scientific terms, notwithstanding the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards multimillion-dollar effort. I am an advocate for assessment, but I recognize the hazards in making assessment into a high stakes venture, and prefer to employ it in service of instruction at this point in its development.

During the late spring of 1998, we were poised to launch our initiatives with the fall semester when the political terrain changed radically.

Transformation

During 1997-98, Dr. Charles Reed came to the CSU as its new chancellor, succeeding Dr. Barry Munitz, who moved on to head the Getty Foundation in Los Angeles. Charles Reed brought with him from Florida—where he held a similar role for many years—a relationship with Britain's Open University. OU, during this same time frame, had been contemplating an American outreach—which has subsequently come to fruition. OU representatives visited sites of potential collaboration, including CSU campuses and our own School of Education and Human Development. In our School, the OU presentation was received with interest and openness, encouraging those such as myself, who were interested in alternative delivery of teacher education. In this context as Governor Pete Wilson's final term was reaching a conclusion, Chancellor Reed was successful in negotiating with him a $5,000,000 line item for the purpose of creating an "Open University type" multiple subject teacher education program that would commence by summer, 1999 and enroll approximately 600 students at its outset.

Clearly this put our planning at California State University, Fresno in a tumult. On the one hand, we would not compete with our own system's initiative. On the other hand, we had our own plans underway and resources committed to move in this same direction. We made organized inquiries about becoming the center for the development of the new program. A visit to Open University by a team of CSU representatives, emphasizing those from Fresno State, took place (Ullrich & Flagel, 1998). Stateside, discussions within the CSU proceeded but the decision was made to direct the project from the system's Long Beach headquarters and to involve the entire system equitably at the outset. Weeks and months drifted by as the CSU awaited the allocation of the funding so work could begin. Our president was named as one of two chairmen of the board of the project. We reassigned our visiting scholar to focus exclusively on PTAC during year one of his stay. I retained serious concerns about the timeline of the OU project, originally called CalNet, and then retitled CalStateTEACH. The actual time for curriculum development was dwindling.

So an initiative which was originally to be regional and ours alone, coincidentally had been adopted by the state with our role being marginalized. The slower, more deliberate path I had

espoused was supplanted by a well-funded crash program with high expectations and a prominent political profile. The system was gambling its credibility on delivering CalStateTEACH on time, up and running.

Execution

During the fall of 1998 several dozen CSU teacher educators were mobilized to create a curriculum for CalStateTEACH. They were divided into teams according to disciplinary subspecialty, such as reading, foundations, mathematics and science education methods. Their work included creating a study guide that complemented a number of print and multimedia resources, including textbooks. The study guide also provided portfolio assignments that strove to assess preservice learning through work intern teachers were doing for their classrooms. This attempt to unify the internship obligations with those of the preservice curriculum was one of several efficiencies CalStateTEACH strove for in its design. In Britain, OU candidates were not interns, but there was a similar attempt to bring university and school obligations close together, both in the interest of verisimilitude and time efficiency.

Other CSU teams took on the need for a student services design for the project and for a web-based communication network. Specific tasks included admission and financial aid information to be developed and put on line. Additionally, the creation of a website with curricular materials on-line and the availability of asynchronous chat rooms were necessary.

The greatest deviation from the Open University path that I discerned was that OU materials are created as a whole exclusively for their students' use. They are written by a small team of experts as one, unified work of curriculum that is intended for use by students in their "Open Learning" programs. The materials are reviewed by other scholars prior to being implemented as curriculum. CalStateTEACH, on the other hand, shortened the research and development process from about three years to about eight months by adopting textbooks, videotapes and other existing materials and creating de novo only the study, assessment and technology guides and a handbook that provided connective text, assignments, and explanation for the curriculum in general. This approach has a financial impact in that the CSU does not own all the rights to the materials, leaving room for publishers to earn their accustomed share of the student dollar. It also raises the question of how applicable to a distributed learning model are materials written for traditional teacher education classroom use. Finally, is the full synergy that was to be obtained by a unified and seamless curriculum still possible when much of its composition is traditional discrete texts? Time and follow up studies may provide answers to these questions as well as the power of this curriculum in dealing with California's extremely diverse K-12 student body.

The statewide infrastructure of CalStateTEACH was to be that of five regional centers and all CSU campuses were invited to propose roles for themselves. Our campus was assigned the

Central Valley, Central Coast, and Sierra regions in partnership with CSU Monterey Bay. We proceeded to conduct a search for a regional center academic director and assigned our School of Education recruiter to add CalStateTEACH marketing to his list of responsibilities. As summer, 1999 began, we found ourselves with a regional center office up and running and, as the summer proceeded, an enrollment of sixty interns spread widely over the state and supported by a staff of "learning support faculty." (Another twenty-five interns are expected to begin in January.)

These LSFs would advise and supervise CalStateTEACH students and grade their work, as well as help lead periodic workshops for them (six in eighteen months of study). LSFs also maintain daily online communication with interns. In the direct management of their program at school sites, Open University relies on mentors (who bear some resemblance to our "cooperating teachers"). U. S. teacher education conventions make it less likely that such a heavily school-based approach would be effective or accepted, so CalStateTEACH combines the use of a more conventional university-based supervisor with Adjunct Site Faculty, who are school site master teachers. LSF direct supervisory visits should be at least monthly; their full-time equivalent load is approximately 20 interns.

As fall, 1999 commenced, Fresno State was very much in the business of delivering an alternative, "Open Learning" elementary teacher education curriculum to students across a wide expanse of California. Not all candidates were in rural or remote areas, however. Following the British model, the program was marketed to candidates for whom it was a good fit given their life conditions and learning style, as well as their location and need to retain a teaching position while completing licensure.

Analysis

As I write, we are nearing the halfway point in our first year of implementation of CalStateTEACH, which can also be expressed as the completion of stage one of four stages in the eighteen-month program. Some preliminary analysis can be put forward at this point in time.

Our large and innovative School of Education offers "multiple pathways" to teaching licensure, including a "four plus one" design, a blended program, cohorts, block programs focused on special combinations of interest (e.g., early childhood/elementary; middle school/elementary), conventional internships, and now CalStateTEACH, a distributed learning internship. We also aggressively recruit teachers, and particularly minority and bilingual teachers, in many contexts such as the corps of teachers' aides and paraprofessionals and the student bodies of high schools and middle schools. We have staffs of marketers, advisors, and grantspersons contributing to these efforts. I relate all this because it occurs to me that we are less adept at matching individuals with the programs most suitable for them than we are in generally recruiting them to our School. To some degree, this is inevitable because several entities have a role in the decision

making process, including the individual, our screening process, and public school personnel who determine whether to hire a prospective intern.

We employ personal interviews as well as documentation of achievement in our traditional programs and the Urban Teacher Selection Interview (Haberman, 1991) in our conventional internship programs. CalStateTEACH meets or exceeds all the admission procedures in place for our other programs. In all, however, I think more could be done to match candidates with the most suitable program for them. Part of that process might be PreTeacher Assessment, as a way of determining a candidate's readiness for the classroom prior to any teacher preparation. Another element would be focused advising that raises candidates' awareness of the pros and cons for them of each program design.

Complementing this process of matching programs with candidates would be a diagnosis of candidates' prospective time commitments. This year we have undertaken in our School of Education a study of the spectrum of time commitments students make to family, school, job, and, possibly, intern teaching. Under pressure to allow high credit hour loads, our Scholarship Committee has begun surveying students' use of time and corresponding grade achievement and levels of stress. To this point, the results are inconclusive (see Appendix A.) but in a preliminary way suggest that high achievers take on a great deal successfully while attaining a level of stress that may well have repercussions in the not-so-distant future. I raise all this in the context of CalStateTEACH because I am concerned about the curriculum commencing with the interns' first weeks of teaching and I have in mind a hard look at the necessity of this confluence. With many interns we cannot begin studies in the summer prior to the start of school because these new teachers tend to be the last ones hired, after the ranks of the certificated are depleted. On the other hand, I wonder if CalStateTEACH could begin slowly and move up in intensity after the first third of the school year when a new teacher has gotten past the rush of fall. I see little advantage in completing the CalStateTEACH program during the second year of teaching as opposed to at the end of that year or shortly thereafter. To some degree, the schedule is a marketing response to condensed calendars advertised by private, multicampus universities competing in California teacher education. This design element will be under study. Already a decision has been made to delay the start of CalStateTEACH in September, 2000 until the end of that first full month of school to relieve some of the bottleneck of the school year's opening days.

CalStateTEACH is a system-wide initiative and is grafted onto the program of an individual CSU institution such as our own. Although the curriculum is the product of a team of distinguished CSU teacher educators, I have some concerns about whether a true integration of CalStateTEACH with the totality of our School of Education will occur. The LSF roles are not generally appealing to tenure-track faculty and CalStateTEACH has a parallel administrative structure which is an alternative to much of our normal procedure in areas such us admission, hiring, student appeals, curriculum, departmental oversight, etc. To this point no problems have resulted from this autonomous structure, probably due to our faculty being accustomed to

multiple pathways to licensure within our School. The situation is confounded, however, by our desire to comply with NCATE standards, particularly as they relate to the conceptual framework and model for our unit of teacher education. In this respect, CalStateTEACH's separateness is again highlighted since it clearly is not a product of our School of Education acting on our own initiative. The California Commission for Teacher Certification has accommodated the innovative genesis and design of CalStateTEACH and we hope that our national accreditors can also see the benefits of this deviation from normal SCDE structure. Our expectation is that CalStateTEACH will stand for NCATE accreditation as a systemwide initiative, rather than as an outgrowth of any of the individual SCDEs.

As was indicated earlier in this essay, California's public schools are caught in a staffing crisis of grand and growing proportions. The primary response has been to create multiple pathways to licensure by allowing a wider range of institutions and approaches to proliferate. Los Angeles Unified School District continues to operate its own program. The University of Phoenix and other out-of-state and non-WASC (our regional accreditor) institutions are permitted into California for the first time. National University and Chapman University continue to prepare approximately 2000 teachers per year, each at numerous centers around the state. CalStateTEACH has been launched. The CSU, which had clung to admissions standards above the CCTC minimums, is moving toward those minimums in response to its commitment to regaining market share and serving more of the state's prospective teachers.

All these efforts sidestep the most direct approaches to the teacher shortage which are documented in numerous reports: increasing teacher compensation and improving working conditions (e.g., NCTAF, 1996). These reforms would require a multibillion dollar infusion of new taxes which California's politicians and its citizens seem unwilling to contemplate. This political context makes increasing or even maintaining the quality of new teachers an embattled concept. CalStateTEACH has been created in such a milieu and as a result we can expect that efforts at quality control within this program will be met with complaints from those who wish to generate certificated teachers for California at any cost. The Open University's pioneering open learning teacher education program has had its own recent struggle over perceptions of quality that appeared widely in the British press and resulted in a temporary suspension of new admits to the program. The merits of the case are difficult to determine because Tory politicians opposed to its egalitarian values have frequently regarded OU with hostility. One point the OU experience makes, however, is that a perceived failure far out in the hustings can be magnified in the media until it causes a major uproar for the home institution. Such are the dynamics of modern media.

CalStateTEACH is a promising innovation that raises in yet another context some of the basic questions we are facing today in higher education as we confront the implications of Internet education and proprietary education. Clearly the central difference between CalStateTEACH and traditional programs is the very limited time preservice teachers spend face-to-face with

faculty and among our campuses' physical resources. For most persons, the essence of any type of education is direct instruction by teachers and professors. This is, however, a notion that is questioned in a number of quarters, some of which represent far more radical approaches than CalStateTEACH. As the largest private university in the United States, the University of Phoenix has had enormous economic success by providing higher education for over 200,000 students with a full-time faculty base of sixty. What Phoenix and others may be showing us is that some types of learning for certain students can be successfully undertaken in distributed, Internet, or other innovative modes. Matching the right student and curricular goals with the correct mode of instruction is, however, still problematic.

We have to be vigilant so that CalStateTEACH is not used as a vehicle to return teacher education to an apprenticeship model in which new teachers find vision and theory in short supply (Tom, 1997, 135). The inspired intelligence that excellent professors bring to their students may be preserved in this first iteration of the CalStateTEACH curriculum, but whether it comes to life without the college classroom experience remains at issue. CalStateTEACH, therefore, represents a case study in several of the large issues facing American higher education, as well as teacher education. Specifically, the value of tenured or full time faculty, extensive bricks and mortar, face-to-face instruction, library and technological resources are all subject to scrutiny. Some will interpret any success that CalStateTEACH has as a demonstration of the wastefulness of traditional programs. Others will regard CalStateTEACH as an emergency measure forced by the times. Yet others will see CalStateTEACH as the best pathway for certain of our students and an appropriate option among multiple variations of teacher preparation.

In any event, CalStateTEACH is worthy of notice and informed study since it represents a postmodern response to the conflicts that bedevil mainstream teacher education institutions, best personified by our NCATE-accredited state colleges and universities. The California State University with the support of the State Assembly and Office of the Governor has essentially gone into competition with itself in the field of teacher education. Instead of being caught in a defensive posture with respect to innovative private and proprietary institutions, the CSU has done its best to create a high-quality version of such programs for itself. Marketed statewide and priced at one-third the cost of private tuition, CalStateTEACH is one of the most striking teacher education innovations to be seen in the post-Nation at Risk era. Expect to hear more about CalStateTEACH.

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