Where Do Opportunities Exist for Improved Coherence Between State and Federal Policy Related to Teacher Preparation?

• There are major opportunities for improved coherence between educational systems and states and federal policies, related to teacher preparation quality and accountability:
  
  ➢ Reviewing federal mandates, particularly accountability reporting requirements, to identify those that are and are not needed for federal policy
  ➢ Assessing costs of proposed new accountability requirements before adopting them and providing funding for institutions and states to meet them
  ➢ Supporting pilot tests of K-12 student outcome measures to determine their validity and reliability as measures of teacher preparation effectiveness
  ➢ Inviting voluntary participation in trials of new approaches that have not been tested and basing scale-up on results obtained in these trials
  ➢ Designing federal policies with recognition of the variation across programs and the need for adaptable approaches rather than “one size fits all”
  ➢ Re-structuring federal policy to focus on continuous program improvement
  ➢ Retaining and supporting programs that develop promising models of reform

• ESEA Title II requires highly detailed reports on many factors, some of which are no longer relevant in several states. For example, campuses are required to report information based on the old concept that non-clinical courses take place prior to student teaching. This does not fit programs in states like California, Maryland, and New York, which offer clinical experiences early and often.

• Current and proposed new teacher preparation program accountability and reporting requirements should be assessed to determine the needs they are serving. Whenever possible, mandated costs should be funded through federal sources.

• New accountability measures need to be piloted before they are instituted on a large-scale basis, in collaboration with states and educational institutions. The best way to do this is to invite voluntary participation of states and institutions in trials and to obtain their feedback in moving forward.

• Current and proposed “teacher preparation report card” provisions in the Higher Education Act should be re-examined and considered in relation to the data needs of institutions and states. The fundamental question here is how the system can be designed to be cost-effective and of substantial use to institutions and states.

• Federal policy should include support for pilots to examine measures that could assess success of program graduates and connect with state contexts. The CSU, the California Department of Education, and the California State Board of Education, together established the state’s Early Assessment Program, which predicts students’
readiness to succeed in college level coursework. It measures readiness in English and math and might be considered in a set of multiple measures for secondary programs at the school level.

- Federal accountability policy needs to recognize differences among programs to align with institutional and state needs. In the CSU system, we have programs that work with large school districts that have comprehensive data systems and are able to provide a range of measures on its K-12 students. Other CSU programs serve rural areas school districts with limited data system capabilities and metrics. We need to re-think the “one size fits all” requirements.

- Rather than being designed to judge institutions, the new framework should emphasize supporting continuous program improvement by institutions and supporting state roles in monitoring this process. Institutions would be accountable for collecting a set of valid and reliable data and for using these data to make program improvements, with states monitoring the process.

- Continuous program improvement is what we emphasize in our CSU accountability system, and the approach has been exceptionally effective. Campuses typically bring together teams to review the results of annual evaluations and to use them in preparing the campus improvement and accountability plan.

- As a result of CSU making continuous program improvements toward reaching traditionally under-served students, 80% of the system’s teacher graduates now report and are reported by their principals as being well prepared to work with these historically under-served students, a pattern rarely found across the nation.

- Federal policy can be structured to support continuous program improvement. The approach would focus on institutional processes connecting performance data, problem solving, and mid-course corrections in order to achieve measurable outcomes within an established timeline.

- One of the most important opportunities for improved coherence pertains to retaining and supporting programs that identify promising models of reform that states can encourage other states to replicate. The Teacher Quality Partnership program and Title II Higher Education set-aside are prototypes of such programs.

- It is critical that the federal government be strategic in developing and adopting accountability reforms. These changes should be instituted deliberately, thoroughly tested to ensure their feasibility, assessed to ensure that they advance access and diversity, and provided the fiscal resources necessary for high quality adoption.