The Role of State and Federal Policy in Teacher Preparation Program Quality and Accountability

- **The preparation of teachers is a state responsibility, not a federal one.** The federal government’s role should be to assist and support the state’s efforts; it should essentially be a partnership rather than a supervisory relationship.

- States are the most appropriate level of government to assess teacher preparation program quality. They should retain primary responsibility for implementing institutional program monitoring and evaluation.

- Findings of rigorous research studies, such as those of the National Research Council and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) Blue Ribbon Panel have identified key aspects of teacher preparation quality:
  - General knowledge that enables teachers to organize and explain ideas
  - Strong content knowledge that relates to what is to be taught
  - Knowledge of how to teach others in their content area
  - An understanding of learners and their development
  - Clinical experiences in which candidates learn from expert mentors

- The California State University (CSU) is the nation’s leader in preparing elementary and secondary teachers. It draws extensively on the latest research and on its partnerships with K-12 schools and other educational institutions in designing quality standards for its programs.

- Over the last decade, the CSU has prepared more of California’s teachers than all other institutions combined—more than 110,000 qualified teachers and roughly 8 percent of the nation’s new teachers.

- The CSU selects well-qualified candidates who demonstrate thorough general and subject matter knowledge, and provide these candidates with strong content and pedagogical preparation in clinical settings.

- Our programs are grounded in deep partnerships with K-12 schools. These partnerships are similar to medical models of training in clinical residencies. Future teachers are prepared at school sites, have extensive practice-based experience, and provide a second pair of hands in the classroom to advance student learning.

- CSU campuses work with K-12 partners in preparation and in performance assessment of teacher candidates. We use a portfolio of assessments addressing candidates’ instructional skills and provide expert feedback to them. Similar performance assessment approaches are increasingly being used across the nation.
The CSU was the nation’s pioneer in **system-wide annual surveys** of graduates and their employers, which we began conducting 12 years ago. These surveys enable our 22 campuses to determine program strengths and areas that need improvement.

We require annual accountability reports from each campus that demonstrate how findings are being used to improve programs. We also examine areas that require attention across the system and identify effective approaches for addressing them.

The CSU has been a leader in **value-added assessment**, and we continue to pilot procedures designed to yield reliable and valid K-12 student outcome data.

The CSU is **not in favor of requiring** teacher preparation programs to report K-12 student outcomes as accountability measures at this time. Our extensive experience with rigorous value-added assessment leads us to these conclusions:

- Research is required that demonstrates the reliability and validity of K-12 student outcome measures for assessing program quality and effectiveness before these measures are used for teacher preparation accountability.
- Evaluation models should not be attached to high-stakes consequences (such as effectiveness labels, eligibility for federal and state funding, etc.) until the models have been proven to be valid and reliable.
- Consideration should be given to K-12 outcome indicators beyond standardized achievement tests—including, for example, student attendance, school grades, promotion and retention, and college and career readiness.

In California, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing establishes standards that teacher preparation programs must meet to be accredited and to retain their accreditation status. Many institutions, including most CSU campuses, also seek voluntary accreditation from NCATE.

In view of system-wide and institutional roles and state level functions, there are three areas in which the federal role is especially important:

- **Supporting model approaches** that are built on evidence of effectiveness and targeted to high-need schools. Both (a) the Teacher Quality Partnership program and (b) the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title II 2.5% state set-aside for higher education partnerships* deserve continued support.
- **Providing funding for meaningful tools** to assess outcomes and track graduates. Data-driven accountability systems and rigorous procedures for tracking performance, impact, and retention warrant federal funding.
- **Improving success in recruiting diverse candidates** through financial assistance. Both scholarships and loan cancellation programs are essential for improvements nationally in recruiting diverse candidates.