American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education
2008 Annual Meeting

The following remarks were presented by MSU President Lou Anna K. Simon during a panel discussion entitled: “Lessons from the Teachers for a New Era Experience for National Education Policy.”

Operationalizing University-Wide Responsibility for Teacher Education

The Teachers for a New Era project at Michigan State University has definitely invigorated efforts at cooperation across the four colleges that have primary responsibility for educating future teachers.

Although institutional lines at Michigan State University have traditionally been quite flexible, the bar has most often been drawn when good ideas get enmeshed in conflicting budgetary priorities.

Prior to the exploratory visit by the Rand Corporation, I initiated a meeting of the four deans to ascertain their willingness to pursue and support this project with enthusiasm.

The generous grant from Carnegie Corporation and the Annenberg, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations complimented a major billion dollar University capital campaign.

The committed financing, coupled with TNE as an attractive campaign platform, encouraged the colleges to lend their support to the enterprise. To underscore the University-wide nature of the enterprise, responsibility for the project was vested in the Provost’s Office. The deans became visible members of the leadership team, each delegating an associate dean as key project contacts.

Upon their recommendations, cross-college faculty project teams were established to develop each of the major focal areas of our proposal:
improvement of disciplinary and pedagogical learning in literacy, mathematics, science, and social science; induction; assessment; and urban education.

The core teams expanded their expertise by invitations to associate faculty members, alumni, and K-12 teachers. The latter groups especially provided feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of newly-certified teachers, ours and others in general.

Overall, we have had a very successful experience in implementing the Carnegie-supported Teachers for a New Era initiative. Administrators and faculty alike have come to know each other better, to appreciate the work and challenges of their respective units, and especially to value cooperative efforts---within the university, certainly, but also across institutions, across the state and increasingly, beyond state boundaries.

I would like to highlight a few of the advances we have made institutionally as a result, or with the assistance, of TNE.

• **Collaboration among colleges for continuous improvement of teacher preparation:** Cross-institutional networks of faculty have cemented new relationships, generated serious examination of both the disciplinary and pedagogical courses that comprise the teacher education program, and have led, and continue to lead, to curricular change.

• In response to a deficiency identified through assessment, a statistics course for elementary education majors has been created and piloted.

• Special sections of our integrative studies/ general education courses, designed with teacher education candidates in mind, have been developed: e.g., ISS 315, a social science course.

• The elementary education language arts major is in process of revision. It involves not only changes in course content more reflective of actual school curricula but also stronger coordination of experiences in disciplinary and pedagogy courses.

• Changes in short-term field experiences for education students have been initiated in cooperation with local K-8 teachers to address areas that have been identified as problematical for new teachers.

• Improvements have been made in on-campus courses taken by prospective teachers and other majors. With the general intent on maximizing conceptual understandings, the basic biological science course has been revised. Similar revisions in other science courses are in progress.
• Development of centers focused on teaching, on and off campus, will serve to sustain the interest generated by TNE: CRYSTAL (undergraduate science teaching); Center for Mathematics and Science Education Research; Center for Teaching American History.

• **To sustain and continue such developments requires institutional commitment and organizational ties.** The deans of Education and the core colleges met recently to discuss what components of TNE they wished to sustain after conclusion of the project. They signed a letter, linked to the budgetary process, indicating strong mutual support for continuing cross college faculty linkages, the induction program and assessment.

• Within their own resources, they agreed to sustain the process of curricular re-development spurred by the TNE project. At the University level, an existing Teacher Education Council reviews and recommends changes in teacher education policy and curriculum.

• The TEC might be expected to serve as a proponent of continuous quality improvement.

• **Fostering a cross-University climate for evaluation and assessment:**

  • Consistent with the design principle “decisions based on evidence”, college and University efforts in implementing assessments have been promoted by:
  • The baseline data that was collected on teacher education candidates and practicing MSU-educated teachers,
  • The assessment measures that were developed by faculty in disciplinary departments as well as in education, and
  • The systems that were developed to collect and analyze such information.
  • These efforts contributed both to our regional re-accreditation review (NCA/CIHE) and to the TEAC review now in progress.
  • MSU has been designated as the depository for MEAP (student test performance data) by the State Department of Education. This provides access to one set of elements needed for value-added measurement. The Provost has provided special funding in the last budget cycle for maintenance of the system, which can also serve as a valuable research tool.
  • We are currently working with the DOE and other state institutions on improvements to the state teacher data bases that will allow us to make the connections between pupils and MSU-educated teachers.
• **Institutionalization of academy based induction**

• **ASSIST**: With funding from TNE, supplemented by the State Department of Education, MSU designed a basic induction program. An on-line resource ([http://assist.educ.msu.edu/ASSIST/](http://assist.educ.msu.edu/ASSIST/)) is available to teachers throughout the state, and MSU faculty “trained the trainers” who would carry this into their school districts.

• Based on input from practicing teachers-- including MSU alumni-- the TNE induction team developed a program focusing on classroom management and acculturation in the first year and on content in the second year. This has been piloted in the Lansing School district and has received strong administrative, faculty and union support. Unfortunately, the faltering state economy resulted in all but one of the new teachers being pink-slipped, leaving a program without a constituency.

**Looking to the future:**

Given the uncertainties of near-term in-state hiring, the College of Education is negotiating with an out-of-state school district, currently hiring large numbers of new teachers, to serve as a locus for continued development of the University-based induction program.

We know that Michigan will need such programs as the wave of baby-boomer retirements occurs, and we do not want to lose momentum. We remain committed to induction supporting and sustaining new teachers.

The TNE-allied **PROM/SE** project for mathematics and science teachers has had an ambitious faculty development program in five large intermediate districts in Michigan and Ohio. It involves on-site and on-campus training for administrators and faculty leaders. The complexity and costs of the program make sustainability at the same level unlikely, but it is hoped that “lessons learned” may carry over in the districts.

The focus on content has encouraged some experimentation by disciplinary departments. The Department of History has joined with K-12 districts to offer a series of summer workshops funded by the NEH.

**Urban Education project:**

The University has facilitated the recruitment of students from the Detroit area by making an exemption from its freshman “admission to the university policy” and permitting direct admission to Education.
Special mentoring and programming have been designed for this cohort of students to enhance retention and interest. Summer internships in the Detroit Public Schools have generated considerably larger numbers of students interested in placement in urban schools; currently internship placements with Chicago Public Schools are being negotiated.

Institutionally, we have learned much through the TNE project, as well as strengthened cross-collegiate and cross-departmental ties, and we are grateful for the generous support of Carnegie Corporation and the foundations that allowed us this opportunity.

There is one loose end that I would like to mention, especially since it is inherent in the TNE principles. This is the question of what we will have learned at the real conclusion of the project, that is, when the students who have gone through the re-configured programs are ensconced in their classrooms.

We have done our own institutional studies throughout the project, and the first four TNE institutions have been periodically evaluated by the Rand Corporation. However, we have yet to produce the first graduates of the reconfigured programs. It would be instructive to identify some point in time at which each of the institutions assesses the impact of what they would identify as their most significant change. Then we might be able to truly ascertain the degree to which TNE has become institutionalized.