

# REPORT ON TEACHER EDUCATION LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

By Jolanda M. Westerhof

**A**s the student population of the United States continues to grow in size and diversity, the demand for quality teachers will further increase. AASCU member institutions prepare over 50 percent of new teachers, and these teacher education programs play a critical role in addressing this need. In recent years, however, the context in which teacher preparation programs operate has grown increasingly complex, and the improvements in practice and other innovations have been overshadowed by heavy scrutiny and shifting expectations.

Formed in 2016, the AASCU Task Force on Teacher Education—composed of higher education practitioners and experts and co-chaired by State University of New York at Fredonia President Virginia Schaefer Horvath and Richard Caulfield, chancellor at the University of Alaska Southeast—undertook a survey of presidents, provosts and education deans at state colleges and universities to gain a better understanding of where the teaching profession is today.

Task Force and survey respondents identified a broad set of challenges facing teacher preparation, including growing expectations coupled with declining teacher autonomy; low pay; teacher shortages; declining enrollment in university-based teacher preparation; and federal and state policies created by external entities. The Task Force report, *Preparing Teachers in Today's Challenging Context: Key Issues, Policy Directions and Implications for Leaders of AASCU Universities*, describes challenges to university-based teacher preparation and offers recommendations for institutions on how to meet these challenges, including bolstering clinical experience, ensuring strong P-12 partnerships, increasing strategic recruitment, building stronger articulation agreements with community colleges, and developing strategies to professionalize teacher education.

The report also presents timely and practical priorities and recommendations for federal and state programs and for public policy for teacher education, such as strengthening and funding

high-quality clinical experiences; requiring all candidates to pass a performance assessment prior to becoming a licensed teacher; ensuring that states evaluate preparation programs using the same standards and supporting service-payback models; and loan forgiveness programs for teachers.

“Across the U.S., local school districts and state and federal policymakers are eager to strengthen the ways we educate the next generations of learners and citizens,” said Task Force Chair Horvath. “More than ever, we need partnerships from cradle to career, with teacher preparation programs focused on student success and connected to their communities.”

Teacher preparation is at the core of most public universities' missions, providing a vital function in pursuit of states' ambitions for an educated and engaged populace. Although today's context for teacher preparation is characterized by myriad challenges, public universities, like AASCU member institutions, are expertly positioned to facilitate that success.

As the report makes clear, AASCU member institutions strive to continuously improve the development of teachers who will prepare future generations in their communities for success in college and careers. Now is the time for the nation's public universities to build on their long-standing commitment to preparing educators by focusing on the key strategies and policies that will move the field forward. **P**

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