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Testimony of

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Honorable Rubén Hinojosa, Chairman

Preparing Teachers for the Classroom:
**The Role of the Higher Education Act and the No Child Left
Behind Act**

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Good morning, Chairman Hinojosa and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

I represent the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. Our members are 800 schools and colleges of education in all states of the nation. Schools of education produce over 90% of the new teachers who enter our classrooms every year.

Colleges of education have changed dramatically over the last decade. Major reforms of programs since the late 1980s have created a curriculum much stronger in content and how to teach it, in how to serve diverse learners well, and in how to apply what is learned in courses to the classroom through tightly connected clinical training. Gone from most universities are the education majors that ducked serious subject matter and provided abstract theory divorced from practice. Our teacher candidates have also changed. A major share are mid-career professionals moving into teaching as a second career. Many are instructional aides who have returned to school to become highly qualified teachers. Others go to classes from their own living rooms via the Internet. And a growing number attend their university classes in the public schools where they are teaching, which function like teaching hospitals do in medicine.

Indeed, we are not your grandmothers' schools of education!

Although there are still some weak programs of teacher education that are a matter of significant concern to us, most of the enterprise has changed dramatically as a result of reforms launched by states, universities, and the federal government.

I would like to dispel three myths about schools of education that often masquerade as facts.

Myth #1 holds that teacher candidates leaving the academy are weak in content knowledge. While that once was often true, nothing could be further from the truth today. In every state, beginning teachers demonstrate significant content knowledge in their area of concentration either by completing a major or by passing a rigorous content test or both. The most recent MetLife survey reported that 98% of principals reported that first-time teachers are well prepared to teach subject matter. Nearly 60% of principals found the quality of new teachers entering the profession today to be noticeably better than the quality of new teachers in the past. And in states like Kentucky and California where major reforms of preparation were undertaken, studies have found that at least 85% of teachers and employers report that new teachers from public colleges are entering teaching well prepared for their work. Preliminary findings from a forthcoming report from the Education Testing Service indicate that the academic quality of teacher candidates is improving – in terms of SAT scores, grade point averages, and Praxis scores. Indeed, an earlier ETS study found that newly prepared high school teachers have higher SAT scores than their peers and equivalent or higher grade point averages in their

subject matter majors. The practice of majoring in education without strong subject matter preparation and then entering teaching as a mathematics or chemistry teacher is a thing of the past.

Myth #2 holds that schools of education are ivory towers, divorced from the realities of the K-12 classroom, producing teachers who are unprepared for today's schools.

This, too, has changed dramatically. Schools of education are integrally involved with K-12 schools. Professional development schools, which are schools modeled after teaching hospitals in the medical profession, are increasingly the norm. In the last decade, universities have launched more than 1,000 such school partnerships across the country, which provide state-of-the-art sites for preparing teachers, pursuing reforms, and conducting research. Studies have found that teachers trained in these sites—many of which are in hard-to-staff urban communities—feel better prepared and are rated as more effective. In addition, veteran teachers report improvements in their own practice, and curriculum reforms stimulated by these university partnerships have produced student achievement gains. Candidates in these sites often complete a full year of student teaching or residency under the wing of an expert veteran teacher. Research tells us that such sustained clinical experiences are a predictor of effectiveness and retention.

Myth #3, my personal favorite, suggests that schools of education reject

accountability. In fact, we may be the only portion of the higher education community that fully *embraces* accountability. We want to know if our graduates are effective; if they remain in the profession; if they generate high achievement from their students. Higher education systems in Texas, Louisiana, California, Florida, and Ohio, to name a few, are actively developing the capacity to follow education graduates and make determinations about program effectiveness. These efforts are underway based on the initiative of the colleges of education supported by external funding.

Even though national professional accreditation is voluntary in most states, most teacher education institutions volunteer to undertake national accreditation, even though about ¼ of institutions do not receive full approval on their first attempt. NCATE accreditation now requires solid evidence of teacher education outcomes, including how candidates perform on licensing examinations, how they succeed in classrooms, how many enter and stay in teaching, and, increasingly, how they influence student learning. Teacher educators are committed to evaluating preparation programs based on the success of graduates

I am not asserting that there is no room for improvement in schools of education—for there certainly is considerable work yet to be done. But I think it is important to acknowledge that we are not standing still. It is also important to acknowledge that schools of education alone cannot solve the nation's teacher supply and distribution problems. Federal incentives are needed to support able candidates in becoming well-prepared and to distribute these well-prepared teachers to the schools where they are most needed.

Teachers in the U.S. are paid considerably less than their peers who go into other lines of work, and many must go into debt to complete their preparation, as there is very little governmental support to help them gain the skills they need to do their extraordinarily complex jobs well. If they go to teach in high-need communities, they will generally earn considerably less than if they teach in wealthy districts. Meanwhile, our competitor nations that are higher achieving (such as Finland, Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, Germany, France, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore) have made substantial investments in teacher training and equitable teacher distribution in the last two decades. These nations recruit their best and brightest into high-quality graduate-level teacher education (which includes a year of practice teaching in a clinical school connected to the university), completely subsidized for all candidates at government expense. They provide mentoring for all beginners in their first year of teaching, and their funding mechanisms ensure equitable salaries, often with additional stipends for hard-to-staff locations, which are competitive with other professions.

In order to make headway on the issue of recruiting, preparing, and retaining teachers where they are needed most, we need a much more systemic approach.

I would like to submit for the record a copy of the “Marshall Plan for Teaching” that was written recently by AACTE Board member and internationally renowned teacher educator Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond. This bold plan points out that in order for our nation to ensure that every student has a teacher who knows how to teach challenging content to diverse learners, we need to invest \$3 billion annually. Chairman Miller’s TEACH ACT that he recently introduced includes some features of this plan. The simple fact is that the federal government has not made the kind of investment in either higher education or pre-K-12 education that is needed to get the result we want.

The two Title IIs—of the Higher Education Act and of the No Child Left Behind Act—are lynchpins in the federal investment in teacher quality. Yet neither is currently robust enough to produce the transformation that is needed.

Title II of the Higher Education Act was first authorized in 1998, four years before the enactment of No Child Left Behind. This will be the first time Congress has had an opportunity to look at the Higher Education Act in relation to the requirements of NCLB.

The purpose of Title II of HEA is to transform teacher preparation—so that it is rigorous and accountable. I am pleased to report to you that transformation is under way. Schools of education are deeply involved with other components of the university -- including schools of arts and sciences -- and with local school districts. The successes of some of these new models of preparation have been documented in a number of recent reports, including a major volume by the National Academy of Education. When the “highly qualified” mandate was enacted in NCLB, Title II HEA funds were increasingly used to prepare teachers to meet those requirements.

Schools of education are at the beginning of developing more meaningful and robust capacity for accountability – through collection of rich assessment data regarding their candidates and their programs. The development of valid and reliable performance assessments is an essential element of those activities. For example, a consortium of universities in California has developed the PACT assessment (Performance Assessment for California Teachers) that, like the National Board’s assessments, measures the actual teaching skills and outcomes of prospective teachers. This assessment and similar efforts in Wisconsin, Washington, Oregon, North Carolina, and elsewhere demonstrate the possibilities for improving preparation by measuring whether new teachers can actually teach before they enter the profession. Such measures build on earlier work -- such as the teacher work sample assessment -- and could provide much stronger accountability than the current requirements for teachers to pass paper-and-pencil tests of basic skills and subject matter knowledge that, though important, fall short of looking at whether teachers can actually succeed in teaching diverse students.

We believe that state certification requirements should include this type of performance assessment so that parents and students are assured that a beginning teacher is skilled in instructing all students. A modest investment by the federal government could facilitate the continued development of valid and reliable teacher performance assessments so that states may adopt them. Such an investment is called for in the TEACH Act recently re-introduced by Chairman Miller.

The Higher Education Act has also put a premium on partnerships among K-12 schools, colleges of education, and schools of arts and sciences. Such partnerships are no longer novel, but are increasingly routine.

But the transformation envisioned by the law—systemic and comprehensive—has not occurred. The transformation remains spotty and unsustained given the minimal \$60 million federal investment. Title II of the Higher Education Act was envisioned in 1998 as a \$300 million program. This amount is a bare minimum for starting on the critical agenda of ensuring that every beginning teacher is adequately prepared to teach the challenging content standards required under NCLB and to do so successfully with students with a wide array of learning needs. Yet every year the funds dwindle.

I would like to submit our reauthorization recommendations for Title II of the Higher Education Act for the record. In summary, we propose

- **A targeted investment in the development of data systems so that schools of education can follow their graduates and assess their impact on student learning, track teacher movement, and measure retention.**
- **An investment in partnerships among schools of education, schools of arts and sciences, and K-12 schools that targets sustained clinical experience, teaching diverse learners (including ELL and special education students), addressing the critical shortage areas (including, math, science, special education, and ELL) and addressing teacher turnover in high-need schools – with a significant increase in funding. This would include support for**

partnerships that provide high-quality internships and residencies in communities where teachers are most needed.

- **A new Teaching Fellowship program that would provide service scholarships to cover the cost of preparation in exchange for teaching in high-need fields and high-need schools for at least four years.**
- **A revision of the Pass Rate requirements so that pass rates are reported for candidates who have completed 100% of their coursework. (This will ensure that candidates taking certification exams have completed all content and pedagogical curricula courses.)**

Title II of the No Child Left Behind Act is the federal government’s \$2.9 billion investment in professional development. Yet, according to the Department of Education, only 28% of the funds are actually spent on professional development. About half of the funds go to class-size-reduction initiatives in states.

Title II NCLB funds should be targeted to produce systemic and sustainable change in states—working through partnership involving higher education and local school districts. The funds should support developing and carrying out statewide initiatives to address the following challenges:

- Persistent and critical shortages in fields such as math, science, special education, and ELL.
- The maldistribution of teachers so that the neediest students are most likely to have the least qualified teachers.
- Ensuring that rural and urban schools have effective teachers and high retention rates.
- Ensuring that all teachers can provide instruction in a rigorous curriculum to diverse learners.

I submit for the record our recommendations for improving the No Child Left Behind Act, which include:

- **Partnerships to reduce teacher shortages in urban and rural areas;**
- **Preparation that will ensure that all new teachers are prepared to teach diverse populations, including English language learners and special education students;**
- **Preparation and professional development to help teachers learn to use data and assessments to improve teaching and learning; and**
- **State-of-the-art mentoring programs for beginning teachers so that they become increasingly competent and stay in teaching.**
- **Support for the development of teacher performance assessments that enhance teacher preparation and teacher accountability.**

I would also like to submit our publication “Teacher Education Reform: The Impact of Federal Investments,” which profiles grants funded by Title II of the Higher Education Act. Next month, I will be pleased to submit to the Subcommittee our upcoming publication, “Preparing STEM Teachers: The Key to Global Competitiveness.”

The relationship between higher education and K-12 schools has changed dramatically in the last decade. There is no longer a clear line between the role of higher education and the role of public schools. Rather, there are ongoing innovative relationships that promote the improvement of instructional practice in both the academy and the classroom. Both Title IIs need to support and fund these rich partnerships to yield maximum benefit for our nation's learners.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.