



UNITED UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONS

TEACHER EDUCATION SEGMENT

**from *Testimony on the
2016-17 Executive Budget***

Presented To:

Senator Catharine Young, Chair
Senate Finance Committee

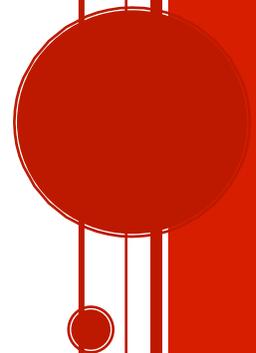
and

Assemblyman Herman D. Farrell Jr., Chair
Assembly Ways and Means Committee

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Prepared by:

United University Professions
PO Box 15143
Albany, NY 12212-5143
800-342-4206
www.uupinfo.org



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TEACHER EDUCATION

Enrollments in many public school districts are growing again, particularly in urban and suburban high-needs districts serving diverse and minority students. In fact, 265 school districts are experiencing a combined enrollment growth of nearly 20,000 in 2015-16, including districts in New York City, Buffalo, Utica, Hempstead, Roosevelt and Central Islip. At the same time, the number of new prospective teachers is declining dramatically. Misguided initiatives to impose multiple, poorly designed and costly high-stakes teacher certification exams, combined with punitive and unfair teacher evaluations and receivership mandates, have discouraged large numbers of young adults from pursuing teaching careers.

Enrollments in the state's public and private teacher education programs fell by nearly 40 percent, from 79,225 in 2008-09 to 47,872 in 2012-13. Serious teacher shortages are already apparent in areas such as special education, technology education, early childhood education, and in STEM fields. Severe substitute teacher shortages across the state further reflect the shrinkage of the teacher candidate pipeline in recent years.

Let me highlight just one example. SUNY's Buffalo State and Oswego campuses have been primary institutions preparing Technology Education teachers in the state. In 2008, their combined Technology Education undergraduate enrollment was in the range of 350 students. Today, it is fewer than 50. In a multi-campus forum held with Regents in November 2015, a faculty member reported that over the past year, SUNY placed 20 new technology education teachers in the state, but received more than 100 requests from schools needing technology education teachers. These programs expect to graduate fewer than 20 students this year and anticipate that there will be 75-80 schools that need qualified technology education teachers but will be unable to find one. While our campuses are attracting students interested in engineering and other technology careers, there has been a dramatic decline in students who are interested in pursuing a teaching career in their field.

The declining recruitment of future teachers has exacerbated an already growing diversity problem. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center, the majority of children in New York state under five years of age are non-white (54 percent). In contrast, there are proportionately more white individuals and fewer people of color enrolled in teacher education programs. The most recent

Title II data, covering Academic Years 2011-12 and 2012-13, reveal that 70 percent of students in New York state teacher education programs are white.

A 2015 Albert Shanker Institute report, titled “The State of Teacher Diversity in American Education,” analyzed teacher diversity in nine U.S. cities, including New York City. In 2012 “White teachers in New York City public schools outnumbered their black and Hispanic colleagues by roughly a 3-1 ratio, according to the report. The situation was reversed among public school students, where blacks and Hispanics outnumbered whites by a 5-1 ratio. Between 2002 and 2012, the share of white and Hispanic teachers in district schools remained stable, while the proportion of black teachers declined.

Recruitment of an adequate and diverse pool of new teachers in the state has suffered a further setback due to obstacles associated with the 2014 implementation of a new system of teacher certification. Teacher candidates must pass four high-stakes tests to obtain initial teaching certification. The new exams, administered by Pearson, Inc., have not gone through adequate validity and reliability tests and were not properly field tested. There is no conclusive proof that this new certification process is improving teacher preparedness in New York state, and there is no plan to formally evaluate their impact on the field. There are serious content problems with some of the new exams, and student certification costs have risen substantially. Instead of improving teacher quality, this new package of certification requirements is presenting unprecedented roadblocks to initial teaching certification and further setting back efforts to recruit new teachers and diversify the teaching workforce. Teacher candidates can pay up to \$1,000 to take—and often retake—exams that have not been adequately vetted, receiving inadequate feedback from Pearson when they fail their tests.

The significance of the new certification requirements as a factor in New York state’s declining recruitment of new potential teachers is illustrated by student experience with the edTPA – the new performance assessment that must be completed during the student teaching experience. The current mismatch between edTPA requirements and student teaching conditions, particularly acute in fields such as special education, has set many student teachers up for failure. A growing number of teacher candidates who successfully complete teacher education programs and are recommended for certification by their faculty, are deciding not to pursue certification in the state. The edTPA must be completed during student teaching and submitted to Pearson for scoring within an 18-month time frame. Faculty reports of low rates of student registration for and submission of the edTPA for scoring reveal that many teacher candidates are giving up on the possibility of

teaching in the state. Students who fail to timely submit the edTPA are, for the most part, eliminating the possibility of getting certified in New York state.

Out-of-state schools are well aware of the teacher certification debacle in New York and are aggressively recruiting teacher candidates from our teacher education programs. There has been a steady increase in out-of-state recruiters at Teacher Recruitment Day events, where prospective employers come to campuses to interview program graduates. For example, Central New York teacher recruitment days, which involve 17 public and private colleges from the Southern Tier (Elmira and Binghamton) through the North Country (St. Lawrence and Potsdam), have seen a steady increase in participation by out-of-state districts (from 22 in 2012 to 27 in 2013, to 38 in 2014, and 48 in 2015).

UUP has demonstrated a strong, unwavering commitment to high-quality teacher education programs. Our members are directly involved in teaching required courses and providing support services for students in those programs. Our work includes supervising student teachers, arranging student teacher placements and other experiential learning activities with P-12 colleagues, collecting and reporting program and student outcomes data, and preparing assessments for internal evaluation and external assessment. Tapping the expertise of our members across teacher education programs on 17 SUNY campuses, we have developed teacher education proposals to enhance the quality of teacher education and begin to remove barriers to entering the teaching profession in New York state.

In its draft report of findings and recommendations, SUNY's TeachNY Advisory Council recommended that campuses should "work more effectively with current on-campus programs, such as SUNY's own highly successful EOP." UUP agrees. To meet the challenge, UUP proposes that the state provide \$15 million to support a new pilot opportunity program—Recruiting and Educating Teachers for All (RETA)—to address the worsening crisis of recruiting and retaining teachers in our under-resourced high-needs districts, and increase the participation rate of under-represented and economically disadvantaged individuals in teaching careers.

This program would provide: (1) financial resources and direct faculty and advisor support to assist students in preparing for and successfully completing teacher certification requirements; (2) supportive services designed to help students who need assistance in academic, career and personal counseling as well as tutoring and supplemental instruction; (3) financial assistance for non-tuition-related expenses (exam and other fees, books and supplies, transportation costs for required completion of 100 hours of field work and distant student teaching placements).

RETA incorporates several of the Albert Shanker Institute's policy recommendations for increasing diversity in teaching. Four warrant particular attention. First, modeled after SUNY's highly successful Educational Opportunity Program, RETA meets the need to develop and expand "programs with evidence of helping to recruit, mentor, and support minority teachers." Second, RETA "invests in and supports high-quality teacher education programs at public colleges and universities serving large numbers of minority students" through its investment in SUNY's teacher education programs, which provide access to students at 17 state-operated campuses around the state. Third, RETA supports collaboration between college/university programs and P-12 schools through the development of orientation programs that would introduce prospective teacher education students to the field of teaching. It would facilitate partnerships between SUNY teacher education programs and school districts in need of diverse teachers. Fourth, RETA will enable "adequate mentoring, support and training in culturally responsive practices to novice teachers—of all races and ethnicities."

As an important step toward addressing the flawed and poorly implemented new system of teacher certification exams and its negative impact on recruiting and retaining teacher candidates in New York state, UUP also calls on the state to stop outsourcing the quality control and accountability for tests to for-profit vendors such as Pearson. The state currently, without cost, can contract with educational vendors to develop and score tests. The vendor profits directly from students, who pay to take and retake tests. The vendor is paid regardless of the accuracy, validity or fairness of the tests, and profits from faulty exams that often require student retakes. We propose a change in the state's procurement law that would require SED to take back responsibility for exam administration and fee collection. This would be an important step toward ending the private exploitation of prospective teacher candidates.

UUP also proposes that immediate steps be taken to address pressing problems with the four high-stakes certification requirements. Since 2014 students have paid to take and retake what are clearly faulty teacher certification exams, with their initial teaching certification held hostage by a rushed and poorly designed transition to new certification requirements.

An important first step would be to remove the edTPA as a high-stakes requirement to allow the necessary time to develop appropriate ways to implement high-quality performance assessment across all 27 different teacher education specialty areas. New York is one of very few states that decided to use the edTPA for high-stakes purposes, and was the only state to do so without adequate trials. Exploratory use for a period of time would help to determine the best way to use

edTPA and to solve problems that have not been addressed. These include the mismatch between the edTPA and specific student teaching contexts, parental concerns about the security of mandatory classroom videos, and the transformation of the student teaching experience from a rich clinical experience to “student teaching to the test.” Another part of this proposal is to give campuses the option to use alternative performance assessments that may be better suited to specific programs and specialty areas, thereby enhancing the assessment of teacher candidates. New York state’s one-size-fits-all edTPA policy is not serving all teacher education programs and students optimally and is creating insurmountable barriers for many prospective teachers.

A second step toward addressing the flaws in the new certification process is a full analysis of the entire package of new teacher certification exams to determine whether they meet professional standards for content, validity, and reliability in all teaching specialty areas. The radical change in teacher certification imposed in 2014 must be evaluated. We are willing to work with the State Education Department, the Regents, legislators, and professionals across private and public teacher education programs to help put New York back on track for a high-quality teacher certification process.