

**Chapter 49.2 Teacher Preparation Follow-up Hearing**  
**Testimony: Fay Glosenger, PhD; Education Department Chair; Juniata College**  
**11-13-08**

Good morning. Thank you for meeting with us today. I am here on behalf of my colleagues from private institutions across the state to express concerns about the credit mandates specified in the new guidelines issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Please know that many colleagues at state and state-related institutions also share these concerns. First, I will note three points of agreement with the Department. Next, I will note six points of disagreement and discuss how the credit mandates may negatively impact our students, our programs, and the public.

**Points of Agreement:**

1. *We share the PA Department of Education's goals and commitment to producing highly qualified teachers in PA.* Research supports the assertion that teachers and high quality instruction are linked to high student achievement. In fact, teachers may be the single most important influence on student achievement and success in school. We appreciate and support the hard work done by the PDE and the guideline committees. Overall, we support the competencies, and we can meet them in all of the new certification programs.
2. *We also agree that teacher preparation programs must address the call for reform; we need high quality teacher preparation programs to produce highly qualified, successful teachers.* Recent national and state reports conclude that teachers and administrators express general dissatisfaction with teacher preparation programs. However, the exact nature of the dissatisfaction is unclear, varies across reports, and depends on the specific programs studied. The problem is complex, and reform efforts are complicated even more by varying definitions and opinions about what "highly qualified teachers" look like. There are no easy answers. Nevertheless, we agree that concerns about teacher preparation do exist and need to be taken seriously.
3. *We accept the challenge to design innovative, rigorous, research-based programs that integrate content, skills, and values; and we are not stalling or objecting to change.* Across the state, bright and dedicated professionals are working diligently to design exemplary programs that comply with the new regulations and meet the competencies outlined in the guidelines. We know that program development and assessment must be ongoing; we realize that feedback from the field is essential; and we expect the PDE to set rigorous expectations and oversee the process. We believe that new designs and reform in teacher preparation must be deliberate and intentional, and we know the importance of demonstrating how our

graduates meet the competencies established by the PDE. We are accountable to the PDE, but more importantly, we are accountable to our students, our profession, and the public.

**Points of Disagreement and Potential Negative Impact of the Credit Mandates:**

1. *We do not agree that most institutions in the state are supportive of the credit mandates found in the guidelines.* Many faculty and administrators believe that excessive credit mandates will negatively affect institutions' abilities to carry out their missions, offer teacher preparation programs, graduate students in four years, and provide a liberal arts education. Also, excessive requirements add one more barrier to recruiting bright, talented individuals into teaching and may also discourage out-of-state applicants. Chapter 354 regulations specifically charge institutions to design programs consistent with their missions, to prevent unnecessary duplication of coursework, and to design programs that allow candidates to graduate in four years. The new guidelines run counter to this charge.
2. *We do not agree that excessive regulation and excessive credit mandates guarantee quality.* While we believe that rigor and high expectations are essential, we can design rigorous programs and meet expectations set by the PDE by demonstrating mastery of specified competencies. We believe each institution has unique strengths and should be encouraged to design teacher preparations programs that capitalize on strengths and offer families and students flexible, affordable, high quality choices that match personal interests, needs, and goals. While standardization appeals to some, we maintain that a move to uniformity across teacher preparation programs will breed mediocrity and limit innovation. Regulations do not call for micromanagement and standardization; the PDE chose to mandate this route of reform. We cannot determine where the credit mandates originated and have found no research to support them. When guidelines were released, credit mandates were an unexpected and nonnegotiable part of the package. Considerable dissatisfaction was expressed at every meeting we attended; objections came from state, state-related, and private colleges and universities alike. There is no empirical evidence to support the Department's belief that credit requirements that exceed a typical college major will produce better or more qualified teachers. More is not necessarily better, credit mandates do not ensure quality, and credit audits do not suffice as a means of program approval.
3. *We do not agree that the number of required credits mandated in new guidelines is congruent with current college majors in education or other disciplines.* The credit mandates are excessive and overly prescriptive. Most institutions have policies that limit the number of required credits in a major. At Juniata College, majors are restricted to 63 credits. Our current early childhood program has 63 credits, 48 credits of coursework and 15 credits for the student teaching semester. While the PDE asserts that the new Pre K-4<sup>th</sup> Grade Guidelines mandate 60 credits of required coursework plus whatever the institution decides

to require for student teaching, the number is deceiving. Student teaching takes students off campus full-time for at least 12 weeks, and they must take 12 credits a semester to maintain financial aid. Thus, credits assigned to student teaching will likely range from 12- 15 credits and take the total number of required credits in the major above 70 credits. Also, the credits mandated in the new Middle Level 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grade Guidelines are numerous and even more restrictive.

4. *We disagree with the assumption that extensive regulation and mandated credits will solve the problems with teacher preparation noted in recent reports. In fact, we believe the credit mandates will create new problems.* We believe the number of four year undergraduate programs that can (or will choose to) offer middle level and special education certification will be limited. If so, the teacher shortage in special education will increase, especially at the middle and high school levels. We also predict a shortage of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers. The PDE still has not circulated the intention to submit form for colleges and universities to declare which programs they plan to design and submit for initial approval, and to my knowledge, the Department will have no systematic, empirical data to determine how many new programs will be offered until these forms are filed. This is very important data we all need to determine the impact of guidelines on future teacher supply and shortage. We are currently completing our new program designs and may have them done before this information is available.
5. *We are extremely concerned about the potential negative impact new guidelines will have on students and their families.* Liberal arts institutions attract students who want to combine teacher preparation with studies in another discipline or with a strength or unique program offered by the college, and these students also expect to graduate in four years. With increased credit requirements, student flexibility, autonomy, choice, and mobility will decrease. For example, many students come to Juniata College to combine teacher preparation with our strength in international studies, environmental sciences, language, or peace and conflict studies. Many have a dual major or a secondary emphasis of study. Now, teacher candidates complete our unified early childhood or elementary and special education programs, earn certificates in both areas, and study abroad; with careful planning they can accomplish all of this in four years. They can explore options their first year, complete field experiences at different levels, and decide which certificate(s) they want to pursue. They can move from another program into education with relative ease if they do so in their sophomore year. Under new guidelines, none of this will be possible. Students will have very few, if any, electives and little room for error. Because of specified credit mandates, programs will be very tight. To graduate in four years, freshmen will have to know what they want to do when they step foot on campus. Students will be unable to spend a semester studying abroad unless they can afford to stay longer than four years. All of these limitations run counter to the spirit of a liberal arts education and make an affordable four year program

less likely. For these reasons, Juniata College is choosing not to offer some of the new certificates.

6. *We disagree with the broad and global assertion that graduates and school administrators are dissatisfied with teacher preparation programs.* While there are legitimate concerns, we also have many unique, high quality teacher preparation programs in PA; many administrators are very pleased with novice teachers, and some graduates note strong satisfaction with their preparation. An administrator from Huntingdon applauds the recent graduates and teacher candidates who work in his buildings. He calls them “essential partners and change agents who have helped three of the four elementary schools in the district gain national and state recognition.” The schools and awards are: Brady Henderson, Blue Ribbon School; Jackson Miller, Speaker of the House Golden Apple Award; and Southside, Title I Distinguished School. We welcome the challenge of reform, but we see it as an opportunity to make strong programs even better.

#### **Conclusion:**

*In closing, regardless of what the PDE chooses to believe or report, wide spread dissatisfaction with the overly prescriptive nature of new guidelines still exists across the state.* We have been working diligently and trying to collaborate in good faith; however, the best we have been able to do is respectfully agree to disagree with the Pennsylvania Department of Education on excessive regulation and required credit mandates. While it is true that the PDE held numerous meetings on the guidelines since 2007, concerns and suggestions regarding credit mandates and the faculty matrix were ignored; credit specification remains a nonnegotiable item without rationale and empirical support. We have been unsuccessful in negotiating elimination of or reduction in the number of mandated credits, and we ask for your assistance before the potential negative impact of excessive regulation results in new problems that are felt across the Commonwealth.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our concerns.