

Lincoln University

Education Department

November 13, 2008

Advancing the Legacy

Thank you, to Representative James Roebuck and the Education Committee of the House of Representatives for providing this opportunity for Pennsylvania Universities providing Teacher Preparation Programs and the Pennsylvania Department of Education to express our views. Our contact with Tracey McLaughlin, Education Research Analyst in preparing for this meeting has remained at the highest professional level. Basic to today's meeting is the underlying goal of are who are here and represented today is to provide highly qualified teachers for all of our students in basic education programs.

Representative of the Lincoln University Education faculty members have attended several of the informational meetings provided by PDE in regards to the changes in the Teacher Preparation Programs and teacher certification. We have, as other university stakeholders, expressed our concerns regarding several points related to the changes; some of which are listed below. It is hoped that PDE policy makers will address these issues.

Lincoln University, the oldest HBCU degree granting institution has as its mission for the Education Department to prepare future teachers, many of whom will return or stay in the area to teach in the urban school districts in Pennsylvania. In addition, our President and Board of Trustees have supported the plan to increase the numbers of pre-service majors entering the teaching profession. However, the changes that have been initiated by the Pennsylvania Department of Education will have an impact on the Lincoln University Teacher Preparation Program in the following ways:

1. The Elementary Education certification (K-6th grade) ends in 2013. This program is the most popular Education major that our students select. However, most of the surrounding states continue to have this certification since Elementary Education covers the widest area of teacher placements in the private and public school sectors. A foreseeable impact of this change may be two-fold: (1) fewer students will choose Education as a major and (2) Pennsylvania colleges and university, e.g. Lincoln University will be less attractive to out of state students with the goal of teaching at the Elementary level.
2. The Elementary/Middle level certificate that will replace Elementary has been defined by PDE as a Middle level certificate. It is primarily an academic content preparation certification. It requires 30 credits in an academic subject area as does the secondary education content/cognate area teacher preparation programs. However, the Elementary/Middle level certificate requires an additional 36 credits in three other academic content areas, plus 27 credits in a Middle Level Professional Core. The requirements established by the PDE Framework for

teaching grades 4 through 8 subjects far exceed the requirements for teaching secondary grades 7 -12 subjects. It would appear that whatever program design, an increased number of courses would be required in order for pre-service teachers to be prepared to teach in their own areas of interest and strength. The impact of this change will be fewer candidates which could lead to the elimination of this program at the university level. Historically Lincoln University has prepared many of the minority teachers in the surrounding areas. This potential changes will detrimentally affect that pipeline.

3. The Early Childhood Education, PK-4th certificate requires 72 professional core credits in a four year program. The prescribed credits will make it prohibitive for Lincoln University to offer a well grounded liberal arts education while meeting these new requirements in four years. The credit requirements are contrary to Lincoln University's liberal arts focus and make it impossible to graduate students in four years.
4. PDE has established a 190 (140 hours defined as pre-student teaching) field experience requirement, which is a significant increase. The Education Department at Lincoln University has a difficult time developing quality field sites for student teachers due to transportation, distance and scheduling constraints. In addition, school districts are more hesitant to accept student teachers given their concerns about meeting their own goals related PSSA testing and meeting AYP.
5. Chapter 354 mandates that students cannot apply for admission to the Teacher Preparation Program until they have completed 48 credits with a 3.0 GPA. The above field experience requirement and the 48 credit admissions mandate are at odds. Decisions related to admission to the program and course advising will need to begin in the student's first semester if they are to meet the required field experience hours.
6. However, the field experience hours and competencies established in the frameworks will not be applied to the nearly 5,000 applicants from out of state that are certified in PA every year. Therefore, Lincoln University's mission of sending minority teachers into the surrounding areas will be jeopardized by those teachers who have not been required to complete this rigorous program, many/ most of whom are not minorities.
7. The single-spaced 19 pages of competencies at the Early Childhood Education level and 9 pages at the Middle level is more than a significant increase from our earlier Guidelines for program development. In addition, many of these competencies are the same of the PDE Academic Standards for Basic Education. Since the Praxis I test is a basic skills test, one questions the need for university teacher preparation programs to use all of these competencies as the basis of their program and course work.

At this time, Lincoln University does not provide a teacher preparation program in Special Education. However, it is widely requested by prospective students as well as students in our program. If and when we receive approval from PDE for a Special Education Teacher Preparation Program, we will experience the following issues.

1. The Special Education certificates must be combined with another instructional certificate thereby creating a dual certification program. The credit requirements established for the Early and Middle Program will make it necessary for special education teachers to come back for a fifth year while not being eligible for certification in Pennsylvania. These two factors will exacerbate the special education teacher shortage in these fields.
2. The Specials Education certificate will change from the N-12 certificate to an N-8 and 7-12th grade certificate. The frameworks for the two preparation program are identical except for one (1) three credit course. Therefore, the only impact of the changes into separate levels is that the candidates must apply for both certificate

Thank you for the opportunity to share the views of the Education Department faculty and the administration of Lincoln University regarding this very important responsibility, educating our future teachers.

Respectfully submitted:

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