

Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

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As the academic year draws to a close, MACTE would like to extend its sincere thanks to the Board of Teaching. Our organizations have partnered effectively throughout the year to make positive change for Minnesota teaching candidates and the students they will one day teach. Beginning with the August retreat, the Board has included MACTE in essential conversations and deliberations that will impact our programs and the preparation our candidates receive. We have worked closely together on legislative matters and on the Special Education Task Force, the PEPER Redesign Task Force, and the Standards and Rules Committee. In addition, representatives of both the Board of Teaching and the Department of Education have been invited to speak to MACTE members at our fall, winter, and spring meetings. We have shared ideas and tackled tough issues; we have kept the communication lines open.

The rulemaking process that will result in decoupling the elementary and middle level licenses, as well as initiating new standards in technology and reading, is nearly complete. Even though the new rules have not yet been adopted, faculty and staff in MACTE institutions have already begun laying the groundwork for the revision of courses and programs to embed the new standards. MACTE is pleased to be moving forward on these changes. We are especially appreciative of the flexibility that the decoupling will bring to our elementary education programs.

Currently, the MACTE Executive Committee and the Board of Teaching are negotiating the timeline for implementing the new rules. We want to make it clear that we will do our best to respond nimbly in revising our courses and programs so that our candidates are fully prepared under the new rules at the earliest possible date. The challenge we face is balancing the demands of the Board with institutional demands for course and program approval. Our ultimate guiding principle is that students must be held harmless in this process. We would like to take this opportunity to help you understand the complex processes involved in making change at our institutions in the hopes that you will allow us the appropriate amount of time for implementing the new standards on our campuses.

Though requirements for course and program approval vary across institutions, there are certain elements that are consistent. First, the faculty must study the new licensure rules, read supporting research, consult with colleagues on best approaches for embedding the new standards, and determine what curricular changes will be required – amending courses, and/or designing new ones. In addition, decisions must be made about what elements of programs can be dropped or realigned to make room for the new standards. This phase of the process has already begun. Next, deans and department chairs must assign faculty and staff to the task of course design and revision. As you can imagine, for this work to be done well, a considerable amount of time is necessary. Many faculty are not on contract during the summer months, so in most institutions this work cannot begin until fall. (Further, it is costly to hire faculty to do this work in the summer. For all of us, budgets are tight in these difficult times.) Next, the new courses and programs must go through approval processes at the department, college, university, and/or system level. In most institutions, it can be assumed that there is a one- to three-month turnaround on each step in this process. If there are questions or concerns about the proposal, the entire package may be sent back to “square one” for revision. Sometimes, as with the legislature or the Board of Teaching, things don’t move along as quickly as we would like, but there are policies that guide procedures, and requirements that must be met. Though they may seem frustrating at times, these institutional processes are in place to ensure a quality education for the students we teach.

I would like to reiterate the fact that we welcome these changes to Minnesota’s teaching standards, and we have appreciated the opportunity MACTE members have had over the past few years to have input in these new rules. Please know that we fully intend to move forward as rapidly as possible. As we tackle the realities of institutional change, we would ask the Board to be respectful of the internal processes that govern course and program change on our campuses.

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