

February 3, 2011  
Mr. Brian Kelly, Editor  
U.S. News & World Report  
1050 Thomas Jefferson Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20007

Dear Mr. Kelly:

As president of the Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges for Teacher Education, I am contacting you to express the concerns of the AILACTE Executive Committee over your recent partnership with the National Council on Teacher Quality to evaluate and rank schools of education across the nation. The AILACTE organization exists to recognize the importance of holistic teacher education in liberal arts colleges and to improve teacher preparation practice in such institutions throughout the country. For over 30 years we have remained dedicated to developing highly effective, liberally educated, globally aware and morally committed P-12 educators.

Our members are quite familiar with accountability measures, submitting numerous annual and multi-year reports on our education programs and graduates to local, state and national accrediting bodies that hold us to recognized professional standards and clearly articulated evidence-based outcomes. These various sets of curricular, instructional and assessment standards, developed from national research and the particular needs of local contexts, are the starting points of all our programs' coursework and clinical experience requirements. These include the 2010 Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Standards, developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association. We clearly recognize our obligation to document the effectiveness of our students to our accrediting bodies and all stakeholders. We understand the significant responsibility of preparing those who will educate the next generations of Americans. Assessment and accountability have long been integral to the work of educators at all levels, including teacher preparation institutions.

Many of our members have had programs reviewed by NCTQ in the recent past, and it is because of this prior experience that we question its research design, research methods and the qualifications of those conducting its reviews. Although its standards are made public, the rubrics and methods of interpretation are not transparent nor do they follow recognized protocols. A review of NCTQ's methodology used in their recent Illinois education program evaluation can be found at [www.eduventures.com](http://www.eduventures.com). Regarding the research design, the materials NCTQ generally request are inputs, most often in the form of course syllabi. This method of assessment is long outdated because it neglects to take into account whether or not learners meet expected outcomes. Nor does it take into account the competence and prior experiences of the learners involved. Rather than reviewing the effectiveness of teacher candidates on P-12 student achievement, NCTQ's review is limited by the assumption that all future teachers require the same type and number of courses and prescribed clinical experiences despite their background. Ironically, P-12 educators would never receive a teaching license or be hired if they followed such a practice.

Professional educators are expected to design their curriculum, instruction and assessment according to the competencies and experiences of their individual students. This is known as differentiation of instruction. Knowledge of learners and their contexts are keys to being an effective educator. The professional standards used by INTASC, NCATE (National Council for the Accreditation in Teacher Education), TEAC (Teacher Education Accreditation Council), NSDC (National Staff Development Council) and ISLLC (Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium) reflect these critical components. Yet NCTQ does not take into account how programs vary according to their context and learners. All these professional groups make on-site visits and examine student outcomes as the basis of their evaluations. Using a process which only assesses inputs to evaluate the quality of education programs is akin to determining the quality of restaurants without coming to the restaurants or tasting their food but by merely reading their menus.

Regarding research findings, many of the reviews conducted previously include judgments that were subjective and value-laden, citing no evidence on which the reviewers based their conclusion. Again, P-12 educators learn that evaluation must be determined on the basis of clearly articulated assessment evidence. The science of educational research demands such a standard. Many of our members' programs ranked high in earlier NCTQ reviews. It is because of this that we feel strongly about our concerns, since a poor study will not be supported by our universities. As stated previously, we are a professional body that views accountability as an integral part of what we do. We willingly submit frequent and extensive data to both governing and voluntary accrediting bodies, benefiting from their assessment and feedback on how we can improve our programs. We do so because their process is transparent, sound, rigorous and fair. Should U.S. News & World Report partner with an organization whose research reflects these qualities, follows an acceptable research design and methodology and uses qualified reviewers, organizations such as AILACTE would gladly support such an endeavor. However, since this is not the case, we urge you to reevaluate this partnership. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you.

Sincerely,  
Jillian N. Lederhouse, Ph. D.  
President, Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges for Teacher Education



## Views and News

The Voice of Teacher Preparation  
in Independent Institutions

## Spotlight on the Annual Meeting

by Trish Parrish

The AILACTE Annual Meeting was held February 24, 2011, in beautiful San Diego. The day began early for AILACTE's state representatives, who were invited to a 7:30 breakfast with members of the executive committee before the 9:00 welcome from President Jill Lederhouse. This breakfast focused on ways the organization can better meet member needs and on how state representatives can be fully involved in helping us improve.

After the welcoming address, participants were able to choose from concurrent sessions focusing on how our liberal arts tradition will holistically prepare the next generation of teachers. Sessions were well attended and conversations flowed freely during and after presentations.

There was a two-hour break between the morning and afternoon concurrent sessions. This allowed meeting participants the opportunity to attend the AACTE opening session or to enjoy one of the many local restaurants for a relaxed lunch with colleagues. The meeting resumed with more concurrent sessions of great quality.

The day ended with the annual business meeting and Sharon Robinson, president of AACTE, joined us to give an update on the ongoing work of the Teacher Performance Assessment Consortium and on ways AACTE is addressing federal policy issues, including the impending NCTQ/US News project. When Sharon finished her address, Jim Cibulka, president of NCATE, joined the group for a brief update on CAEP. He noted that part of the issue our profession is facing can be traced to the fact that national accreditation is voluntary, rather than federally required. Additionally, Jim addressed the four accrediting options that will be available under CAEP (two currently available in NCATE; two available in TEAC). Part of the unification process will be the renegotiation of all state partnerships. Jim encouraged AILACTE members to work with their states to ensure our institutions are represented during the negotiation process. Next year the 2012 annual meeting will be held in Chicago, again in conjunction with the AACTE meeting.

## Be Bold, Nimble and Resolute

by Dwight Watson, Past President

As I reflect back on my time with AILACTE, I realized that I have been a part of the organization's leadership for over twelve years. I have spent a considerable amount of my time in the academy in this organization. I have been an enriched professional because of my connection with AILACTE. As I transitioned from an AILACTE institution to one belonging to the Teacher Education Council of State Colleges and Universities (TECSCU), I am reminded about the uniqueness of liberal arts schools. In a state university, we are often restricted by state funding models and appropriations. We often have large models that may be viewed as factory-like in which it may be difficult to move nuanced changes to scale. We often cannot be nimble and move quickly toward change in order to maximize resources and maintain currency. I have noticed as of late that liberal arts colleges are scaling up to create MAT programs, Education Leadership Programs

and Ph.D./Ed.D. programs. As these institutions move toward these programs, I caution that the core of liberal arts is being lost when it comes to undergraduate teacher preparation.

My advice is to cherish the boutique qualities of your institutions and remain nimble. If you have not had a chance to read the Blue Ribbon Panel on teacher preparation, then I encourage you to do so. This panel discusses clinical residency models and stronger PK-12 partnerships. The liberal arts colleges are poised to do this rich work and become models for the rest of us. Please cherish your strengths, focus on your missions and measure your impact. You may think your voice is small and marginalized, but your collective solidarity is a powerful force; therefore, I encourage you all to support the initiatives of AILACTE and to vigorously renew your membership and encourage others to join as well. Thank you, colleagues for twelve years of inspiration, professional engagement and collegial support.

## Treasurer's Report

by David E. Coffman

"As the treasurer of AILACTE, I am happy to report that AILACTE is financially sound. As I reported to the members at the annual business meeting in San Diego, the current executive board has diligently worked to be good financial stewards of current monies and to continue the work of those who served before us. Also at the business meeting, I presented a board-approved 2011 operating budget of \$64,800. The members present at the meeting approved the budget as presented.

Without you as members, we could not continue the work of AILACTE to represent the voices of the independent liberal arts colleges and universities. Please contact me at [dcoffman@bridgewater.edu](mailto:dcoffman@bridgewater.edu) if you have questions regarding financial aspects of AILACTE."

## 2011 AILACTE Journal Call for Manuscripts

The AILACTE Journal is a refereed journal with national representation on its editorial review board published by the Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges for Teacher Education. Each issue is nonthematic. The journal, published annually, is soliciting manuscripts concerned with teacher education, including teaching and learning, induction, in-service education and pre-service education. Project descriptions, research reports, theoretical papers, debates, papers espousing a particular point of view and descriptions of activities or issues in teacher education at the local, state or national level would be appropriate topics for the journal. The closing date for submissions is July 1, 2011. For submission criteria visit [www.ailacte.org/publications.shtml](http://www.ailacte.org/publications.shtml).



## From the President

by Jill Lederhouse

What a great experience it was to hear from so many of you at the AILACTE annual meeting in San Diego! I trust that those of you who were able to attend found the presentations to offer helpful and creative solutions for many of the challenges facing teacher educators in liberal arts institutions today.

One important challenge is the upcoming review of educator preparation programs by NCTQ and *U.S. News & World Report*. The annual meetings of both AILACTE and AACTE were animated with conversation surrounding this review. These discussions focused largely on the quality of the project's design, qualifications of program reviewers, views of the NCTQ organization as expressed at the conference by Kate Walsh and on its website and the experience of those who had previously participated in the student teaching or state program pilots.

Kate Walsh of NCTQ and Bob Morse of *U.S. News & World Report* accepted an invitation from AACTE to present an update on the project and to answer questions posed by respondents Michael Feuer of George Washington University, Rick Ginsberg of the University of Kansas and moderator Sharon Robinson. The entire session can be viewed at <http://aacte.org/index.php?/Digital-Media/Event-Recordings/video-from-the-nctq-session-motivations-for-and-methodologies-employed-in-the-us-news-nctq-project-2011-aacte-annual-meeting-a-exhibits.html>. The following day, AACTE also held a session for members to respond to the project. Our own AILACTE Eastern Regional Representative and delegate on the AACTE governing board, Debra Colley, served as moderator of this event.

Because the leadership of AILACTE had serious concerns about the design quality and the motivation behind the joint evaluation project, I wrote to the senior editor of the magazine, Mr. Brian Kelly, on February 3, 2011, to articulate our views on your behalf. A copy of this letter is included here and on our website. Although the choice of whether to participate is up to each AILACTE member's institution, I urge you to be fully informed before you come to your decision by reading the NCTQ website, our letter, the study of NCTQ's methodology at [www.eduventures.com](http://www.eduventures.com) and letters from many other professional organizations across the country as found on the AILACTE and AACTE's websites.

## Spotlight on the Annual Conference: State Representatives Meet in San Diego

by Kim E. Koeppen, *Midwestern Regional Representative*

Eleven state representatives gathered over breakfast in San Diego for collegial conversation and brainstorming about AILACTE. In addition to relaying the organization's THANKS, Executive Board Member Frank Kline facilitated the discussion regarding what AILACTE might do better and/or differently to address common concerns of our institutions. The two interconnected themes that emerged were resources and communication. Some of the specific ideas are outlined here.

In order to advocate for AILACTE institutions, members need to stay informed about persistent and emerging issues as well as resolutions that come before the larger AACTE body and dialogue about their potential impact on our institutions. There was also a call to share resources as a means to enhance professional development for aspiring, new and seasoned teacher education faculty and administrators.

The AILACTE homepage could become a repository for both resources and communication. Articles, resolutions, reports, course work, etc., could be posted and chat rooms established around specific topics. Ideas for generating layers of listservs to efficiently disseminate information were also discussed.

In addition to taking advantage of technology, there was an expressed desire for AILACTE to make space during the annual conference to do our work face-to-face. One suggestion that met with broad support was to expand the conference to allow for workshop-esque sessions on specific themes as they apply to our institutions, e.g., leadership and NCATE/CAEP.

The Executive Board will address these and other ideas in the coming months. If you have additional ideas for maximizing AILACTE's influence, please forward them to your state representative or any Executive Board member.

## Introducing AILACTE's New Executive Assistant – Jennifer Knox

For eight years AILACTE benefited from the very capable service of Stacy Ernst. Although we wished the best for Stacy, we were all a bit reluctant to see her move on in her career since she would no longer be able to continue as AILACTE's executive assistant. But in Jennifer Knox, of LaGrange College, we have found another extremely capable individual. With just six months of experience in her role as AILACTE's new executive assistant, Jennifer handled every conference component as if she were a veteran. Our annual meeting was so successful largely because of her careful attention to detail. Although many of you were able to meet Jennifer in San Diego, we've asked Jennifer to introduce herself to the rest of our members....

"I have worked at LaGrange College in LaGrange, GA for the past five years. My first role at LaGrange College was part-time as the Office Administrator for the Education Department. While working in this position, I completed my Masters in Education. My plan was to return to the teaching field after completing my degree; however, I was offered a full-time position as the Graduate Admissions Counselor and

Certification Officer. I believe the administrative skills I developed and my knowledge of education programs in a small liberal arts college will benefit my role as Executive Assistant for AILACTE."

## AILACTE Recognizes First Graduate Student Scholar

by Debra A. Colley, *Eastern Regional Representative*

During the 2011 Annual Meeting, the Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges for Teacher Education (AILACTE) recognized Kenneth Whaley as the first recipient of the AILACTE Graduate Student Scholar Award. This award was instituted by the AILACTE Executive Board and membership in 2011 to recognize a graduate candidate at an AILACTE institution who is conducting research related to student learning and achievement and who brings forward a commitment to the mission and qualities of excellence supported by AILACTE.

Mr. Kenneth Whaley is enrolled in the Ph.D. program at Mercer University in Georgia. His doctoral research focuses on the relationship between teacher autonomy support and students' intrinsic motivation and academic achievement in middle-grades mathematics. Kenneth loves talking about his research as he feels that "self-determination and autonomous motivation in middle school are directly tied to student learning and achievement in the area of mathematics." He expects to investigate how we support the learners and prepare teachers as well, with a specific interest in determining what teachers can do to cultivate and extend intrinsic motivation to enhance mathematics achievement in the middle grades. Kenneth will finish his doctoral program in the spring of 2012 and looks forward to presenting his findings at the next AILACTE Annual Meeting.

Kenneth is a teacher in the Trickum Middle School of the Gwinnett County Public Schools, Georgia (metro-Atlanta area) where he teaches accelerated mathematics in the 7th grade and serves as the MathCounts team coach. AILACTE was *proud* to support the research and scholarship of graduate candidates who study at AILACTE institutions. The new Graduate Student Scholar Award will be awarded each year, with increased opportunities for graduate candidates from across the county to meet, gather and network at the national AILACTE Annual Meeting.

## 2011 AILACTE Scholar Jon Eckert



I am currently an assistant professor of education at Wheaton College. My research includes teaching effectiveness, assessment, teacher compensation and labor-management relations. I am a consultant for the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), the developers of the TAP System. I recently completed a white paper for Capitol Hill funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation through NIET on six Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) sites around the country. I also work with the Center for Teaching Quality to elevate the voice of teachers in policy discussions.



From 2008-2009, I served as a Teaching Ambassador Fellow at the U.S. Department of Education where I worked in both the Bush and Obama administrations on teacher quality issues, including TIF, assessment, accountability and distribution of stimulus funds. Currently, I am leading a research project for the Department creating case studies of twelve sites around the country that are demonstrating progressive labor-management relationships. Prior to the Fellowship, I was a public school teacher outside of Chicago and Nashville for twelve years. In May 2008, I earned a doctorate in education leadership, policy and organizations from Vanderbilt University, Peabody College.

My project, generously supported by AILACTE, extends my work on teaching effectiveness to liberal arts teacher preparation. Are values-based liberal arts teacher preparation programs ideal for developing educators for the 21st century? Theoretically, programs like Wheaton's and many other AILACTE institutions are well positioned because the liberal arts background of their graduates empowers them to be effective practitioners, scholars and flexible problem-solvers. The four years of education classes and practical experiences with K-12 students should prepare them for the initial challenges and opportunities they will face in their classrooms. The fact that Christian faith is integrated with all of the learning that occurs in classes and practical experiences enables our graduates in seeing students as whole spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical and social beings. Because we do not know what schools or classrooms will look like in the next 10 years, these are the characteristics that 21st century schools need in their teachers and leaders.

This project will begin to address the issue of the impact of our graduates on the field in their first two years of practice. The three research questions we are attempting to answer are:

*What are the experiences and educational impact of Wheaton College teacher candidates and graduates?*

*What aspects of a values-based liberal arts teacher preparation program are the most beneficial to our graduates?*

*How can a values-based liberal arts teacher preparation program best support our students and graduates for the diverse settings in which they serve?*

This mixed-methods research project is already underway. I am working with eight undergraduate education majors through the college's mentoring initiative to track our fifty-seven 2010 education graduates. We are in the process of electronically surveying, tracking and interviewing all of our graduates to understand their experiences, gauge their impact on students and determine the impact of our Christian liberal arts teacher preparation program. We hope this research will benefit the department, college and similar institutions, as well as the undergraduates conducting the inquiry. This work will continue with new mentoring groups as they continue to study the 2010 graduates and add cohorts of graduates in the future. Because the researchers are undergraduates who are novice researchers, I have designed and administered the on-line survey. A strict protocol will guide our interviews, and all interviews will be digitally recorded and coded. We meet weekly to discuss our research progress. This type of project is indicative of the type of work that strong values-based liberal arts teacher education programs can provide to develop education leaders. My student research team and I will share our preliminary findings with senior policy officials at the U.S. Department of Education in 2012.