



Fall 9-18-2017

S.C. Education Deans Collaborate to Remedy Acute Teacher Shortage

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Recommended Citation

Winthrop University, "S.C. Education Deans Collaborate to Remedy Acute Teacher Shortage" (2017).
Winthrop News 2017. 157.
<https://digitalcommons.winthrop.edu/winthropnews2017/157>

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S.C. Education Deans Collaborate to Remedy Acute Teacher Shortage

Quick Facts

- State education deans urge action to address the teacher shortage being experienced across the Palmetto state.
- The shortage of qualified teachers in South Carolina, especially in high poverty and rural areas and in disciplines including math and science, has become so critical as to compromise both the quality of education and future economic development across the state. Enrollment declines at colleges of education only serve to exacerbate this crisis.



Jennie Rakestraw

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA - The deans of six of South Carolina's larger institutions and Colleges of Education have formed a consortium to address collaboratively some of South Carolina's most pressing education issues.

Together, they urge action to address the **teacher shortage** being experienced across the Palmetto state.

The deans convened at the request of the provosts of nine colleges and universities across the state who have been meeting for the past two years under the auspices of the **Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative (TCCC)**, a collective impact site at work in the Low Country.

Jennie Rakestraw, dean of Winthrop University's **Richard W. Riley College of Education** said, "Our state's public education system faces a crisis —an ever-growing number of vacancies in schools across South Carolina has created an urgent need for more teachers. However, new teachers need to be well prepared and able to help every student learn and succeed in school and beyond. The education deans have come together to identify practical and innovative ways our institutions, in collaboration with the state legislature and educational agencies, can address the teacher recruitment and retention issue. Our recommendation includes allowing our universities to create novel pathways to becoming a teacher through university and school partnerships. I am very hopeful about the ideas generated and what this will mean for our schools and the children they serve."

The dean's consortium has met twice and future meetings are planned to address the teacher shortage and other pressing education issues.

The statement below is directed at the newly established **S.C. Educator Retention and Recruitment Study Committee** established by the legislature and the **S.C. Department of Education** and the **Commission on Higher Education**. It was facilitated by TCCC and prepared by the deans following meetings with senior education and higher education administrators and the **Education Oversight Committee (EOC)**:

The shortage of qualified teachers in South Carolina, especially in high poverty and rural areas and in disciplines including math and science, has become so critical as to compromise both the quality of education and future economic development across the state. Enrollment declines at colleges of education only serve to exacerbate this crisis.

On Aug. 18, the deans of education from Clemson University, College of Charleston, Francis Marion University, The Citadel, University of South Carolina and Winthrop University, as well as representatives from the Center for Education Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA)

and the S.C. Education Oversight Committee (EOC), met to establish the facts and potential countermeasures. The meeting was convened and facilitated by the Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative.

A second meeting occurred on Aug. 30 in Charleston, South Carolina, with State Superintendent Molly Spearman and Jeff Schilz, interim president of the S.C. Commission on Higher Education, in attendance.

Fact Finding

The number of teachers leaving their positions each year (6,500 in 2016) is significantly higher than the number of S.C. graduates of teacher programs available to fill them (1,700 in 2016). Enrollment in S.C. teacher training programs is declining on average by 4% per year.

Of the nearly 6,500 teachers who did not return to their positions:

- 25% took a teaching position in another S.C. district or special school;
- 23% left because of a personal choice;
- 18% retired;
- 12% moved out of the area;
- 5% changed professions altogether;
- 5% took a teaching position out of the state or country; and
- 4% were terminated or their contracts/letters of agreement were not renewed.

Additionally, 38% of the 6,500 teachers who did not return had five or fewer years of classroom experience.

High teacher turnover creates a continuous state of rebuilding in schools, often diminishing the collaboration and cohesion needed to build a sense of community. Additionally, the constant process of hiring and replacing teachers consumes an inordinate amount of districts' capital — both human and financial.

Unless corrective action is taken, the failure to attract and retain great teachers will significantly compromise the education attainment of our children, the fiscal health of our communities and our collective capacity to attract new jobs and families to our state.

Countermeasures

The need for innovative programs and strategies for both recruiting and retaining quality educators in South Carolina is apparent. Collective action is required to develop and implement incentives and structures to attract, develop and retain quality teachers.

We urge the S.C. Department of Education and the S.C. Commission on Higher Education to work with us and other Schools and Colleges of Education to:

1. Provide expedited approval of pilot programs that would allow for conditional certification of educators followed by full credentialing after years of service, demonstration of instructional effectiveness and success in Praxis subject assessment.

We are committed to working together in the development and deployment of these pilots to ensure that they are complementary and aligned. We further commit to working within our own institutions to minimize delays and to “fast-track” internal approval.

2. Work with the governor and S.C. Legislature to significantly increase funding for evidence-based programs, including Call Me Mister and Teaching Fellows.

These programs are known to work and can contribute significantly to the supply of qualified teachers. In the case of Teaching Fellows, we urge that the amount of the award be increased immediately, in line with CERRA's recommendations, and ultimately the number of awards.

Additional areas of critical need that we intend to address as a group in the coming months include the following:

Develop powerful messaging that truly outlines the needs.

o Further analyze the shortage to target geographic and content areas.

o Define the shortage not only by the number of required teachers but also by the number of students impacted.

Develop multiple pathways to certification.

o All certification pathways must produce educators who have content and pedagogical knowledge, as well as demonstrated professional disposition for classroom instruction, and who have completed rigorous, supervised field experiences in the subjects they will teach.

o Provide flexibility to districts and Colleges of Education in partnership with districts to develop models that respond to local needs.

- o Educator compensation must be addressed.
- o Low teacher pay, especially in their first five years, is a handicap in attracting new teachers to the profession.
- o Innovative initiatives that include differentiated tuition programs and/or loan forgiveness need to be evaluated as possible recruitment tools.

- Address the issue through both the lens of recruitment and retention.
- o Develop marketing that encourages students to pursue this career path.
 - o Showcase excellence.
 - o Engage the business community in changing the narrative on teaching and its importance.
 - o Market existing teacher loan programs better.
 - o Increase fiscal support for individuals to pursue this career path, i.e. Call Me Mister, ProTeam and Teacher Cadet programs.
 - o Develop career advancement opportunities for veteran teachers that will retain our best teachers in the classroom, i.e. dual roles, teacher leadership, National Board Certification.
 - o Supplement National Board Certification to promote mid-career retention.
 - o Provide new teachers with appropriate professional support, feedback and demonstration of what it takes to help their students succeed.

- Address school climate.
- o Address the underlying causes for why educators depart within the first five years, i.e. compensation and working conditions.
 - o Increase supports and training for district and school-level leadership. Leaders must be able to build authentic collaboration with their staff members while providing instructional supervision.

About the Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative
 The Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative (TCCC) is a community-wide movement in Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester counties, South Carolina, focused on improving the quality of life of its citizens and its workforce through education. Using data and focused community collaboration across a continuum from “cradle-to-career,” TCCC serves as a catalyst for widespread systemic change, with the ultimate goal of increased student success and economic prosperity for all.

For more information, contact Ashley Heffernan at Ashley@TriCountyCradletoCareer.org or call 910/465-7864.

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