



Teacher Education Council of State Colleges and Universities
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Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Attention: Desk Officer for U.S. Department of Education
RE: OMB Collection 1840-0744

December 30, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

I write on behalf of the Teacher Education Council of State Colleges and Universities (TECSCU) to submit the following comments on the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Information Collection Request (ICR) for OMB collection 1840-0744.

TECSCU is the distinct national voice on matters of importance to educator preparation programs at public colleges and universities. We represent publicly funded colleges, schools and universities, where the majority of new educators are taught. As such, TECSCU members stand to bear the largest institutional fiscal burden of the proposed regulations, and they will also suffer the greatest disruptions due to the unintended consequences of the proposed regulations' erroneous costs estimate.

TECSCU is joined in these comments by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), representing some 420 state colleges, universities, and state systems of higher education. AASCU's support of our comments reflects broad campus alarm about the proposed regulations and their inaccurate cost-estimate.

As you are well aware, the data provided by the Department have led the OMB to estimate that the total cost of the regulations would be between "\$42.0 million and \$42.1 million over ten years." We believe this is a gross underestimate that ignores available evidence and assumes the existence and availability of data and methodologies that simply don't exist.

First, the spurious precision of the cost forecast, which purports to be exact enough to capture a variance of \$100,000 *over 10 years*, is ample evidence of its questionable nature. It is outlandish to believe that the variance between the low- and the high estimates for the costs of the broad-ranging and data-intensive mandates of these regulations can be that precisely forecasted. The forecast would have to be exact enough to capture an average variance of \$200 per year per state to arrive at this level of precision.

Second, the Department estimates that it will take 2 hours per teacher preparation program for a state to determine whether the program *either* has specialized accreditation *or* provides teacher candidates with the content and pedagogical knowledge and quality clinical preparation including rigorous entry and exit standards. This estimate does not include the cost of pursuing specialized accreditation, nor does it consider the time it would take to determine if a program that does not have specialized accreditation is able to meet the alternative standard. While the majority of TECSCU institutions are nationally

accredited, over 11,000 programs across the country are not, and would therefore require specialized evaluations by either state or an accreditation agency. To assume that states would be able to perform this function for thousands of programs at no more than 2 hours per program is unrealistic. The omission of the substantive costs of this provision for institutions and the states is particularly odd, since the Department's stated goal in promulgating these regulations is to improve the programs that it deems insufficiently robust. The assumption of a mechanically frozen set of institutional characteristics, and the reduction of the cost estimate to the costs of filling out forms certainly undermines that claim.

Third, the Department estimates that the initial burden for each institution to "adjust its recordkeeping" systems to report data for each program would be 4 hours. This estimate grossly underestimates the complexity of campus information systems, the need to update and revise existing technology, and the personnel required to report new and existing information in a "yet to be determined" accountability system. We invite the Department to examine the numerous implementations of various Student Information Systems at institutions to get a more realistic sense of what systems changes actually cost for fairly well-settled campus information collections and data flows, let alone for novel and hitherto untried models. It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that this item alone would certainly exceed the total cost estimate presented in the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking.

Fourth, the proposed regulations mandate costly surveys of graduates and employers without adequately considering the massive expenses this would entail. While some TECSCU institutions have access to statewide employment survey data, for those that do not, the Department estimates the average state will need to spend about \$25,000 to develop the survey instrument. However, TECSCU institutions have reported costs exceeding \$5000 *per campus* to develop, distribute, and evaluate existing employer and graduation surveys. It is unrealistic to think that a statewide survey could be developed, distributed, and analyzed for \$25,000 and this estimate does not take into consideration the significant time, effort, and resources that would be needed to ascertain how to track and/or exclude students who move out of state, and how residency would be determined for existing graduates.

Fifth, beyond the cost of developing, distributing and analyzing survey data, the proposed regulations underestimate the cost of linking student learning outcomes to teacher preparation programs. The Department of Education assumes that because 47 states have received \$575 million in grants to develop Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS), these systems will be able to link student achievement to their teachers, and the teachers to their institutions. However, most TECSCU institutions have reported that SLDS are not developed and do not make this link currently. The cost to increase the scope of SLDS to enable them to adequately link student learning outcomes to teacher preparation programs will necessitate considerable additional funding. SLDS will need to be redesigned and re-worked to determine *if it is even possible* to create a system that could do this tracking with any degree of reliability.

Finally, and most astonishingly, the proposed regulations simply assume the existence of substantive scientific consensus on some of the central demands they make, thus conveniently sidestepping the vexing question of the massive costs involved in developing these. The regulations, for example, use terms like "teacher evaluation" and "student learning outcomes" as if these are well-defined and self-evident, but then proceed to make various demands about what their constituent elements *should* include even as it avoids offering any clues as to the Department's own definitions. One reading of the the proposed regulation seems to suggest that almost anything developed by the states will be acceptable so long as it pays lip-service to the multi-pronged requirements of the text, while a different reading seems to suggest that the Department actually believes in the existence of objective definitions of these terms against the current lack of scholarly consensus. Regardless of which approach proves the intended one,

the development and implementation of these metrics will prove enormously costly and cannot be assumed away.

We strongly believe that the estimates provided by the Department of Education grossly understate the actual burden these regulations would impose on our membership. We believe accurate cost-estimates are critical to informing policy, and that distorting projections of predictable costs is not an acceptable method of advantaging one set of policy preferences against others. We are most concerned about unintended consequences of adopting these policies without forthrightly expressing their likely costs. Without an accommodation of their likely financial impact on institutions and the states, these regulations will certainly cause campuses and states to move limited resources away from the preparation of future educators and into data collection and reporting, thereby having a lasting negative impact on public education. We urge the OMB to re-examine these cost-estimates and revise them accordingly. We would, of course, be happy to extend any assistance we can in that effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "K. Heyning". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small horizontal line above the "y".

Katy Heyning, President
Teacher Education Council of State Colleges and Universities

Submitted also with the endorsement and on behalf of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)