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News Release

Commissioner Jones: Launch Of NCATE Blue Ribbon Panel On Clinical Preparation, Partnerships And Improved Student Learning Is “A Bold Step”

Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones today characterized the launch of a Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation, Partnerships and Improved Student Learning, as “a bold step” in the ongoing national effort to improve teacher training programs.

The panel is being formed by the National Council on Accreditation for Teacher Education (NCATE). Commissioner Jones and Nancy Zimpher, Chancellor of the State University of New York System are the panel’s co-chairs. The panel begins meeting this week in Washington, D.C.

“NCATE has taken a bold step in creating this panel—representative of all stakeholders—to help move forward changes in educator preparation which will better meet P-12 urgent needs,” said Commissioner Jones. “Raising P-12 student achievement in America is an imperative; using our combined resources in new ways to focus on urgent P-12 needs will help reach that goal. I see this panel as a major step forward in restructuring educator preparation throughout the nation.”

NCATE announced the panel’s formation today. NCATE said the panel signaled “the beginning of a sea change in the preparation of the nation’s teachers.”

The work of the panel will culminate in recommendations for restructuring the preparation of teachers to reflect teaching as a

practice-based profession akin to medicine, nursing, or clinical psychology.

In its news release, NCATE stated:

“Practice-based professions require not only a solid academic base, but strong clinical components, a supported induction experience and ongoing opportunities for learning. This redesign is intended to bring educator preparation into better alignment with the urgent needs of P-12 schools. Such changes in the way teachers and other P-12 educators are prepared potentially have far-ranging effects on the structure of schools of education.”

Panel members include experts in education research, policy, teaching and learning and leaders in higher education and P-12 schools at the state and local level.

The panel will establish a set of guiding principles for the clinical preparation of teachers so that preparation focuses more on building the expertise necessary for effective practice as professionals. This includes the development of candidates’ ability to understand and relate to their students and their needs, development of practical and evidence-based pedagogical skills and the use of research evidence and judgment in practice.

The group will issue a report of its findings and recommendations when its work is completed, most likely near the end of 2010.

The panel will examine characteristics and elements of clinical preparation in exemplary programs. It will also review the research and make recommendations as to how those characteristics and elements can be supported in policy and through funding formulas at every level—school, district, state and federal.

In a follow-up phase, the panel will form a working group to guide changes in NCATE standards and accreditation processes to support more clinically-based educator preparation and working partnerships between preparation programs and P-12 schools. NCATE will pilot proposed changes at sites currently supported by teacher quality grants located in Race to the Top states. A second phase of the work will be guiding the process through NCATE policy boards to implement changes in NCATE accreditation standards to help support the Panel’s recommendations and vision.

Dr. James Cibulka, president of NCATE, said: "The panel is jointly chaired by leaders from higher education and the states. States, districts, and colleges and universities must work in close collaboration and in new ways to meet urgent P-12 learning needs."

The first meeting of the panel is scheduled for Jan. 6-7, 2010.

NCATE accredits 667 schools, colleges and departments of education, which produce two-thirds of the nation's new teacher graduates annually and is recognized as a specialized accrediting body by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

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