

**Major Points of Emphasis**  
**To the Academic Standard Review Commission**

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Many of North Carolina's 36 independent colleges and universities were established in great part to help educate teachers for North Carolina public schools.

The number of students applying to NCICU teacher education programs is declining as requirements on state approved teacher education programs and students are increased and requirements for alternative entry portals to teaching are decreased.

The overview from undergraduate teacher education programs suggests that small size and diverse student bodies enable student and faculty to work well together beginning in first introductory course in teacher education. Still, students coming to college need more critical thinking and writing skills and understanding of how to use creativity.

Education majors are prepared to understand content standards, alignment and student assessment through all coursework. These elements are embedded in lesson and unit plans students develop and implement as well as in field experiences, and teacher portfolios.

Central to content alignment and assessment is concern about universal best practices, so that regardless of the standards, students are prepared to teach.

Education departments focus on the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and since the Common Commission Core standards are part of the Standard Course of Study, that focus is significant. Most faculty have attended professional development offerings in this area. Given that programs are aligned to the Standard Course of Study, every time changes are made there is significant upheaval in having to change entire teacher education programs.

One of the major challenges for teacher educators is to prepare teachers who can teach students in any part of the state, in rural or urban areas, large or small schools, and from all types of socio-economic backgrounds, and often in a class with wide ranging levels of knowledge and understanding. Consistent standards across schools in the state are critical to enabling schools of education to prepare teachers to be successful in any and all of those environments.

One suggestion concerning the Common Core was that the Common Core standards as a part of the Standard Course of Study be a 5 year pilot with teachers having input in adapting and improving the standards.

Teacher education program accreditation status is strongly linked to K-12 education standards. Successful accreditation is highly related to a program's ability to have students meet the standards (North Carolina Standard Course of Study) on which programs are based. While teachers need to conform to the same standards, they also need to have the professional freedom and autonomy to use relevant curricula that may differ depending on the students being taught.

It is not yet possible to evaluate how the K-12 standards have affected students in preparation for college and career because the standards have not been in place long enough to know. Current teacher education candidates graduated when the North Carolina Standard Course of Study was aligned to the End of Grade and End of Course tests. That alignment appears to have limited some candidates' abilities in higher order thinking and questioning—with students expecting there to be one “right” answer and to be able to memorize and report the answer.

Instead of simply reporting information, students need to think critically, read deeply and be able to propose multiple possibilities and scenarios. While standards are vital, the way standards are assessed can be problematic.

Regardless of the standards that are used in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, they must be consistent state-wide and assessed rigorously. Too many North Carolina students coming to college who were educated under the same North Carolina Standard of Course of Study as other North Carolina students, have wide disparities in preparation for college and university level academic challenges. Many of the students who are not prepared to do well in college are students who are accustomed to having been very successful in high school.