



College of Education and Allied Professions
Office of Alternative Licensure
Strategic Plan 2008-2010

Role Statement

The Office of Alternative Licensure (OAL) is housed in the College of Education and Allied Professions (CEAP) at Western Carolina University. Established in June 2008 by the Dean of the College of Education, the OAL is designed to better serve alternative licensure students, program coordinators in the Colleges of Education and Allied Professions, Arts & Sciences and Fine & Performing Arts, and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) by creating one office to support all CEAP alternative licensure programs. The Office of Alternative Licensure supports academic programs to help them meet their enrollment needs.

The Office of Alternative Licensure activities for 2008-2009 and beyond are aligned with the Boyer Model of Scholarship, Western's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), Stewards of Place model, and the Millennial Initiative with UNC-Tomorrow as an overarching guide.

Mission Statement

The Office of Alternative Licensure assists with the implementation of UNC-Tomorrow *Recommendation 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 Quality and Quantity of Public School Teachers*: UNC should improve the quantity, quality, and geographic distribution of public school teachers and UNC should help address the shortage of science and math teachers, especially in rural areas.

To this end, the mission of OAL is to recruit candidates into Western's alternative licensure programs (with special attention to the recruitment of high-need areas: math, science, middle grades, special education, and other licensure areas as identified by LEAs), answer inquiries, and process applications. The OAL also initiates contact with and solicits applications from current 1st year lateral-entry teachers; serves as the primary contact for LEAs and for candidates who have served or are serving in the military. In addition, the Office of Alternative Licensure tracks and systematically follows up with prospects, applicants, candidates, program completers, and employed lateral-entry teachers.

Vision Statement

The Office of Alternative Licensure will continue to assist with implementation of the UNC-Tomorrow recommendations and will serve CEAP alternative licensure candidates in every phase of the process, from initial inquiries to employment in N.C. public schools. The office will be responsive to the needs and concerns of candidates, program coordinators, and other offices within the university. The Stewards of Place model will drive the partnership between OAL and WNC public school systems leading to effective engagement in a variety of university and community partnerships that include, among others, the public schools, Colleges of Arts and Sciences and Fine and Performing Arts, state NC TEACH office, and the North Carolina Model Teacher Education Consortium.

The Office of Alternative Licensure will implement the Boyer Model of Scholarship and Western's Quality Enhancement Plan to provide research opportunities in the scholarship of application for the director of the Office of Alternative Licensure to collaborate with Western Carolina University faculty members and students. OAL will continue to track retention and survey Western's alternative-entry teachers in an effort to identify factors that have contributed to their persistence in the profession.

The Office of Alternative Licensure will seek to secure external and internal resources to enhance its programs and meet its mission.

External Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

- Western Carolina University's reputation for preparing excellent teachers is well known in the state.
- Western is the seventh-largest producer of teachers in N. C.
- Western has developed an aggressive teacher education recruitment plan in conjunction with General Administration. This plan focuses on improving both the number and quality of teacher education candidates (including alternative licensure) leading to retention of the best teachers in the classroom.
- Western Carolina University has a long history of established partnerships with the public school systems in the western region.
- There is a strong demand for teachers. Regional LEAs look to Western Carolina University for staffing their schools.
- There are graduate programs in education and other fields offered in the region only by Western.

Limitations

- External mandates by legislative bodies and the establishment of licensing agencies outside of the university system create a drain on faculty/staff time, a philosophical tension between the mission of the university and the demands of such groups, a threat to curricular integrity, and a drain on already tight financial resources.

- Fiscal problems at both state and national levels have created revenue shortages resulting in inadequate support for faculty programs and services.
- Inadequate teaching salaries in summer school coupled with other restrictions such as loss of FTE units reduce faculty incentives to teach summer school, a prime time for lateral-entry teachers to take courses.
- Reduced or unpredictable opportunities for external grants and the resultant increase in competition for available funds make obtaining external funding a formidable challenge.
- There is a lack of sufficient scholarships and out-of-state tuition waivers for alternative licensure students who will work in education in North Carolina upon graduation.

Internal Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

- There is an excellent teaching faculty committed to superior teaching and training of teachers. The faculty members are widely respected by area schoolteachers, administrators, and agency personnel.
- The faculty's commitment to alternative licensure students is demonstrated through the teaching of evening classes in Cullowhee and Asheville.
- The College's relationships with other colleges and offices across the campus are strengths.
- Western has been preparing alternative entry teachers since 2000 through the NC TEACH program.
- Western's NC TEACH program was selected to pilot "NC TEACH Online" in 2004.
- Retention data obtained from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction show that the retention of WCU lateral entry teachers is higher than the total NC lateral entry teachers and total NC first-time teachers for those hired 2000/01–2006/07.
- There is an existing task force on teacher supply and demand at Western Carolina University.
- An increasing number of CEAP faculty are developing and delivering online courses and programs.
- The Office of Alternative Licensure has an advisory board with university faculty, administrators, and external stakeholders to guide OAL plans and actions.

Limitations

- There are high demands on faculty due to course offerings in Cullowhee and Asheville as well as the demands of program delivery via distance education

(online). Although faculty positions have increased, there are too few faculty to adequately staff online programs for which there is a high demand.

- The OAL database is not fully integrated with the CEAP TEAMS database and Banner, which will allow for more accurate and complete report queries.

Strategic Goals and Actions

Strategic Goal 1 – Recruitment (UNC-Tomorrow Recommendation 4.3.1 and 4.3.2; WCU Teacher Education Enrollment and Recruitment Plan - Action Plans 17, 18, 23 and Qualitative Action Plans 2-3) Recruitment of alternative licensure students contributes to the implementation of UNC-Tomorrow Recommendation 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 *Quality and Quantity of Public School Teachers*: UNC should improve the quantity, quality, and geographic distribution of public school teachers and UNC should help address the shortage of science and math teachers, especially in rural areas.

WCU has a comprehensive Teacher Recruitment Plan with ongoing action plans targeting an increase in the number of teachers produced that is consistent with the UNC System teacher recruitment plan. The Alternative Pathways Advisory Board serves in an advisory capacity to provide suggestions for increasing the number of students enrolled in alternative licensure programs.

Actions

- Integrate the OAL database with the CEAP TEAMS database and Banner, which will allow for more accurate and complete report queries. This information will be used to better predict the courses and number of sections needed each semester
- Implement a schedule for tracking students at various points in the program.
- Work with Alternative Pathways Advisory Board and TEEPT to identify and implement recruitment strategies
- The OAL Director serves on the Teacher Education Enrollment Planning Team and is a member of a team reviewing the expansion of Teacher Productivity Goal
- Collaborate with Western's Office of Career Services and the Office of Rural Education to offer two on-campus teacher education recruitment sessions– *Teaching Opportunities for Non-Teaching Majors*
- Participate in WCU's Education Recruitment Day and the NC Mountain Teachers' Job Fair at WRESA
- Meet with personnel directors in the western region and in NC TEACH II systems

Strategic Goal 2 – Retention (Stewards of Place; WCU Teacher Education Enrollment and Recruitment Plan - Action Plans 17, 18, 23 and Qualitative Action Plans 2-3)

Staffing schools with adequate numbers of qualified teachers is a WNC public school problem. Beginning teachers, in particular, have extremely high attrition rates during the first five years of teaching—and turnover for this group is as much as 40-50% in some areas (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Ingersoll, 2001). Because of teacher shortages, (especially in the high-need areas of math, science, middle grade, and SPED) school systems have turned to alternative-entry teachers. The Office of Alternative Licensure is committed to the Stewards of Place model and collaborates with our public school partners to identify strategies for preparing alternative licensure students for the classroom.

WCU has a comprehensive Teacher Recruitment Plan with ongoing action plans targeting an increase in the number of teachers produced that is consistent with the UNC System teacher recruitment plan. The Office of Alternative Licensure supports academic programs to meet their enrollment goals. The Alternative Pathways Advisory Board serves in an advisory capacity to provide suggestions for retaining the number of students enrolled in alternative licensure programs until they have completed the program and are recommended for a license.

Actions

- Implement tracking system for alternative licensure candidates to systematically track students from initial inquiries to employment in the NC public schools
- Work with Alternative Pathways Advisory Board and TEEPT to identify and implement retention strategies for increasing number of program completers and MAT candidates
- Work with department heads to offer identified key licensure or prerequisite courses at a time and/or format accessible to working adults
- The OAL Director serves on the Teacher Education Enrollment Planning Team and is a member of a team reviewing the expansion of Teacher Productivity Goals
- WCU lateral-entry teachers are invited to participate in Western's Center for the Support of Beginning Teachers online support program. Additional support opportunities are available to those hired in Western's service region.

Strategic Goal 3 – Research (UNC-Tomorrow 4.3.3.1, the Boyer Model of Scholarship, QEP) The Boyer Model of Scholarship provides research opportunities in the scholarship of application for the Director of the Office of Alternative Licensure (OAL) to collaborate with Western Carolina University faculty members and students.

The OAL scholarly activity is focused on using evaluation data to sponsor and conduct research to determine the effects of alternative entry programs on new teacher retention and development. WNC beginning teachers, mentors, and administrators are surveyed online annually (2003–present). Dr. Lori Unruh, Assistant Professor in Psychology,

collaborates with CSBT Director to analyze the annual survey data. They are currently looking more closely at the effects of induction programs on lateral entry and traditionally prepared teachers.

The Office of Alternative Licensure annually tracks retention of Western's alternative-entry teachers. An online survey is planned for November 2008 to collect additional data from currently employed WCU alternative-entry teachers in an effort to identify factors that have contributed to their persistence in the profession.

Actions

- Identify needs of beginning teachers, mentors, and administrators
- Collaborate with faculty members to collect data and conduct research
- Publish research report annually. 2007-2008 publication:
Unruh, L., Holt, J., Morgan, K. (October 2007). *WNC beginning teacher induction program: 2006-2007 Survey report*. Western Carolina University. The report includes data on alternative entry teachers and was distributed to all stakeholders. <http://www.wcu.edu/9742.asp>
- Share research – In 2007-2008, the CSBT director and research coordinator made presentations highlighting the work of the center at one state and two national conferences in this academic year. The CSBT and SUTEP directors collaborated with faculty members from the College of Education, Health, and Human Science at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville on a presentation for AACTE: *Partnerships in Collaboration for Teacher Quality: Teacher Mentoring and Induction*.
- Implement the QEP - Synthesis: A Pathway to Intentional Learning at WCU

Applied Research by students in EDRS 800: *Alternative licensure program completion*. The director of OAL served as a "client" for a group of students in Dr. Meagan Karvonen's EDRS 800, Advanced Research Methods, fall semester 2008. There is some anecdotal evidence from recent years that large numbers of students enroll in alternative licensure programs at WCU but do not complete the coursework or obtain their certification from WCU. However, no data have been systematically collected to document the extent of these trends or why students are not completing the program. This study seeks to inform that problematic research gap by answering these questions:

1. At what point in their progress toward completion do students prematurely exit the alternative licensure program at Western Carolina University?
2. For what reasons do students prematurely exit the alternative licensure program at Western Carolina University?

For more information about OAL research, visit: <http://www.wcu.edu/8457.asp>.

Strategic Goal 4 – Secure external funding (UNC-Tomorrow 4.7.3.1, Stewards of Place, the Boyer Model of Scholarship)

The Office of Alternative Licensure collaborates with WNC public school partners and other state agencies to secure external funding. This process is mutually beneficial in that it “expands the learning and discovery functions” of WCU while enhancing the schools’ “capacity to address and resolve” the teacher recruitment and retention problem. Grant funding also provides applied research opportunities for university faculty members “to address critical policy issues...that affect the region and the State of North Carolina.”

Actions

Actively seek external funding supporting teacher retention through federal, state and foundation grants.

Current funding for 2008-2009:

- Transition to Teaching Grant (federal) – *NC TEACH II* – year three, \$125,000. This grant works directly with identified school districts to recruit and prepare lateral entry teachers in high-need subject areas who are committed to remaining in a teaching position in a high-need school district for a minimum of three years. Also supports new teacher retention.
- UNC-General Administration grant – *Online Lateral Entry Course Development* - \$11,560. This grant funds online course development for English/language arts and Social Studies methods courses for lateral entry teachers. These courses will be added to the UNC-Online repository.

Proposals in process:

Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation Grant – Project START: The Millennials. \$50,483. This proposal focuses on supporting 2nd and 3rd year teachers. The format includes face-to-face and online support.

Evaluation

- At the end of each academic year, the director of the Office for Alternative Licensure shall prepare a report and present to the Dean of the College of Education and Allied Professions and the Alternative Pathways advisory board. This report should address the areas set forth in this strategic plan.
- Alternative licensure students, lateral-entry teachers, principals, and personnel directors in the region will be surveyed to determine their perceived effectiveness of services provided by the Office of Alternative Licensure.
- Director of OAL solicits feedback from faculty and department heads at select times during the year.