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Four Texas universities top-ranked for teacher preparation programs

AUSTIN, Texas — The Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) congratulates Dallas Baptist University for being named the country’s top-ranked program for preparation of elementary school teachers by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ).

In its 2014 Teacher Prep Review, released this week, NCTQ shared its rankings, and assessments of educator preparation programs around the country. Joining DBU in the top 10 for elementary teacher preparation were Texas A&M University, the University of Houston and the University of Texas at Austin. Texas A&M University, the University of Houston and Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi also received praise for offering quality educator preparation programs at an affordable cost.

The Top Ten programs in each category are as follows:

Elementary

1. DALLAS BAPTIST UNIVERSITY (undergraduate)
2. TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY (undergraduate)
3. OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY (graduate)
4. NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA (tie; undergraduate)
4. UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON (tie; undergraduate)
6. LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY (undergraduate)
7. UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON (undergraduate)
8. MIAMI UNIVERSITY OF OHIO (tie; undergraduate)
8. EASTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY (tie; undergraduate)
10. UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN (undergraduate)

Secondary

1. WESTERN GOVERNORS UNIVERSITY (undergraduate)
2. LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY (undergraduate)
3. FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY (undergraduate)
4. COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY (graduate)
5. FURMAN UNIVERSITY (tie; undergraduate)
5. HENDERSON STATE UNIVERSITY (tie; undergraduate)
5. MIAMI UNIVERSITY OF OHIO (tie; undergraduate)
8. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO (tie; graduate)
8. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA IRVINE (tie; undergraduate)
8. CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK – HUNTER COLLEGE (tie; graduate)
8. MIAMI UNIVERSITY OF OHIO (tie; graduate)

Courtesy: NCTQ.org

NCTQ gave an unflattering assessment of alternative certification programs, which are popular among second-career teachers. Alternative certification allows college graduates with degrees in any subject to be hired as teachers on a probationary basis while they complete their teacher training. It also allows them to become teachers without having to get a second college degree. NCTQ criticized alternative programs and state regulators for failing to ensure that alternative certification candidates have sufficient knowledge before entering the classroom as a teacher of record. Texas is the only state that allows private, for-profit companies to operate alternative certification programs, and two of those programs currently produce more new teachers than any other program in Texas, including universities.

ATPE, the state's largest educators' association, believes the NCTQ report highlights the need to make educator preparation and certification more rigorous and relevant.

"For many years, we have been pushing to raise the standards to enter the teaching profession," ATPE Executive Director Gary Godsey said. "Giving brand-new teachers responsibility for a classroom without first making sure they are well-prepared and receiving adequate support and mentoring in their first few years on the job is unfair. It sets the teachers up for failure and does a disservice to their students, too."

The Texas Legislature and State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) impose minimum standards for teacher preparation, such as the amount of training required and minimum GPA requirements. Some educator preparation programs voluntarily impose admission standards that are higher than what the state requires, but large alternative certification programs often stick with the state's minimum criteria. ATPE recently asked SBEC to raise the minimum GPA for those pursuing certification from a 2.5 to a 2.75, and the board has agreed to propose the change.

"There are outstanding programs in our state that are producing highly effective teachers. There are also some great teachers who've been able to thrive in their profession *despite* poor training," Godsey said. "By and large, though, Texas must change the way we recruit and prepare educators if we want to compete in a global economy."

He adds that professional standards have an impact on teacher compensation and retention.

"Other high-performing countries allow only their top students to become teachers; consequently, teachers in those countries are highly esteemed and very well-compensated," Godsey said. "We cannot compete if we allow educator prep programs to sacrifice quality in order to maximize their profits and fail to equip their customers with the skills needed to be successful teachers."

To see a full copy of the report, visit http://www.nctq.org/dmsView/Teacher_Prep_Review_2014_Report.

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The Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) has been a strong voice for Texas educators since 1980. It is the leading educators' association in Texas with more than 100,000 members statewide. With its strong collaborative philosophy, ATPE speaks for classroom teachers, administrators, future, retired and para-educators and works to create better opportunities for 5 million public schoolchildren. ATPE is the ally and the voice of Texas public school educators.