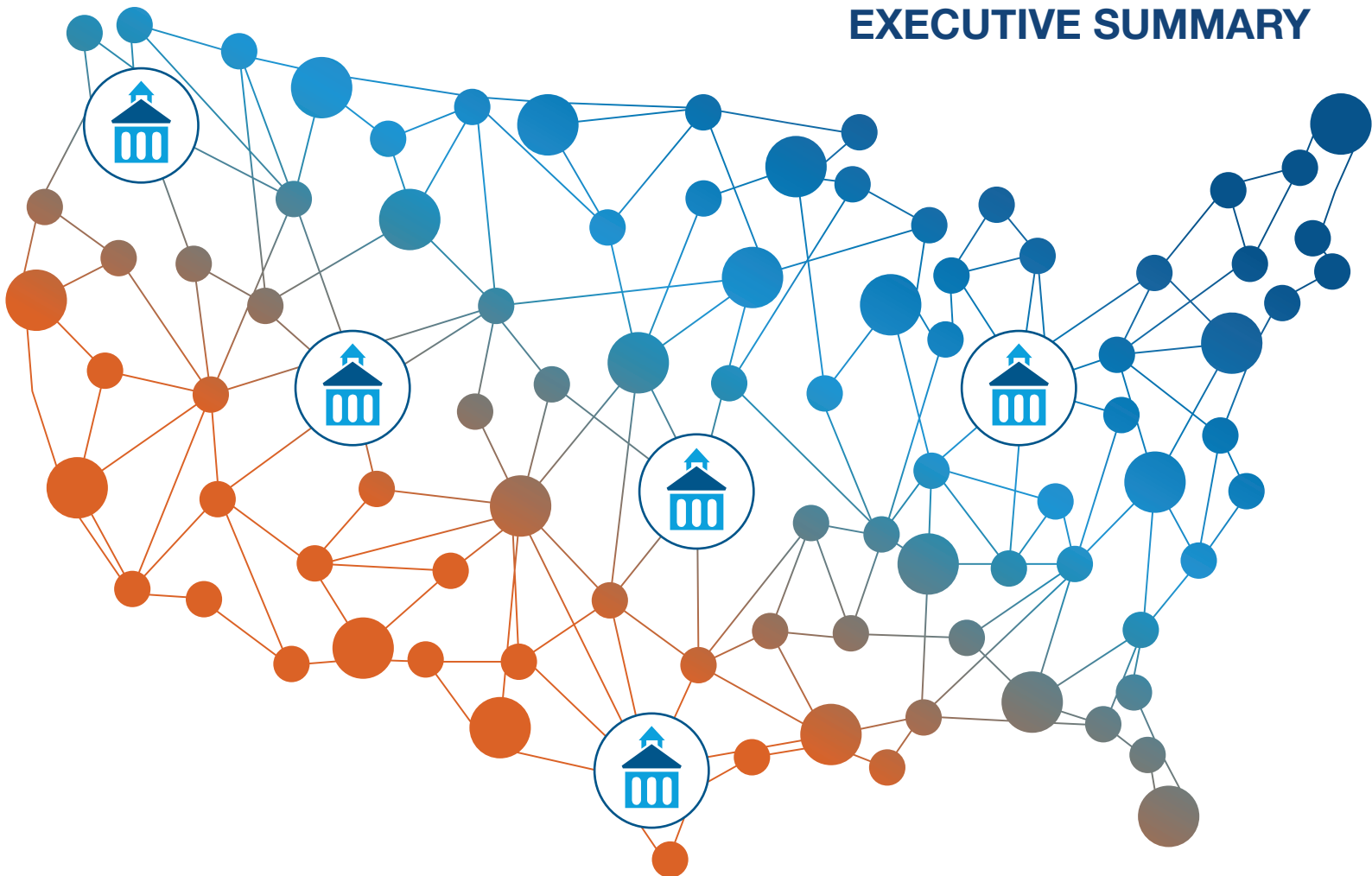


Colleges of Education: A National Portrait

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Colleges of education are best known for preparing future teachers, which is one of their most essential functions, but they do much more to advance the quality of education in America's schools, colleges, adult education centers, early childhood education programs, nonprofit organizations, and other educational entities. This report attempts to provide a comprehensive picture of colleges of education: the work that they do, the people who do that work, and the students they serve. Because teacher preparation is so important, these pages describe key trends and challenges in meeting the nation's need for highly skilled teachers. The report also portrays the full spectrum of undergraduate and graduate programs, research, and service that occur within schools, colleges, and departments of education (referred to as *colleges of education* throughout this report). Among the report's key findings are the following:

SIZE AND SCOPE OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS

- Some 2,300 colleges and universities, or one third of all postsecondary institutions, award degrees and/or certificates in education. These institutions conferred more than 300,000 degrees and certificates in education during the 2015-16 academic year; almost half of those awards were master's degrees, and almost one third were bachelor's degrees.
- There are 1,689 colleges of education in the United States, defined as 4-year colleges and universities that award degrees and/or certificates in education at the bachelor's level or higher.
- Colleges of education award degrees and certificates in more than 100 specialties; programs preparing students to become teachers and school administrators are the most popular.
- Eighty-eight percent of the organizations that offer teacher preparation programs are 2- and 4-year colleges and universities. The remaining 12% are school districts, nonprofit organizations, and other entities that run state-approved alternative teacher preparation programs.
- Despite efforts by colleges of education to attract students to high-need fields, there is a mismatch between the majors that students choose and the personnel needs of PK-12 schools. Of the high-need fields identified by the U.S. Department of Education (bilingual education and English language acquisition, foreign language, math, reading, science, and special education), only special education is among the most popular degree fields. This mismatch has contributed to teacher shortages in these fields in some states and localities.
- A factor influencing teacher shortages is attrition among early-career teachers. A national longitudinal study of all bachelor's degree recipients found that, 4 years after finishing college, 10% were working as teachers. Unfortunately, 9% of recent graduates had worked as teachers but were not still teaching after 4 years, and another 6% had prepared to teach but never entered the profession (the remaining 75% had not prepared to teach). Among those who majored in education, 60% were teaching in 2012, but 24% were no longer teaching and another 16% had not entered the profession.

HISTORY OF COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

- The history of colleges of education is characterized by two main themes: a broad scope of scholarship and external recognition and support that have allowed colleges to withstand ongoing debates about the value of education as an academic field.

FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES OF COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

Teaching: Undergraduate Programs

- Teacher preparation is the dominant activity at the undergraduate level; 96% of undergraduate education degrees and certificates are in fields that prepare students for teaching.
- To improve PK-12 student outcomes and encourage teacher longevity, colleges of education are changing teacher preparation. Colleges have concentrated on preparing both generalist and specialist teachers to work with the increasingly diverse PK-12 student population. They also are placing a stronger emphasis on clinical experiences and implementing performance assessments that require candidates to demonstrate key teaching skills.

- Improvements in teacher preparation programs have the potential to help stem the precipitous decline in enrollment that colleges of education have experienced. The number of undergraduate education degrees awarded annually peaked at almost 200,000 in the early 1970s and is less than 100,000 today.
- One reason for declining enrollment in undergraduate education programs is expanded opportunities available to women, who earn 80% of education degrees, in other fields. In 1970-71, 36% of all bachelor's degrees awarded to women were in education. Since then, as the total number of degrees earned by women more than doubled, the number of bachelor's degrees women earned in education dropped by almost half. In 2014-15, only 7% of all bachelor's degrees awarded to women were in education. Other factors likely affecting enrollment in teacher preparation programs include the relatively low pay of teachers and concerns about working conditions.
- Most institutions award few undergraduate degrees in education. Only 74 institutions award more than 250 education bachelor's degrees; those institutions account for one third of all such degrees. Another 1,044 institutions confer fewer than 100 degrees apiece; 268 of these institutions award 10 or fewer degrees in education. One consequence of declining undergraduate enrollment may be the closure of at least some of these small programs.

Teaching: Graduate Programs

- The specialties that graduate students choose are more diverse than at the undergraduate level, with educational leadership and administration particularly popular among those earning doctorates and graduate certificates.
 - In 1975, 40% of all master's degree were in education, making it by far the most popular field. Today, the range of master's degree fields is larger, and education is the second most popular field at 19% of all degrees, following business at 24%.
 - The number of women earning graduate degrees in education has increased over the long term, even as the number earning bachelor's degrees in education has dropped.
 - Education remains a popular field at the doctoral level, representing 18% of all doctorates conferred, about the same percentage as in 1970-71.
- The number of students earning graduate degrees in education increased steadily from the mid-1980s through 2010. However, since 2010, the number of graduate degrees and certificates conferred in education has declined by 14%. This change occurred despite increases in other fields, and may be due to changes in school district policies on reimbursing graduate course work and rewarding holders of advanced degrees with higher salaries. The exception is doctoral education. The number of doctoral degrees conferred in education has increased by 30% since 2010, mirroring the trend across all disciplines.

Research

- A robust infrastructure of scholarly organizations, journals, and public and private funders supports education research conducted at colleges of education.
- Despite government and philanthropic support for education research, most individuals earning doctorates in education do so to advance careers in teaching or administration rather than research. The tight academic job market may dissuade students from considering a career in academe.

Service

- The service that faculty perform can take many forms, from providing ongoing professional development to teachers and administrators to creating school curricula and instructional materials to consulting with schools regarding the needs of particular student populations. These community engagement and outreach activities are as diverse as the interests of faculty and the needs of partners.

LEADERSHIP AND FACULTY

- The "average" dean of a college of education is a White woman in her late 50s who has been in her position for 6 years. Deans earn a median annual salary of approximately \$154,000. Assistant and associate deans are even more likely to be female and White, average a few years younger, and have been in their positions for an average of 7 years; their median annual salary is \$117,000.
- At each rank, education faculty are far more likely than faculty as a whole to be female. Education faculty are not more racially or ethnically diverse than the faculty population as a whole.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The average age of full professors of education is 62, suggesting that a considerable proportion of faculty are older than the traditional retirement age of 65 and are likely to step down at some point in the next decade.
- As colleges consider coming retirements, an important question is whether colleges of education will be able to retain tenure lines or whether those positions will convert to non-tenure-track status. In a time of shrinking resources, it may be difficult for colleges to stem the trend of increased reliance on contingent faculty.
- Commonly heard concerns about the academic qualification of teacher candidates do not appear to be borne out by available data; bachelor's degree students majoring in education have similar academic credentials, in terms of both high school GPA and admission test scores, to the rest of the student population.

STUDENTS

Undergraduates

- Women earn 81% of undergraduate degrees and certificates conferred by colleges of education and make up 76% of those enrolled in teacher preparation programs.
- Despite concerted efforts to recruit diverse students, colleges of education are not nearly as racially and ethnically diverse as the PK-12 schools where they prepare students to work. In 2018, 52% of students in public schools are projected to be non-White, but only 25% of those earning undergraduate degrees and certificates from colleges of education are people of color.
- At the bachelor's degree level, colleges of education are also less diverse than higher education as a whole. Among the fields in which more than 20,000 students earned bachelor's degrees in 2015-16, only agriculture was less diverse.
- Those enrolled in teacher preparation programs are a somewhat more diverse group than education degree recipients. The primary reason for this difference is that alternative programs—although comparatively small—have a much higher proportion of people of color.
- Students earning bachelor's degrees in education are primarily traditional-age, are financially dependent on their parents, and come from families in which one or both parents attended college. They tend to work part-time while enrolled and attend college full-time. Students earning associate's degrees from colleges of education are older, are often first-generation college students, and are financially independent; many have young children and work full-time while they are enrolled.
- Doctoral and graduate certificate students are older and are more likely to be married and to have children than those in master's degree programs, although 40% of master's degree students have dependents and 44% of those are children age 4 or younger. Doctoral and graduate certificate students have higher family income, reflecting their differing ages and family circumstances.
- Almost all education graduate students work, and the majority work full-time. It is not surprising, then, that half of graduate students in education attend exclusively part-time and another 18% mix full- and part-time attendance.

Graduate Students

CHALLENGES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

This report confirms many of the challenges cited by education deans in a recent national survey: declining enrollment, difficulty recruiting diverse students and faculty, filling teacher shortages in key subject areas, and rapid attrition among new teachers. In addition, deans cited personnel and resource constraints, federal and state regulations, and lack of capacity to track and analyze student outcomes as particular challenges.

Despite these challenges, colleges of education have been resilient and have persisted in playing a critical role in the nation's education system.

By improving the quality of education through teaching, research, and service, colleges of education make an important contribution to American prosperity and quality of life.

The full report will be available in August 2018. For more information, visit aacte.org.

This publication is the first in a series of signature reports that AACTE will release on the contributions and challenges of colleges of education.

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