

**Addressing Declining Enrollment in Alternative Certification
Programs in Louisiana: Louisiana State University
Shreveport Pilot Pipeline Initiative**

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Abstract

In a recent publication Evans et al. (2021) examined national enrollment declines and trends related to traditional teacher preparation programs. Factors contributing to declining enrollment included salaries so low for some teachers they qualify for federally funded benefit programs, school safety, politics, and stress. This article a continuation of that review as the researchers looked at trends and issues in alternative routes to teacher preparation - undergraduate alternative certification options including IHE and non-IHE. Efforts to address issues from Louisiana State University Shreveport's Pilot Pipeline Initiative are presented.

In a recent publication Evans et al. (2021) examined national enrollment declines and trends related to traditional teacher preparation programs. Factors contributing to declining enrollment included salaries so low for some teachers they qualify for federally funded benefit programs, school safety, politics, and stress. This article is a continuation of that review as the researchers looked at trends and issues in alternative routes to teacher preparation such as undergraduate alternative certification options including IHE and non-IHE with specific data from

Louisiana programs addressed. This article goes further to discuss the Pilot Pipeline Initiative that was established to address issues and declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs, both traditional and alternate certification.

The Center for American Progress (CAP; Partelow, 2019) reported enrollment trends as related to the type of programs – traditional; alternative, IHE-based; or alternative non-IHE based with each being defined by the respective states. The report noted that in 2018, 77% of enrollment was still in traditional programs; however, the Alternative non-IHEs saw tremendous growth in enrollments. Their 2010 - 2018 data analysis revealed that enrollment in traditional programs declined by 43% whereas enrollment in alternative non-IHE programs increased by 42% with enrollment in alternative IHE programs declining 19%.

However, an interesting finding from the CAP report (Partelow, 2019) regarded states that showed growth where no IHE programs existed in 2010. By 2018, IHE-based alternative programs in several states noted growth from zero including Delaware (0 to 213), Minnesota (0 to 1,215), Nevada (0 to 723), New Jersey (0 to 1,575), North Carolina (0 to 1,633), North Dakota (0 to 24), and Vermont (0 to 152). Non-IHE alternative certification programs increased by 42% during the same period. Growth in states from zero included Arizona (0 to 28), the District of Columbia (0 to 486), Indiana (0 to 11), Michigan (0 to 10), Nevada (0 to 870), Rhode Island (0 to 50), and West Virginia (0 to 40).

CAP (Partelow, 2019) reported that non-IHEs have been intensely scrutinized due to poor student outcomes and deceptive practices. High default rates, lower earnings, and the unlikeliness of obtaining employment as compared with students who attended public institutions has been problematic for completers from these programs. Furthermore, those that attended largely online, non-IHEs faced even lower earnings and prospects of employment. The Higher Education Act (HEA) Title II reporting to the U.S. Department of Education does not require alternate programs to specify whether they are IHE or non-IHE-based, so it is unclear how prevalent for-profit non-IHEs are in teacher preparation. What the CAP report does show is that for-profit, non-IHEs are significantly growing.

Texas has the largest enrollment of alternate non-IHE candidates than in any other state with more than 60,000 students enrolled since 2016 (Partelow, 2019). Rapidly growing is the Texas Teachers of Tomorrow program. The low-cost entry fee of \$295 for an alternate teacher preparation program is a key attraction to high enrollment, but completion rates are not high.

A Look at Louisiana Higher Education Alternate Certification Pathways

In Louisiana, there are 28 initial teacher preparation programs in alternate certification including undergraduate and MAT offerings with eight being non-IHE and Relay-Grad School of Education listed as both IHE and non-IHE (Louisiana Department of Education [LDOE], 2022). The HEA Title II website for the 2020 reporting year includes enrollment and completer data for preparation programs nationwide (Title II, 2022). Louisiana data indicated enrollment at a decrease of 51% for IHEs whereas enrollment for non-IHEs increased by an astounding 614% from 2010 - 2018 (Table 1). The enrollment table represents data for all preparation programs combined for the state's IHE and non-IHE programs, respectively.

Table 1

Alternative, IHE-Based Program Enrollment

| State | AY 2010- 11 | AY 2011- 12 | AY 2012- 13 | AY 2013- 14 | AY 2014- 15 | AY 2015- 16 | AY 2016- 17 | AY 2017- 18 | AY 2018- 19 |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Louisiana | 2482 | 2194 | 1531 | 1421 | 1307 | 1171 | 1043 | 1103 | 1224 |
| Percentage Change: 51% Decrease | | | | | | | | | |

Alternative, not IHE-Based Program Enrollment

| State | AY 2010- 11 | AY 2011- 12 | AY 2012- 13 | AY 2013- 14 | AY 2014- 15 | AY 2015- 16 | AY 2016- 17 | AY 2017- 18 | AY 2018- 19 |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Louisiana | 179 | 591 | 856 | 1030 | 803 | 1001 | 1808 | 1138 | 1278 |
| Percentage Change: 614% Increase | | | | | | | | | |

The completer data table represents both programs respectively divided by each individual institution (Table 2). The 2010 – 2018 data analysis revealed a 58% decrease in completers in IHE programs. By 2018, Louisiana College had the highest number of completers with a total of 80. Furthermore, the programs with the four next highest numbers of completers, combined with Louisiana College’s completers, made up more than half of all completers in Louisiana (Northwestern State (58), Louisiana Tech (40), University of Louisiana Lafayette (36), and McNeese State University (29). The five programs with the fewest completers had a combined total of just 21. These programs included Relay-Grad School of Education (0), Southern University A & M College (0), Grambling State University (5), Louisiana State University Shreveport (7), and Loyola University (9). In non-IHE programs, there was a 27% increase in the state’s overall number of completers with iTeachLouisiana showing the highest number of completers in 2018 with 390, which is more than half of all completers for non-IHE programs. The five programs with the fewest number of completers produced a combined total of 70 completers (Tangipahoa Parish (0), Teach Ascension Academy (7), St. Bernard Parish PS (11), Caddo Parish School Board (21), and Relay-Grad School of Education (31).

Table 2

Louisiana Program Completers – Alternative, IHE-Based

| IHE Name | AY 2010-11 | AY 2011-12 | AY 2012-13 | AY 2013-14 | AY 2014-15 | AY 2015-16 | AY 2016-17 | AY 2017-18 | AY 2018-19 |
|--|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Centenary College Louisiana | 15 | 23 | 24 | 28 | 12 | 25 | 12 | 27 | 16 |
| Grambling State University | 6 | 9 | 4 | 10 | 7 | 11 | 11 | 8 | 5 |
| Louisiana Christian University (Louisiana College) | 200 | 126 | 141 | 113 | 121 | 103 | 69 | 73 | 80 |
| Louisiana State University Alexandria | 8 | 8 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 8 | 19 | 22 |
| Louisiana State University Baton Rouge | 74 | 65 | 83 | 56 | 60 | 12 | 34 | 15 | 24 |
| Louisiana State University Shreveport | 71 | 49 | 30 | 23 | 7 | 11 | 9 | 8 | 7 |
| Louisiana Tech University | 91 | 146 | 96 | 72 | 48 | 44 | 44 | 56 | 40 |
| Lovolo University LA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 9 |
| McNeese State University | 91 | 85 | 50 | 37 | 40 | 38 | 39 | 30 | 29 |
| Nicholls State University | 95 | 75 | 38 | 41 | 37 | 29 | 21 | 44 | 24 |
| Northwestern State University | 43 | 46 | 67 | 58 | 69 | 82 | 80 | 61 | 58 |
| Relay-Grad School of Education | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 36 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Southeastern Louisiana University | 38 | 32 | 46 | 28 | 22 | 20 | 16 | 9 | 16 |
| Southern University A&M Collene | 40 | 34 | 25 | 16 | 13 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 0 |
| Southern University New Orleans | 21 | 10 | 14 | 10 | 16 | 13 | 7 | 10 | 13 |
| Tulane University | 10 | 13 | 29 | 30 | 17 | 19 | 25 | 23 | 14 |
| University of Holy Cross | 61 | 46 | 39 | 29 | 25 | 23 | 19 | 28 | 21 |
| University of Louisiana Lafayette | 163 | 97 | 96 | 53 | 57 | 37 | 32 | 41 | 36 |
| University of Louisiana Monroe | 12 | 103 | 32 | 32 | 37 | 35 | 35 | 21 | 17 |
| University of New Orleans | 56 | 83 | 82 | 78 | 61 | 45 | 47 | 28 | 22 |
| Xavier University LA | 32 | 22 | 14 | 24 | 15 | 13 | 6 | 6 | 17 |
| Total | 1127 | 1072 | 914 | 745 | 667 | 604 | 518 | 521 | 470 |

Percentage Change: 58% Decrease

Louisiana Program Completers – Alternative, Not IHE-Based

| IHE Name | AY 2010-11 | AY 2011-12 | AY 2012-13 | AY 2013-14 | AY 2014-15 | AY 2015-16 | AY 2016-17 | AY 2017-18 | AY 2018-19 |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Caddo Teaching Academy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 9 | 0 | 21 |
| iTeach Louisiana | 0 | 10 | 43 | 100 | 221 | 280 | 0 | 0 | 390 |
| Louisiana Resource Center for Educators | 157 | 147 | 157 | 137 | 132 | 88 | 88 | 120 | 100 |
| Relay-Grad School of Education | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 31 |
| St. Bernard Parish PS | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 28 | 14 | 19 | 11 |
| Tangipahoa Parish | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Teach Ascension Academy | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 7 |
| TNTP Academy | 371 | 231 | 163 | 341 | 180 | 134 | 369 | 150 | 108 |
| Total | 528 | 388 | 363 | 578 | 557 | 540 | 484 | 293 | 668 |

Percentage Change: 27% Increase

Note: U.S. Department of Education, Higher Education Act Title II State Report Card System, <https://title2.ed.gov/Public/Home.aspx>.

LSU Shreveport Pilot Pipeline Initiative

In an effort to address the dismal and concerning trends in teacher preparation, the LSU Shreveport Department of Education implemented the Pilot Pipeline Initiative in 2021. This pre-educator pipeline was developed to produce a diverse group of highly skilled, certified educators from the surrounding areas who aspire to teach and make a difference in their home communities and play a part in the greater good. The Pilot Pipeline is founded on six P’s: partners, players, pathway, platform, perks, and publicity. From this pipeline experience, teachers will be equipped with efficient tools to promote student interest in the profession of education (Burrell et al., 2021; Senge, 2006). The Department is pleased to share progress in each of the P’s of the Pipeline.

Partners

The Department has established mutually beneficial partnerships with four North Louisiana school districts. Each Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement is unique to the Department’s preparation goals and the district’s workforce needs. These agreements have evolved from a contract that outlines the expectations of school districts and providers during the student teaching semester to a true pipeline blueprint for the recruitment, development, and employment of home-grown teachers. The Director of Clinical Preparation and Partnerships

meets with district liaisons on an annual basis to review agreements and make adjustments as necessary.

Players

The Department recognized early on that the Pilot Pipeline initiative was more than just a basic community engagement project. It was the University's footprint on the educational outcomes of the children, families, and communities that represent Northwest Louisiana. Therefore, the Department identified key administrators from the University's leadership team and Superintendents' cabinets from partner K-12 schools who had the authority to make high-level decisions and solicit immediate support to move the initiative forward. Department faculty presented national and state trends in the recruitment, retention, and certification of K-12 teachers, shared a logic model for the pipeline initiative, and expressed the need for the collective support of the campus and community to engage in this movement. Although there is much road yet to travel, the Department has received financial support to host community events on the campus for aspiring educators, offer Praxis certification exam scholarships to current education majors, and potentially add an Aspiring Educator of Color scholarship to the School of Education's recruitment package.

Pathway

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE, 2022) with the support of leading K-12 and higher education professionals emerged as huge players through the 2021 statewide launch of the Pre-Educator Jumpstart Pathway. The pathway exposes high school juniors and seniors to the teaching profession through clinical experiences and college-level education courses co-designed by partner universities and school districts. In order to be a state-recognized pathway program, districts must adopt the Educator's Rising standards-based curriculum. The Department's four partner districts are at various points in their pathway implementation. The Department offers at least six hours of dual enrollment credit to pre-educator students at two career tech sites. Pre-Educator students log clinical experiences in various schools within their home districts. They are also invited to the University to connect with education majors, utilize campus resources, and explore college life. One of the most memorable moments of the pathway is when pre-educators complete their coursework and commit to pursuing an education degree. Just as star athletes are recognized for their commitment to play collegiate sports, districts hold Signing Days during which pre-educator pathway students sign a Letter of Intent to pursue an education degree and join the teaching profession.

Platforms

The Educator's Rising curriculum is only one component of a district's pathway program. The Department is currently supporting three school districts in their launch of Educator's Rising clubs in select middle and high schools. Membership in Educator's Rising is open to all students. Members engage with Educator's Rising communities across the state, region, and nation through competitions and conferences. It is the Department's hope that Educator's Rising clubs will become the initial gateway into the profession.

Perks

Now, more than ever, districts have to compete for teachers. The beauty of the Pipeline is that as districts send students to the University, the University returns students to their home districts as teacher residents. It is the district's responsibility to seal the deal with employment. The Department works with district leaders to design incentive packages that are beneficial for both the district and the recruits. One partner district committed to offering Pipeline graduates a year of experience in pay if they returned to the district as a classroom teacher. Another district offered to cover tuition for their traditional and alternate certification students if they agreed to teach in the district after completing all certification requirements.

Publicity

The Pilot Pipeline is the Department's priority as it presents a long-term solution to teacher shortages at least in the community where the University is planted. The School of Education seeks every opportunity to showcase the initiative and to be a positive voice for the profession. *Teach Reach Inspire*, a monthly radio program featured on National Public Radio is a prime example. The program invites members of the educational community to share what it truly means to teach children, reach families, and inspire communities. The Department has plans for an in-school studio called EDTV where faculty and students can create marketing and instructional materials that result in next-level teaching.

Conclusion

As the teacher shortage continues to grow due, efforts must be undertaken by teacher preparation providers that are innovative and doable – the goal of the LSUS Pilot Pipeline Initiative. We hope this framework will provide a jumping off place for other teacher preparation providers as we all need to work solidly to combat the current state of the education profession in our country.

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