

CWU Teacher Education Programs Earn Accreditation

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PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ELLENSBURG, Wash. — The nation's largest accrediting organization has reapproved teacher education programs at Central Washington University. On Oct. 30 the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) announced that CWU's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) has earned continuing "accreditation with conditions." The CTL comprises all teacher education endorsements, educational administration, school counseling, and school psychology.

"We know that our teacher education programs are among the best in the U.S., but it's gratifying to have that confirmed by NCATE. They're the gold standard for accreditation of teacher education programs," said CWU Provost, Dr. David Soltz, who added that the university welcomed NCATE's suggestions to improve diversity education and collect more assessment data.

Conditions are attached to Standard 2, unit assessment and evaluation, at both undergraduate and graduate levels; and Standard 4, diversity, at the graduate level. To address the conditions, CWU will require diversity coursework for graduate students and continue to refine the system for assessing students' work. To remove the conditions, CWU will host a visit no later than fall 2009 that focuses on standard two and four.

CWU has the ninth largest teacher preparation program in the United States, and produces 20 percent of all P-12 classroom teachers in Washington state. Ninety-seven percent of program graduates pass the teacher certification exams required to teach in Washington.

Accreditation is a process for assessing and enhancing academic and educational quality through voluntary peer review. Accreditation ensures university teacher preparation programs operate at a high level of educational quality and integrity. NCATE accreditation is the process by which a professional education unit is recognized by the profession as meeting national standards for the content and operation of the unit.

NCATE and Washington state partner in the review of teacher preparation programs, conducting their reviews at the same time. The state/NCATE partnership saves time, effort, and expense for the institutions and the states while promoting high national standards for teacher preparation.

In May 2007, a team of reviewers from NCATE and from the state Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) examined CWU teacher education programs over the course of about five days. The team considered all components of teacher education programs: how students' work is evaluated, their training in working with K-12 students from diverse backgrounds, the knowledge and skill of teacher candidates, and much more.

Although the NCATE team concluded that CWU's residency teacher preparation program deserved continuing approval, the PESB disapproved the program — a decision CWU is now appealing.

“Superintendents, principals, and classroom teachers tell us our students are well prepared. Our students demonstrated that they're well qualified on standardized state certification exams. Now NCATE also has told us we have a good program,” said Soltz, CWU's chief academic officer, noting that the state's Teacher of the Year also is a CWU graduate. “We look forward to a good resolution of our appeal of the PESB decision and to working with them and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to ensure they hold our programs in the same high regard as do other agencies and individuals.”

NCATE is a non-profit, non-governmental alliance of 33 national professional education and public organizations. NCATE's performance-based system of accreditation is designed to ensure that U.S. colleges of education produce competent classroom teachers and other educators who work to improve the education of all P-12 students. This year more than 700 institutions are a part of the NCATE system. The U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation recognize NCATE as an accrediting body for schools, colleges, and departments of education.

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Central Washington University is a master's degree-granting institution with approximately 10,000 students and 1,500 faculty and staff. More than 160 undergraduate and master's degrees are offered. Founded in 1891, the Ellensburg campus is located in the heart of Washington State, nestled between the Cascade Mountains and the Columbia River. Since 1975, CWU has served the needs of place bound students at six university centers throughout the state. CWU is an AA/EEO Title IX Institution.