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LYCOMING COLLEGE
WILLIAMSPORT, PA 17701-5192

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PA. STATE BOARD
OF EDUCATION

570-321-4010

FAX • 570-321-4389

December 1, 2006

Dear Representative:

Enclosed is a letter containing our concerns about the proposed changes to the Elementary, Secondary, Early Childhood and Special Education certification programs that have been set forth by the Department of Education. These changes will impact in very substantial and negative ways all Pennsylvania institutions of higher education that offer teacher education programs. These changes will be very difficult to implement and still allow these institutions to meet the requirements of PDE to complete certification programs in four academic years and to meet required state standards and those of No Child Left Behind. Closure of some strong, vital certification programs, major restructuring of others, increased financial burdens and loss of out of state students are some of the major expected results.

We deeply appreciate your attention to these proposed changes and our concerns and know that you will give them most careful consideration before you vote to implement them. Please contact me at the telephone number or email address below if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Dr. Rachael Hungerford, Chair and Chief Certification Officer
Department of Education
Lycoming College
Williamsport, PA 17701

1-570-321-4010 (office)

Email: hunger@lycoming.edu

Enclosures

INDEPENDENT REGULATOR/
RENEW COMMISSION

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To: Concerned Parties

From: Dr. Rachael Hungerford, Chair

Director of Teacher Education/Chief Certification Officer

Lycoming College Department of Education

Re: Position of Lycoming College Department of Education regarding
proposed changes to Chapter 49 regulations

Date: December, 2006

We understand that the education regarding major changes to all teacher education certification programs will be voted upon in January, 2007. We urge you to very carefully consider the consequences that these changes will have on Pennsylvania institutions of higher education that offer teacher certification. These consequences will not benefit the public schools, students or the colleges and universities.

Personally I am a former teacher and have been a teacher educator at Lycoming College for the past 18 years. I have many years of work and experience in teacher education. After much discussion and interaction with colleagues in both public schools and higher education it is my belief that these proposals by PDE did not take into consideration input provided by members of higher education programs and did not have full backing of school administrators and teachers. All of these people have long years of experience and knowledge related to the education of children.

Below are listed my concerns and those of my college:

1. The split of Elementary (K-6) certification into N-3 (early childhood) and 4-8 (elementary) certifications is not a well thought out or sound possibility.

Consequences of this split are as follows:

- The creation of a lack of continuity in elementary program since teachers at all grade levels (k-6) need to understand the academic and development issues and stages of students through all grades. Students in the primary grades may need instruction at a higher level and those in the intermediate grades may need instruction at a lower level. Different preparation

Suggestions:

- Keep the existing certifications and provide options for teacher candidates to specialize in either early childhood or upper elementary/middle areas. Such specialization could be done as a concentration of courses or a special endorsement that happens after graduation and their initial certification is acquired. This would also fulfill the requirement for 24 additional credits in order to maintain certification. Endorsements would provide focus for those credits rather than the current random selection that often happens now.
2. The split and the additional requirements for special education certification is another serious concern.
- The supply of special education teachers is very low and are the ones in the most demand. Additional requirements of dual certification for every special education teacher will make this situation much worse. For most of us it means that our students seeking special education certification will not be able to complete their work in the four required academic years and in very substantial increases in the cost of their education. Both of these things are unnecessary burdens on students. Consequently many students may choose not to seek special education certification and adding to the already serious and growing problem of teacher shortage in this area.
 - The issue of reciprocity of certificates for out of state students applies to special education certificates as well as elementary and secondary.
 - The impact on higher education will be enormous and negative. At this time it is extremely difficult to hire highly qualified faculty in the special education areas. There are simply not enough faculty out there and there is no sign of this changing in the near future. These new changes/requirements will make the demand even greater.

Suggestions:

- Keep the existing certifications and provide options for teacher candidates to specialize in the other certification areas after they get their initial special education certification. This can be done in the same way as suggested above for elementary and secondary and early childhood.

Suggestions:

- Provide special education and English Language Learner requirements as competencies not courses or hours – a practice consistent with existing teacher certification programs.
- Allow or require teachers to use their required 24 credits after they get their initial certification as suggested earlier in this document.

Increasing the quality of teacher in and trained by the Commonwealth of PA is important and needs careful consideration. Cooperative ventures among all areas of teacher education are already in place and provide creative ways to accomplish what we want. Accommodating the financial needs of perspective students is also necessary. While we can always improve we are already doing a fine job.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I deeply appreciate it.