Continued Discussion on Efforts to Streamline and Strengthen the Commission's Accountability System

April 2014

Introduction

This agenda item continues the April 24 COA discussion of efforts to streamline and strengthen the Commission's accountability system.

Staff Recommendation

No specific action is being recommended at this time.

Background

Commission staff has been engaged in discussions with the field about ways in which to streamline and strengthen accreditation and accountability in educator preparation. Staff reported on these discussions at the April 11, 2014 Commission meeting. The Commission had an opportunity to comment on some of the ideas emerging from these discussions and the members shared their thinking on priority and importance of various aspects of those concepts. A copy of the Commission agenda item is included as Appendix A to this item.

Commission staff will continue this discussion with the COA and discuss plans for furthering the work.

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Information/Action

Professional Services Committee

Update on Plans to Strengthen and Streamline Accreditation

Executive Summary: This agenda item presents for discussion an update on the plans to strengthen and streamline accreditation. In addition, it includes a focused discussion on the Program Assessment component of accreditation and a possible pilot for Commission consideration and direction.

Policy Question: What factors should be considered in strengthening and streamlining accreditation?

Recommended Action: That the Commission discuss the issues surfaced in this agenda item and direct staff regarding appropriate next steps.

Presenter: Cheryl Hickey, Administrator, and Teri Clark, Director, Professional Services Division

Strategic Plan Goal

II. Program Quality and Accountability

- Develop and maintain rigorous, meaningful, and relevant standards that drive program quality and effectiveness for the preparation of the education workforce and are responsive to the needs of California's diverse student population.

Update on Plans to Strengthen and Streamline Accreditation

Introduction

This agenda item continues a discussion that began with the development of the Commission's strategic plan in 2012 (http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/vmg.html) and continued at the December 2013 Commission meeting (http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2013-12/2013-12-2G.pdf) regarding the need to strengthen and streamline the Commission's accountability system for educator preparation. It provides an update on discussions taking place with the field including ideas that are emerging on streamlining and strengthening accreditation and accountability.

Background

Ensuring quality and holding programs accountable for producing educators who are both ready and able to begin professional practice relies on three interdependent systems managed by the Commission. The first is the Commission's adopted ***educator preparation program standards***. These standards serve as the bedrock for accountability, defining expectations for programs that prepare prospective educators for service in the public schools and for the candidates who complete these programs. The second major system includes ***assessments, and other outcome measures***, which ensure that candidates entering the public school system are sufficiently prepared and qualified to effectively enact their roles as new educators. The third system is the ***accreditation process*** itself, which includes biennial reports on program outcomes, program assessment documents, and site visits. The accreditation system ensures that programs are, in fact, aligned with the standards and of sufficient quality. Because these three systems are interrelated and interdependent, the Commission's current initiative to strengthen and streamline accountability must include considerations for all three.

Throughout the fall of 2013 and into the winter of 2014, staff have been engaged both internally and with various stakeholders, in discussions about changes the Commission might consider in the nature of standards, the kinds of performance outcomes that could be incorporated into accreditation, and in the reports and documentation that are used to determine alignment with standards and quality of programs. Specifically, the following questions are serving as important discussion focal points:

> *Is the Commission's accreditation process yielding the type of information needed to determine the quality of both preparation programs and program graduates? What are the "right things" to evaluate and/or measure in order better understand the quality of educator preparation and readiness of program graduates to begin practice?*
>
> *Are additional refinements and/or adjustments needed so that the accreditation system functions in the most efficient and least bureaucratic manner possible while still yielding a sufficient level of assurance to the public that programs are producing high quality educators for California public schools?*

There is a relatively strong consensus that the Commission is focused on the right questions, and that updating these systems is both timely and necessary. The most recent confirmation that the Commission needs to streamline and update its accountability system came in a March 28, 2014 report from the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) in response to the Commission's proposed 2014-15 budget (http://www.lao.ca.gov/Publications/Detail/2987). The report addresses the governor's proposed budget as it relates to instituting new fees for accreditation. The following LAO recommendations are pertinent to the topic of this agenda item:

> ***Recommend Legislature Direct CTC to Overhaul Standards and Accreditation.*** *To reduce the cost, labor, and fees associated with the current accreditation process, we recommend the Legislature adopt statute that requires CTC to make substantial revisions to its standards and accreditation process by January 1, 2016. We recommend these revisions be guided by the following broad principles.*
>
> - *Program standards should be clear, concise, and aligned to the state's academic content standards. The standards should focus only on the most critical aspects of teacher preparation.*
> - *Accreditation should incorporate reliable program outcomes data, including but not limited to: job placement rates, retention rates, and surveys of program completers and employers. These data should be made available to the public.*
> - *Accreditation should be cost–effective and self–supporting. Accreditation fees should be as low as possible while still sufficient to cover expenses associated with a streamlined accreditation process. The Legislature should review the fees periodically to ensure they are reasonable.*
>
> *To ensure CTC is making progress on the revisions outlined above, we also recommend the Legislature require CTC to submit a status report to the Legislature by January 1, 2015. As part of the status report, we recommend the Legislature require CTC to identify the changes it plans to make to its accreditation fee schedule as a result of streamlining teacher standards and associated accreditation activities. (Legislative Analyst's Office, March 28, 2014).*

These recommendations are advisory only at this time, but they support and amplify the importance of the Commission's goals in this area. Funding permitting, the recommended timeline seems reasonable.

Progress and Future Plans for Strengthening and Streamlining the Accountability System

Commission staff has been meeting with a wide range of stakeholders for the last several months to analyze and consider needed changes in the accountability system. A report on these activities was presented in December 2013 to Commissioners. The following ideas are emerging in these discussions:

1. Program <u>standards</u> should:
    - be clear, concise, and organized around educator performance expectations that define the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for successful beginning practice in the public schools;

- be aligned to the relevant academic content standards adopted by the State Board of Education;
- focus on the programs' ability to help each candidate meet performance expectations for licensure;
- require programs to present a coherent design, grounded in research on best practice;
- include a strong clinical component; and
- enable flexible program design and innovation.

2. Accreditation should incorporate reliable program outcomes data including:
    - candidate assessment results;
    - surveys of program completers and employers; and
    - other valid indicators of program quality might include program enrollment and completion data, job placement rates, retention rates.

3. Accreditation should be cost effective, efficiently managed, and appropriately attentive to the evaluation of inputs (program documentation) as well as outcomes. Ideas to increase efficiency and effectiveness include:
    - Reducing and setting parameters for the level of documentation needed to demonstrate alignment with standards.
    - Increased reliance on program outcome data, as outlined above, to serve as additional sources of information about program quality.
    - Targeting site visits based on issues arising in program document review as well as in data collected annually from surveys, candidate assessments and other relevant sources.
    - Consistently poor performing programs should be closed.
    - Consistently high performing programs should be recognized as exemplary.

4. Information about programs should be publicly available. The Commission might want to consider developing a "data dashboard" that would provide consistent and transparent information about Commission-approved educator preparation programs. Data that could be included in such a data dashboard might include:
    - Number of candidates accepted in the program annually;
    - Demographic information on candidates accepted into the program;
    - Data from entrance examinations and entering GPAs;
    - Information on required courses;
    - Clinical experiences, including data on duration of supervised student teaching;
    - Data on program completion rates; and
    - Data on entry and retention into the profession, including information on mobility and careers of graduates.

While these ideas do not yet form or represent a consensus, they do represent the thinking of an array of stakeholders, including faculty and administrators from the California State University, the University of California, private and independent colleges, teacher representatives, school administrators and others. These ideas are offered for the Commission's consideration, discussion and prioritization. Staff will use the results of these discussions to shape next steps.

Recommendation and Possible Next Steps

Staff recommends that the Commission discuss the issues surfaced in this agenda item and direct staff regarding appropriate next steps, which could include:

1. Convening a Summit in the Spring of 2014 to review the issues surfaced at this meeting and gather feedback and additional input about the Commission's accountability system – standards, outcomes, and processes. Participants would focus on identifying essential aspects of the teacher preparation program standards and useful indicators of program quality to strengthen the inclusion of outcomes in the accreditation process.

2. Working with a design team appointed by the Executive Director to (a) review all feedback and input received to date, (b) analyze and provide preliminary thinking on the manner in which educator preparation standards might be restructured to focus on the essentials, and (c) work with staff to identify other potential changes to the accountability system.

3. Developing a June 2014 agenda item that updates the Commission and presents a plan of action with a timeline for revising the accountability system.