Discussion of Options for Identifying Exemplary Programs

Overview of this Report
The Commission has indicated that they would like the staff, with guidance from the Committee on Accreditation (COA), to develop a process to identify exemplary educator preparation programs. This agenda item discusses a potential process for identifying exemplary programs.

Recommendation
That the COA discuss the topic. Based upon the COA discussion, staff will bring this item back in June 2018 for further discussion and possible action.

Background
With the recent implementation of the new accreditation system, the Commission has signaled its desire to have a method to formally recognize California educator preparation programs that are exemplary. The standards adopted by the Commission set the baseline for what all programs are expected to do and it is always the Commission's expectation that all programs meet all standards. Some programs, however, go above and beyond these minimum requirements by devising and/or implementing practices for meeting the standards in preparing new educators that exemplify best practice. Such programs can be models for other programs, especially programs that may be challenged in an area that the exemplary program excels. In this way, a significant opportunity exists.

Certain sectors of the educator preparation community have historically shared best practices in educator preparation across institutions; however, because this is not true for all institutions, the Commission could assist in providing resources for all programs by identifying programs that excel in program implementation and practice. For program sponsors experiencing challenges in successful program implementation, exemplary programs could provide significant guidance and support. With this in mind, staff is proposing a system that identifies potential programs that would be exemplary while also requiring an altruistic approach for your consideration.

Historical Context
A number of significant revisions to the Commission's standards for educator preparation and performance expectations have been adopted as part of the strengthening and streamlining educator preparation initiative it undertook beginning in 2012. The table below illustrates some of these revisions and the month and year that the revisions were adopted.

New/Revised Standards or Performance Expectations	Adoption Date
Preliminary Administrative Services Program Standards	December 2013
Administrative Services Induction Program Standards	February 2014
Preliminary Multiple and Single Subject Program Standards	December 2015
Teaching Performance Expectations	June 2016
Teacher Induction Program Standards	October 2016
Preliminary Education Specialist Program Standards	In review process
Pupil Personnel Services Program Standards	Early in review process

During this time, the COA was also at work analyzing, planning, and implementing a revised accreditation system that places a greater focus on outcomes data and increased institutional reporting requirements relying on evidence rather than narrative throughout the seven-year accreditation cycle. Preliminary teacher and leader preparation and teacher and administrator induction programs have been engaged in implementing these major modifications to their programs in order to align with the Commission's new standards and expectations. In this time of considerable change, exemplary programs can be powerful models.

Of the 250 Commission-approved institutions that offer one or more educator preparation programs leading to a California credential, there are currently 80 Preliminary Multiple and Single Subject, 65 Preliminary Administrative Services, 161 Teacher Induction, and 46 Clear Administrator Induction programs in California. Approximately 14% of these programs participate in an accreditation site visit each year and are potential candidates for exemplary program status consideration.

However, staff suggests that the process to identify exemplary programs should be distinct from the Commission's accreditation system. The accreditation system is designed to identify if programs are meeting the Commission's standards. Standards are the minimum expectations and institutions and the programs they offer are required to meet all Commission-adopted standards at all times. Members of the Board of Institutional Reviewers are charged with making decisions about whether or not the standards are being met. Staff recommends that all program-specific and Common Standards must be met in order to be eligible to apply for exemplary program status; however, the remainder of the identification and selection process for such programs would take place outside of the accreditation system.

Discussion
Identification of Exemplary Programs
In an effort to develop a process that is both effective and equitable, staff suggests establishing baseline eligibility criteria for programs seeking exemplary program status that could include the following concept:.

Eligible programs must:
- Meet all corresponding Program Standards;
- Be offered by an Institution that meets all Common Standards; and

- Be from an institution having earned full Accreditation status from the COA in the most recent year (Year Six).

After satisfying the baseline criteria, eligible programs may request consideration for exemplary program status through an application process that would be implemented by staff and coordinated by the COA.

Discussion of Additional Potential Application Requirements
Staff has outlined below the possible steps in an application process for eligible programs interested in obtaining exemplary program status. Through this application process, potential exemplary programs would be required to detail the ways in which the program provides creative and unique approaches to effective program implementation. Each of the steps in this potential application process is a suggestion and should be considered by the COA.

Once eligibility has been determined, a program seeking exemplary program status would submit the following documentation during the proposed application process:

- A three to five-page paper identifying the exemplary aspect(s) of the program and how they tie to the program standard with supporting information;
- Specific documentation regarding the impact of the program on teaching and learning and how the exemplary aspect is linked to the impact;
- A statement of endorsement from an employer or completer (limited to two pages); and
- A signed statement from the unit lead and program director that the program agrees to be available to other programs seeking technical assistance in the area(s) in which they are exemplary.

Within this process, it is important to ensure the integrity of the accreditation system. As such, staff suggests that the application process be facilitated by a committee of program-specific experts comprised of representatives from the previous year's exemplary programs (for the first year, staff proposes that three to five representatives from the work group that developed the revised program standards be asked to serve on each of the selection committees). This selection committee would review the submission. The actual decision for which programs are awarded exemplary status could be made by either this group or this group could make a recommendation to the COA. Staff suggest that the COA discuss these options or other possibilities. Also, issues related to whether the decision is appealable, the actual process, and what grounds the COA (if the deciding body is the COA) could deny the recommendation from the group are still to be determined.

Detailed steps for this proposed review process are as follows:

- Selection committee is determined;
- Institutions with eligible programs are notified of the opportunity to request exemplary program status;

- Staff collects the submissions;
- Eligible submissions are provided to the selection committee by Commission staff;
- Selection committee members have 2-3 weeks to review all submissions;
- Commission staff conduct a conference call or Zoom meeting with the selection committee to determine specific programs for recommendation;
- Staff present the selection committee's recommendations to the COA;
- Programs that are finalists have the opportunity to present to the COA;
- COA grants Exemplary Program status to programs based upon recommendations; and
- Exemplary programs are included in the annual accreditation report to the Commission in the fall of each year.

Staff recommends that the application process be opened annually in mid-May and close on July 1st with the selection committee's recommendations being presented to the COA at its August meeting.

The potential workload impact on Commission staff is unknown at this time.

Access to Exemplary Programs
A program that is granted exemplary program status must agree to be featured on the Technical Assistance or dedicated webpage on the Commission on Teacher Credentialing's official website. This webpage will include the Exemplary Program's application submission document, other supporting materials, and contact information. At the conclusion of the Exemplary Program's year, all documentation and information will be archived on the dedicated webpage for future reference and historical preservation.

Initial Year Pilot
Staff advises that the initial round of exemplary programs be restricted to specific program types and be viewed as a pilot. By constraining the focus initially to general education teacher preparation and administrator preparation—at both the preliminary and second tier level – the process could be implemented and fine-tuned before expanding the option to additional types of educator preparation programs.

While one approach would have the program identify what aspect of its program it would like to highlight to demonstrate that it is exemplary, staff suggests that the COA also consider whether to limit or identify particular topics upon which a program would be determined. Rather than leaving this to the program to determine what aspect of its programs to highlight, the Commission could identify some aspects of programs it would like to focus on in a given year. For example, in general education preliminary teacher preparation a number of things have changed in the recent adoption:

- New Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs) are being implemented. A preliminary program might want to identify as exemplary is in disseminating information about the revised TPEs to faculty, candidates, supervisors, employers, and other partners.
- The implementation of the 10 hours of professional learning for the cooperating teachers.

In the Teacher Induction programs, the new standards are a fundamental shift from the prior standards and having programs identified that have been very successful in making that shift could be very helpful for the programs that have not yet.

There are preparation programs that have developed very effective ways to address the Commission's standards and to prepare educators to be effective once they are employed.

Exemplary Program Expectations
Staff recommends that exemplary program status be granted to a program for one year, the year after the accreditation site visit, with the expectation that faculty or staff from the Exemplary Programs will do the following:
- Engage in outreach by serving as a model for educator preparation programs in need of direction and guidance;
- Prepare a presentation for the Commission to provide information about the program and/or to share about the outreach the program provided; and
- Agree to have a program representative (e.g. program coordinator or director) serve on the exemplary program selection committee the year following being granted Exemplary Program status.

Questions to Consider
There are a number of issues to discuss with respect to developing and implementing a process by which exemplary programs are identified. Some of them are listed below and the COA is asked to discuss these questions as well as any other issues it deems relevant to this topic.
- Does the COA want a process for recognizing exemplary programs?
- What should the involvement of COA be in this process?
- Is it appropriate that each year's selection committee be comprised of representatives from the previous year's exemplary programs? Should selection committee representatives be permitted to serve concurrently on the Board of Institutional Reviewers? Are there other approaches?
- Should specific areas within or characteristics of a program be eligible for exemplary program status, or should exemplary program status only be granted at the broader program level?
- Should specific evidence (e.g. data, statements of endorsement, etc.) be provided in addition to the narrative exemplary program proposal? If so, what specific evidence?
- Should exemplary program information be archived on the Commission's website or made available for only the year in which the program holds exemplary status? If this information is to be archived, consideration will need to be given to how the information and previous exemplary programs will be monitored?
- If a program and/or its institution receive less than full Accreditation on its initial site visit but subsequently raise that to full Accreditation, should that program then be qualified to apply for exemplary status?

Next Steps

Based on the COA's discussion, staff will prepare an agenda item for the June 2018 COA meeting.