Beyond the Teacher Certification Program Debate: From Models to Features
Due: June 11, 2011

In recent years, the range of models for teacher certification has significantly expanded, including a variety of alternative routes in addition to more traditional programs. The variation in pathways has provided the opportunity to compare program models to determine how teachers are best prepared. However, research focusing on global comparisons among models has not yielded particularly fruitful results, since the nature of the programs being compared is often not well defined, the boundaries between program models are blurred, and the influence of the contexts in which they exist has been ignored. Perhaps we are asking the wrong questions and need to move from “Which program model, alternative or traditional, is most successful?” to questions that consider what specific program features are most important. For example, what are the features of programs that best prepare teachers for particular contexts? What is the relationship between these features and practices and novice teacher outcomes? What are the similarities and differences in organizational structures and practices across program models, and how do these matter? How does novice teacher quality relate to various teacher education program features? How have changing national and state conditions, policy shifts, local labor markets, and institutional features impacted teacher education program structures and practices?

We encourage empirical research using different kinds of theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches as well as thoughtful conceptual articles from varied perspectives that will contribute to the knowledge base and stimulate additional discourse for research, policy, and practice in this area.

Examining the Complexities of Assessment and Accountability in Teacher Education
Due: December 15, 2011

The theme of accountability currently permeates conversations about education at every level, including teacher education and professional development. However, these increasingly strident calls for accountability often fail to articulate “accountability” clearly. Many accountability measures for “what works” in teacher preparation programs are narrow in scope, from meeting state certification requirements to assessing the achievement scores of the program’s graduates, as measures by standardized tests. Who is to be held accountable? For what? And by whom? Who decides on goals, measures, consequences, and the nature of accountability? One result of this lack of clarity is that when accountability schemes are offered, critiques of the scheme are dismissed as evasive and arguments for the scheme are interpreted as punitive.

In this issue, we invite empirical or conceptual manuscripts addressing accountability in teacher education that will move the community forward in considering accountability both more precisely and with greater complexity. What empirically-based accountability measures have been developed for teacher education settings? What makes particular types of evidence more powerful than others in determining accountability in teacher education? What ethical and political questions arise for policy makers, teacher education programs, and teachers as we attempt to assess program and teacher candidate quality? What are the intended and unintended consequences of teacher education accountability policies for different stakeholders (e.g., beginning teachers, mentor teachers, administrators, teacher educators, higher education institutions)? We also welcome manuscripts that speak to policy and practice as they are brought to bear on one another in the
name of accountability as well as research conducted in contexts where innovative accountability policies are currently in place.