

Teacher Education Unit earns national accreditation

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Penn State Harrisburg's commitment to achieve national accreditation of its professional academic programs whenever the opportunity exists has reached an historic milestone. The college has just been informed its Teacher Education Unit, which consists of undergraduate and graduate programs, has earned full accreditation from the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

"The continual focus on quality at Penn State Harrisburg includes an ambitious accreditation effort. We lead the region in national accreditation," notes Chancellor Madlyn L. Hanes. "Accreditation is a calling card for quality. Penn State Harrisburg has a practice – and it's an important one – to seek national accreditation for its professional programs. Our college is an exemplar in that pursuit."

She continued, "The accreditation of our teacher education programs gives endorsement to our longstanding reputation for curricular relevancy and innovation at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, acknowledges our extensive involvement with the region's school districts, and recognizes the considerable talents of our faculty scholars."

"Penn State Harrisburg's teacher education programs join a select group of programs across the nation which have earned first-time NCATE accreditation this year," said Director of the School of Behavioral Sciences and Education William D. Milheim. "Students and potential students can be assured that our education programs meet the highest state and national standards for academic excellence as a result of the accreditation," Milheim continued. "We've been recognized for a long time for the high quality of our teacher education programs. The NCATE process prompted internal self-study so we can now document that quality."

The NCATE accreditation covers Penn State Harrisburg teacher education programs in Elementary Education, Elementary Education with Early Childhood Education, secondary education programs in English, Mathematics, and Social Studies, and the master's program in Teaching and Curriculum. Also included are the Reading Specialist certification, Early

Childhood endorsement, and English as a Second Language certificate programs.

In NCATE's standards-based accreditation system, institutions must provide evidence that teacher education candidates possess the requisite knowledge, skills, and dispositions to effectively teach diverse learners and to have an impact on student learning. Teacher candidates must know and understand the subject matter they plan to teach and to be able to teach effectively so that all students learn. The U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education recognize NCATE as a professional accrediting body for teacher preparation.

Beginning with the introduction of elementary education as an undergraduate major in 1967 – just one year after the college's creation, Penn State Harrisburg's teacher education programs have provided highly capable instructors to area schools and beyond. In just the past 25 years, more than 1,400 students have earned Elementary Education degrees at the college and more than 2,000 educators have enhanced their classroom skills through its master's degree in Teaching and Curriculum.

A four-year process, the accreditation effort "involved many, many committed partners," Milheim stressed. "The list is nearly endless and without all the partners, the task would have been formidable. We had remarkably successful collaborations with local school districts, our teacher education council, the state Department of Education, teachers, faculty, students, college administration and staff, and all the academic schools at Penn State Harrisburg."

The college's NCATE coordinator Lisa Buenaventura, echoes that partnership praise by stating, "The accreditation process harnessed talents and commitment throughout campus on all levels. The NCATE Board of Examiners was impressed by the overwhelming support it received from everyone involved – at the college and in the community." Steven Melnick, director of teacher education, said "The office of the chancellor was indispensable in supplying critical, unconditional support and resources to the effort."

With the addition of NCATE, other national accreditations at Penn State Harrisburg include all the undergraduate and graduate programs in the School of Business Administration by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and all the engineering and engineering technology majors in the School of Science, Engineering, and Technology by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). The Master of Public Administration major in the School of Public Affairs is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA).

The Criminal Justice and Health Administration programs at Penn State Harrisburg are currently undergoing review by their respective accrediting bodies and when completed their endorsements will finalize the college's commitment to national accreditation. And to provide for continuous review of overall quality, all undergraduate and graduate degree programs not

subject to national accreditation undergo an internal review process on a five-year cycle.	