



Speaker's Task Force on Urban Education

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Thank you President Cross. Good afternoon, members of the Task Force. I am very pleased to have been invited to share my thoughts on teacher recruitment, retention and training.

I appreciate that the committee in its formation has recognized that the professional life of a teacher is on a trajectory. Like all professionals the growth of high quality educators continues until their retirement – and maybe beyond.

The faculty in Education at UWM also approach our work with the life-cycle of the educator at the center of our work. To that end, we are looking at recruiting teachers to both diversify the pool of teacher candidates and to support those who choose the profession.

We recruit teacher candidates from the traditional undergraduate population. We recruit second-career candidates. We work with people currently teaching without certifications to help them earn their certification while holding onto their job in choice schools. We have both undergraduate and graduate programs. We take seriously our history as the largest producer of educators for the state of Wisconsin.

As President Cross noted leadership at the three largest education institutions in Milwaukee have come together to create M3. M3 is a partnership of UWM, MATC and MPS with the goal of working to collaboratively increase academic success for all students. Together, we will be looking at how to align the efforts of each institution to provide academic options for all students. This effort, while focused on the success of all students, will necessarily create new pathways for students with an interest in teaching.

The daily life of a teacher in an urban classroom is complex. Class sizes can be large. There can be a great diversity in the racial, ethnic and language make-up of the classrooms. At the same time we know that the diversity of the teacher pool is not growing in the same way or rate as our classrooms.

New teachers entering urban classrooms require a strong grounding in content, theory and practice. Education faculty have worked collaboratively for many years to create high quality programs that prepare teachers for urban classrooms. Today, I would like to share a couple of those collaborations and a few thoughts from a teacher candidate and a principal.

The first collaboration is the Institute for Urban Education. As President Cross explained the IUE is a System-funded program housed at UWM's School of Education. The institute has three foci for our work. First, it brings teacher candidates from across the state to complete their student teaching semester in Milwaukee Public Schools. These are students from any of the teacher education programs in a System IHE. They have a demonstrated interest in the lived experience of teaching and learning in an urban school. The second focus is professional development for current cooperating teachers. To that end, the IUE has offered two summer academies bringing together leading faculty in education and current classroom teachers to share, explore, and develop high quality practices for urban classrooms. Finally, the IUE is pursuing a research agenda about what it takes to prepare successful teacher candidates to become successful professionals.

The second collaboration is based on research promoting the importance of the field/clinical and student teaching experiences for the education of new teaching

professionals. Currently, we are partnering with HR representatives from four of our local urban districts – Brown Deer, Milwaukee, Racine and West Allis/ West Milwaukee – to develop high quality field placements for teacher candidates throughout their programs. This work cannot be underestimated for the teacher candidate or the schools in which they are placed.

One of our recent graduates put it this way:

I have a student with some very challenging behaviors (as I have had many). There is no textbook, article or class discussion that can prepare you for handling such behaviors. You have to have first-hand experience to have a clue as to where to begin... If I had not had my field experiences and student teaching opportunities with really quality teachers, I would have had great struggles as a professional to help this and many other students. I am still in contact with the teachers that I had in my field experiences and I frequently call on them for guidance and assistance.

One principal, cited on the DPI's Promoting Excellence for All website, specifically cites the impact of our field students on the learning environment for and the learning of the children at her school. Jenny Doucette explains that her students need connections with adults to support their learning. She turned to UWM to bring in field students and student teachers. She wanted the vitality of the teacher candidates and she knew what her teachers had to offer our candidates. She found that there was a measurable change in student learning as a result of the collaboration.

One final example of our innovation around the field experience is our work in special education. The UWM/MPS Internship Program provides opportunities for post-baccalaureate special education certification students to begin teaching in Milwaukee Public Schools while earning certification. Interns are teachers-of-record in MPS schools. They are supervised by UWM instructors and supported by experienced MPS mentor teachers. The third focus of the task force is the retention of teachers in urban schools.

One way to retain high quality teachers is to offer them high quality professional development opportunities. Faculty at UWM have long histories of working with and for teachers in urban districts.

ArtsECO a project housed in the Peck School of the Arts at UWM is collaborating with MPS, the DPI, and community partners to provide high quality professional development for art and classroom teachers. Teachers participate in free monthly Teacher MeetUps and Summer Teacher Institutes. This project also offers free pre-college experiences for MPS students.

The Milwaukee Mathematics Partnership, a multimillion dollar partnership between Milwaukee Public Schools, MATC, and UWM funded by the National Science Foundation, provided the bedrock for current math teacher professional development efforts at UWM. This ten-year project, running from 2003 to 2013, sought to develop teachers' mathematics content knowledge, their pedagogical practices in teaching mathematics, and district leadership capacity. These efforts have begotten subsequent cross-district partnerships in elementary and secondary mathematics addressing changes in mathematics content embodied in the Wisconsin Core Standards among other efforts.

UWM is the site of a National Writing Project program. The National Writing Project offers both introductory and advanced training in the theory and practice of teaching writing. It brings together teachers to engage in multi-genre writing as a group and learn important skills for supporting learners in creative and informational writing.

In closing, I would like to share that the recruitment, education and retention of high quality teachers for urban schools is a complicated and critical goal for the future of our children living in urban areas of our state. The opportunity that the Task Force has to add to our success and the success of other IHEs in Wisconsin cannot be underestimated. Please know that faculty and staff at UW-Milwaukee will continue to take a leadership role in learning from and about the urban classroom to best educate the new and continuing professional.