

TOWARD A NEW MODEL



MSU and *Teachers for a New Era*

A NEW MODEL FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

MSU Selected to Participate in Landmark Initiative

Michigan State University has long been known for the quality of and commitment to its teacher preparation program. In December, the university took another major step forward when the Board of Trustees approved a proposal that paved the way for MSU to participate in the Carnegie Corporation's landmark initiative designed to strengthen K-12 teaching by developing state-of-the-art programs in teacher education.

In 2002, MSU was one of only four universities across the country that were asked by Carnegie to take part in the reform initiative, known as "Teachers for a New Era." MSU and the other institutions each will receive \$5 million over the next five years to support the proposed changes and innovations. Other foundations, including Annenberg, Rockefeller and Ford, are providing support for the effort.

"MSU's national prominence in teacher education reform, its reputation from cross-college collaboration, and its outreach into community schools gave it a distinct edge in the competition," said Barbara Steidle, assistant provost and project manager.

"Designed as a Carnegie venture, the Teachers for a New Era project attracted additional foundation support, thus providing the funding for four institutions."

Carnegie's goal in launching the program is to establish "exemplars" of outstanding teacher preparation, and selected MSU, Bank Street College of Education, California State University at Northridge, and the University of Virginia for their unique history of

leadership and innovation in preparing teachers.

In announcing the four institutions, Carnegie President Vartan Gregorian said, "Teaching reform is central to school reform, and these institutions are pioneers in the movement. If we really want to improve student achievement, we have no choice but to improve teaching. As the 19th century French philosopher Victor Cousin succinctly put it, 'As the teacher, so is the school.'"

Under Gregorian's leadership, Carnegie has made higher education issues, particularly reform of teacher education, one of its highest priorities. The philanthropy's goal is to clearly identify those programs that are truly outstanding in preparing tomorrow's teachers and that can serve as models for other institutions.

"The idea is to have some teacher education programs be so good and do such good jobs of collecting information about what they are doing that they would be recognizably outstanding and could serve as examples for what is possible for different sorts of institutions," said Robert Floden, director of the College of Education's



Assistant Provost Barbara Steidle is serving as project manager of MSU's Teachers for a New Era initiative.

Institute for Teaching and Learning and co-principal investigator of the project.

"It's a great honor to be selected by Carnegie. It's fair to say that they picked us because we are doing a great job already, but with some extra funding, we could be truly outstanding and recognized in the field as such," Floden said.

A key aspect of MSU's approach is that it will be an all-university effort. The project will include MSU colleges that have a role in preparing teachers.

"Part of the reason MSU was chosen is because our commitment to preparing teachers well, particularly in their subject areas, extends across the university," said Joan Ferrini-Mundy, associate dean in the College of Natural Science and director of the Division of Science and Mathematics Education. She will serve as the co-principal investigator.

"The faculty leadership team includes people from the colleges of Education, Natural Science, Arts and Letters and Social Science. We will build on our strengths and become a national model for how teacher education can be taken seriously across the arts, letters, science and social science."

The funders are counting on leadership by the presidents of supported institutions to elevate the role and importance of the teacher education enterprise within the university community, Ferrini-Mundy said.

As part of the project, MSU will match the \$5 million that it will receive from the philanthropy over the next five years. Additional foundation grants will cover evaluations and each institution will receive up to



\$750,000 that they will share with local partners, including school districts and other teacher education programs.

Floden said the implementation plan addresses the three guiding principles that the philanthropy has set for the redesign of schools that prepare teachers. The principles are:

- A design that builds improvements on research evidence.
- Top-level collaboration between university faculty in the arts and sciences with the school of education faculty to ensure that prospective teachers are well grounded in specific disciplines and provided a liberal arts education.
- Establishing teaching as a clinical profession, with students having access to mentoring by master teachers and university faculty in a formal two-year residency as they make a transition from college to classroom.

A major emphasis of the MSU work will be the subject matter knowledge

prospective teachers must have to teach effectively, and plans include such possibilities as creating new arts and science courses, and changes in education course work and field experiences.

MSU will also design and implement an induction program in which MSU will work with graduates in those all-important first years of their teaching careers. In addition, faculty members will research and publish their findings on various aspects of the new initiatives, Floden said.

"This is part of becoming not only an outstanding program, but a recognizably outstanding program," he said. "We have to study what we are doing as we are doing it, we have to write about it, and make connections to other teacher education programs in the state or elsewhere and to school districts. We will get the word out about what we are doing."

Carnegie expects to select other institutions to participate in the project in future years. The plan is to have at least eight institutions of higher education in the project by 2004.



A Conversation with Joan Ferrini-Mundy and Robert Floden

Joan Ferrini-Mundy and Robert Floden were key architects of MSU's Teachers for a New Era initiative, and as co-principal investigators they will remain at the center of the ambitious project. Neither is a stranger to large projects. Ferrini-Mundy, associate dean in the College of Natural Science, director of the Division of Science and Mathematics Education, and professor in the College of Education, is one of the leading authorities on mathematics education. In the late 1990s, she chaired the group charged with rewriting the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards. Floden, a professor in the College of Education and director of the Institute for Research on Teaching and Learning, is a leading scholar and gifted researcher whose work on teaching and the connections between policy and practice have been published widely. From 1990 to 1996, he co-directed the influential National Center for Research on Teacher Learning (NCRTL) based at the college. What follows is a conversation with the two researchers on the role of content and context in teacher education and MSU's Teachers for a New Era initiative.

At the heart of MSU's Teachers for a New Era initiative are the notions of content and context. Can you explain why content and context are so critical to the intellectual underpinnings of the project?

RF In conceiving the project we needed to think about what was most important for our teachers to learn and be able to do so that we would have a focus for the work that would have to be done across the university. Content was one of the first things that came to mind. There has been work at Michigan State for a number of years on the importance of teachers' understanding of content—not narrowly just the content they teach but also content that is specific to helping kids learn what is in the school curriculum. That had been a theme at Michigan State for a long time. The connection between the arts and sciences and education made content an obvious focus. So that's why we focused on content.

JFM Let me also say that an important feature of the current K-12 situation is that there are proposals for reform across subject areas. And so content, in a sense, is a challenge now because the ground is shifting. Part of the challenge for teacher education programs, and one which MSU has always met well over the years, is to figure out how to adjust to the fact that the K-12 curriculum shifts. We have a lot of examples at this university of folks who have been active in that K-12 reform and who have been trying to work to improve things across different subject areas. That is another place where we can build on work that is already underway here. There is the Connected Mathematics Project, Balanced Assessment as part of the MARS (Mathematics Assessment Resource



Joan Ferrini-Mundy and Robert Floden

Service) work, and a whole host of activities in this college that have been aimed at improving content in K-12.

RF In terms of context, everyone knows that just understanding the subject matter isn't enough to teach it well to a wide variety of kids. Teachers need to keep an eye on both what it is they hope students will learn and on the students. Context operates at several levels. There is the classroom context in which a teacher needs to pay attention to the differences among kids in the classroom and to what those students bring with them in terms of understanding what one is trying to teach. And then there is the context outside the classroom. The demographic situation is that the current school population is increasingly made up of students from minority groups and the population of teachers remains predominately white and middle class. Therefore, it's important for teachers to understand the context of their students' lives so that they can

do a better job of finding ways to connect the content to their students.

JFM An aspect of context that changes continually is the district, state and national policy context. We're now entering an era of strong attention to accountability and to assessment, and so this is an aspect of context that teachers will have to confront. Later, we can discuss our assessment focus in this project, but part of our design is to help teachers be ready for these kinds of changes in the policy context.

One of the things the project makes clear is that the preparation of teachers is a university-wide endeavor and responsibility. How important is it that faculty from throughout the university be integrally involved?

JFM Part of the reason this is so important is because





Carnegie demanded it. The fact remains, though, that if you're a professor of freshman calculus, it is not necessarily on your mind that some of the students sitting in front of you will be teachers some day. We hear from subject matter people across the disciplines that their students are coming in as freshmen unprepared. It's only a short chain of logic then to say, 'Yes, but we are the place that prepares the teachers of those freshmen for their subject matter work in the secondary schools and in the earlier grades as well.' So logically it makes a great deal of sense to involve faculty from throughout the university, and this initiative gives us a wonderful opportunity to really tackle the question of how to do that. It is one thing to say teacher preparation ought to be university wide. It's another thing to really figure out how to make that happen. We have some ideas on how to do that and we'll also figure some things out as we go.

RF Teacher preparation as a university-wide responsibility has been the language at Michigan State for a long time. But, in fact, the way things have operated is that people have taken their bits of the responsi-

bility and operated separately. So education faculty members have thought about their part and done a good job of that, but have not really seen it as their province to think about their work connected to freshman experiences in integrative studies, for example, or to work in a major. Likewise, people in integrative studies or in the major have been doing their part educating students, but without much attention to the fact that, for example, a large fraction of the mathematics majors are preparing to be secondary mathematics teachers. So this is an opportunity for them to begin to think about that and learn a little bit about what is happening in students' lives outside of their own courses. One of the things we see happening within our working groups initially is the need to start on some very basic things like 'What do students take when they prepare to be teachers?'

There is much attention paid to assessment. Can you describe the role assessment will play as a tool for university faculty as well as pre-service teachers as the initiative develops over the next several years?

RF We see assessment as a way of gathering evidence about what our students are learning and what the connection is between what our students are able to do and what their K-12 pupils learn. To make our decisions based on evidence, we need better ways of assessing what our students are learning—from their freshman year through the internship on into the induction period. It's also important that in our thinking about the effectiveness of our program, we focus on the most important teacher knowledge and skills. So we will look at the connection between what our

teachers are able to do, or have studied, and how that is connected to pupil achievement, which is increasingly important for teachers once they are out in the field. There is also a university policy context in which universities are being asked as part of their accreditation to put more energy into thinking about what graduates in different majors should know and to provide evidence about what they are learning.

JFM A complementary piece of the project that is crucial to the assessment is our plan to develop teacher knowledge standards. Our subject matter groups and our other groups—assessment, induction, and teachers for urban schools groups—will all be involved in this business of laying out, at least in some general way, MSU's perspective on what teachers need to know and be able to do. That is the kind of thing, of course, that evolves and shifts and gains more detail in some specific areas, but the assessment will in some way, we hope, be linked to our own agreements internally about what we think is important for teachers.

Induction will also have a role in the initiative. I know it is early in the process, but what might we expect from an induction program for recent graduates?

JFM We are committed to developing a program that will be available to MSU graduates for two years after they complete their internship. We have a team that is just starting to do the groundwork to figure out what that would be like. They will design a program. It will follow the themes of the project in that it will take seriously the idea of making con-

tent and context central. We can speculate about what it might look like. It might have a technological piece. Because the State of Michigan expects districts to put in place induction requirements, we'll need to figure out ways to link to what districts are doing in terms of induction. The idea is that MSU will continue to take some responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of its teachers after they leave us. We also see it as a way to get interesting feedback on how effective our program was by the questions and needs that we see in the participants in our induction program. I think it will be a way for us to say, 'Maybe this part of the program didn't work so well and we should rethink it.'

RF And MSU's program already has a yearlong internship, which was put in place in part because of the recognition that a lot of learning to teach happens once people are spending all of their time out in schools. But our graduates, people who receive certification, are still going to have additional experiences where there is going to be a lot of learning. In that period, it is important that learning be not only from the person next door, but also from a connection to the university—both education people and those in the arts and sciences.

With induction, it seems you are trying to keep good teachers in the classroom. With the recruitment of underrepresented groups and making it easier for students to pursue teacher certification you are trying to bring great people into the profession. Do you see the induction and recruitment efforts related in some ways?

RF Absolutely. To get enough terrific teachers into the classrooms, you need a three-pronged strategy that involves recruitment, education, and retention. Induction is one of those ways to improve retention, but so is doing a good job in the regular part of the program so that people are on top of their game when they take their first job. And it is also important to get people into the program early on, especially given our focus on preparing teachers for urban schools. It is important to bring in people with that interest. Since most people end up teaching not far from where they grew up, it's important, if you want to have teachers in urban areas, to recruit people from urban areas to teacher education offered at Michigan State.

The project is clearly a huge undertaking. The Carnegie Corporation's goal is to create great models of teacher education. At the end of the process, do you think there will be much that other institutions will be able to learn from MSU's experience and innovations?

JFM You are right that Carnegie and the other funders are interested in seeing institutions put in place teacher education initiatives that can be supported by evidence and, therefore, will be credible and believable. A lot of what this is about is showing that what we are doing does lead to improved pupil learning. That's a pretty tall order, but I think our advantage here is that we have the background and expertise across the university to be able to do that. So a big part of setting ourselves up to be a model will be studying what we are doing—another tradition at MSU—so that we have something to say about

how our processes worked and what aspects of them made a difference. I am confident that we will have a great deal to share with other institutions about both the process and effects of our efforts.

RF Carnegie uses the word *catalytic*, which is a good way of thinking about this. It is not that we would create a program that others would adopt. It doesn't work that way in education. Michigan State is different from other institutions. In fact, each of the four institutions that have been chosen so far are quite different from each other, and you wouldn't imagine that what Cal State Northridge developed would be something that the University of Michigan would pick up and use. The populations are different and the goals are different. But the idea is to be catalytic by producing ideas that would seed changes and would make it easier for other places to change in productive ways. We can certainly promote change in that way.



Highlights from MSU's *Teachers for a New Era Plan*

on content

WHEN WE SPEAK of “making content central” we mean several things. First, undergraduate preparation in the disciplines must include knowledge of facts and concepts, habits of mind, critical thinking, analysis, knowledge of the nature and practice of the disciplines, and understanding of knowledge creation and testing. . . . Second, we believe that teachers need two additional kinds of education in context: Knowledge of the school subjects . . . and pedagogical content knowledge.

on context

TEACHERS DO NOT teach in vacuums, nor do they teach blank slates. New teachers do not learn to teach in sterile labs, but rather in noisy, cacophonous real classrooms rich with complexity, and situated in specific communities and schools. Teachers teach specific students who bring with them experiences . . . that teachers need to understand and prepare to respond to. Teachers teach within communities . . . that have a history, values, and beliefs that shape what they expect of schools. Without knowledge of those contexts . . . all the content knowledge in the world will not prepare a teacher to effectively work within a specific school with specific children.

on cultural change

WE BELIEVE THAT the next steps in making content and context central in teacher education at MSU require serious cultural and intellectual change on the part of all participants. It will mean developing new coalitions of university and K–12 school faculty who collaborate in ways that involve exploring and agreeing on both what (and how) content is and should be taught in K–12 schools and what (and how) content is taught in the university, particularly to prospective teachers.

on assessment

OUR COMMITMENT to the centrality of content and context implies a commitment to identifying or developing assessment tools and seeing that faculty—in arts, social sciences, and sciences, education, and K–12 schools—understand assessment tools and learn to use them, both in continual program improvement and in tracking the progress of each student in the program.