

Our Opportunity and Challenge

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When it was time for me to step into the role of President of the California Council on Teacher Education (CCTE) in the Spring of 2014, I wanted to make sure I was keenly aware of the wishes and visions of the CCTE membership. I wanted to have a clear direction and focus for my term. As the new CCTE President, I was committed to continue the good work of our past presidents and the relationship building within our organization as well as without, all to advance our mission and to accomplish our priorities and goals.

I established as my personal goal to improve the relationship with our members by reaching out and hearing their concerns. My primary means for gathering the perspectives, concerns, and wishes of our membership was through the creation of a membership survey we administered to our extensive list of members and delegates as well as others who have attended our conferences. The survey, conducted in May of 2014, allowed respondents to evaluate the strategic goals of our organization, to evaluate the programs and services that are offered to the CCTE membership, and to indicate other programs, services, and initiatives CCTE should undertake.

I was gratified by the significant response to this survey, which was

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indicative to me of the care our members have about the future directions of CCTE. We need to be vigilant in incorporating their responses and recommendations and use this information to decide the future direction of the organization as well as to improve our current programs and services. The Board of Directors and I were very pleased with the substantial response from the membership, and we are committed to addressing the findings, which we understand reflect the interests and commitments of the membership.

Specifically, the survey asked the respondents to rate the value of the following current services and activities CCTE offers to its membership:

- The CCTE semi-annual conferences
- Affiliate organization meetings at CCTE semi-annual conferences
- Special Interest Group (SIG) meetings at the CCTE semi-annual conferences
- Email communications regarding issues and initiatives
- CCTE's two professional journals
- Mentoring of new members and graduate students
- Policy sessions at CCTE semi-annual conferences
- Research and practice sessions at semi-annual conferences
- Poster session at semi-annual conferences

The survey responses confirmed to me that email communications to the membership regarding issues and initiatives is the most important and valued service provided by CCTE. These emails, in my view, are the primary means by which we communicate with our membership regarding issues that we need to address, policy initiatives in which we want our membership's involvement and input, and professional opportunities from which our membership can benefit.

The second most highly rated service, according to the survey results, is the two CCTE-sponsored professional journals—*Issues in Teacher Education* and *Teacher Education Quarterly*. The membership appreciates and values the cutting edge research showcased in our journals, and they also appreciate the professional development the journals provide. One of the original intents of our journals was to provide our membership with an opportunity to publish their research on teacher education. As the prestige and quality of the journals has increased, we began seeing higher numbers of submissions from scholars all across the United States and, thus, fewer manuscripts from California researchers.

These findings prompted us, with the expert direction of Alan Jones, our CCTE Executive Secretary, to initiate a new program to identify and foster scholarship on teacher education in California. The CCTE 2014-2015 Quest for Teacher Education Research is being implemented this year in response to the call for more research in the field that will better inform practice, support and encourage innovation, and guide us in policy advocacy. CCTE is delighted with the enthusiastic response to the Quest program and we anticipate the 37 research projects involved this year will both broaden and deepen our knowledge of the field. This is just a first step in CCTE's efforts to support and encourage its member institutions and all individual scholars across the state to study and improve the preparation of educational personnel to better serve the students in our schools.

Another highly rated CCTE service, as indicated by the survey results, is the mentoring of new members and graduate students. This survey finding was especially gratifying to the CCTE Board. While there is a range of age among the officers and the Board, many of us within the leadership of CCTE are approaching retirement age, myself included. We have committed ourselves to developing the next generation of teacher educators through grants such as Project LEAD: Leadership, Excellence, and Apprenticeship Development, which was funded by AACTE two years ago. Since then, we have conducted each year very successful New Faculty Support and Graduate Student Support programs, all aimed at the "next generation" of CCTE. We are also committed to diversifying the next generation of teacher educators and will continue to develop initiatives with that goal. At our most recent CCTE leadership retreat, the Board recognized and moved forward on the findings from this membership survey, and we are committed to continue to strengthen our efforts to build our next generation of teacher educators.

The survey also asked CCTE members to identify additional activities or services CCTE should provide to its membership. We clustered the responses thematically and identified several of the most significant themes. The biggest cluster of responses was related to advocacy. It was quite clear from the responses that the CCTE membership wants the CCTE leadership to take a more active role in advocacy. In particular, CCTE membership survey findings suggest that the organization needs to undertake more advocacy work on behalf of education in general and in response to the increasingly difficult educational environment. Related to advocacy, the CCTE membership survey findings also suggest that the CCTE leadership should be more visible and make better use of the media to get out its message—essentially to find more ways to actively participate, not merely respond, in the shaping of policy and practice in

California related to the preservice and inservice preparation of teachers.

The field of education is at a significant crossroads with many different organizations proposing a variety of initiatives, some promising and others counterproductive. The California Council on Teacher Education can play an important advocacy role at this historical time. We have the research resources and talent to positively impact education in California. This is our opportunity and challenge.