To: The Task Force on Teacher Leadership and Compensation

From: Dr. Dwight C. Watson, Dean of the College of Education, University of Northern Iowa

Re: Response to Recommendations

Date: January 21, 2013

A group of University of Northern Iowa faculty and staff reviewed the task force recommendations and decided to write this response as it pertains to the implementation effects these recommendations may have on the university as well as suggestions on how to better connect these initiatives with teacher education programs (TEPs) in institutions of higher education (IHES). The College of Education faculty members would like to work in collaboration with the Department of Education, the Board of Education Examiners, local education agencies, and area education agencies in supporting the implementation of some of these initiatives.

We acknowledge and support the four themes that emerged which undergird each of the recommendations. These themes are:

1) a systemic approach
2) loose-tight leadership
3) a focus on implementation
4) evidence-based practices

As we reviewed the recommendations, we will provide commentary across many of the recommendations with a particular focus on Recommendation 12 which is to coordinate the development of the teacher leadership pathways with teacher preparation programs (TEPs).

**Recommendation 1:** Create and fund multiple, meaningful, and well-designed career pathway opportunities open to all teachers in Iowa.

**Page 13:** We like the fact that a teacher may choose the career pathway, but the language that indicates that this is also the final progress level for those who are not selected to be a mentor, model, or lead teacher is problematic. By default everyone cannot move forward in the pathway because there are not enough slots. Teachers who remain career teachers should not be viewed as less than.
We also want to make sure that career teachers can host and mentor field-experience students as well as student teachers. Field-experience students are those who are placed in classrooms as early as their sophomore year and continuously until student teaching. These *early and often* experiences enrich the effectiveness of these future teachers. We are very concerned that we will not have enough mentor or master teachers to meet the field placement and student teaching capacity of Iowa’s 33 teacher preparation programs. More specifically will UNI be able to place over 550 students a year in student teaching across the state of Iowa.

**Page 15:** We believe that model, mentor, and lead teachers should have or be pursuing a masters degree. We already have an elementary masters degree program that focuses on specific content, evidentiary-based assessment, and culturally-congruent pedagogy as well as a teacher leadership masters degree that focuses on diversity, professional development, adult learning theory and practice, and evidentiary-based assessment. We are willing to partner with districts and area education associations in designing and delivering these masters programs.

**Page 15:** The duties and responsibilities of the lead teacher is to facilitate instructional leadership team and to plan professional development. UNI is poised to support districts in this facilitation and delivery of professional development. We suggest that school districts solicit an IHE representative to serve on teams and assist in professional development. We also encourage co-professional development in which districts and TEPs collaborate on the initiative and broaden the participation to include IHE faculty. This model has proven successful as we partnered with AEA 267 to host the Professional Learning Communities conference with over 500 PK-12 and college educators. We suggest that another duty and responsibility of master and lead teachers is to act as liaisons between the districts and their local TEPs.

**Page 16:** We would encourage career teachers to seek masters degrees and that the degrees would move them forward on the salary scale.

**Recommendation 2:** Establish a pathway that utilizes the wisdom and expertise of educators who are not currently practicing, including retired teachers.

**Page 15:** We like the emeritus teacher role because we use these teachers to support our preservice programs as adjuncts and student teaching coordinators. Having emeriti taking some of the lead and master teachers’ roles will free up classroom teachers to host and supervise field-experience students and student teachers.
Recommendation 3: Review existing allocations and use these funds strategically to enhance teacher compensation and create leadership opportunities.

Page 16: The focus is on content mastery and elementary teachers are content generalists; therefore, for elementary teachers, we suggest that a masters degree in professional development or teacher leadership. At UNI, both of the masters degrees are steeped in theory, pedagogy, and content.

Recommendation 4: Appropriate new money for the explicit purposes of raising base pay to a competitive level and creating additional leadership in opportunities for teachers.

Page 17: We support this recommendation. We agree that the TAP may be one model and we hope that the state is open to other models as well. We would not want the dictate of the state to intervene with the teacher performance assessment that we are piloting which is the edTPA.

Recommendation 5: Establish a Commission of Educator Leadership and Compensation to ensure consistent and successful implementation.

Page 18: We note that it is imperative that post-secondary educators are on the Commission and we strongly encourage that a member from UNI's teacher education program be selected since we prepare more teachers across the state than any other IHE.

Recommendation 6: Collaborate with districts implementing a mechanism for piloting peer assistance and coaching programs.

Page 19: We, at UNI, will investigate closely these peer-coaching models and ensure that our preservice teachers are prepared. We will investigate what would be the equivalent of such a model in IHEs and how can we replicate in order to model these practices for our preservice teachers. Our Educational Leadership and special education programs already includes strong curriculum pertaining to peer-coaching as an instructional strategy that teachers and principals may implement.

Recommendation 7: Incentivize teachers to teach in locally and state-defined hard-to-staff subjects and high-need schools.
We support this recommendation. Another incentive would be to provide scholarships for students pursuing teaching degrees in high-need areas. We believe that we prepare teachers for hard-to-staff subjects such as mathematics, science, special education, literacy, and TESOL. We are crafting recommendations to the Board of Education Examiners for endorsements in STEM and Instructional Technology. UNI currently has the most TEACH grant participants in the nation. These grants provide as much as $16,000 of federal support to teach in hard-to-staff places in high-needs areas.

We believe we are providing the services necessary to acclimate our preservice candidates to high-need schools within the Urban Education Network and through our Teacher Quality Partnership grant in rural settings. We are also emphasizing cultural, linguistic, and developmental competencies in professional development opportunities for our faculty members so that they can better prepare our preservice candidates. We believe that these competencies will enhance dispositional stances and culturally-relevant instructional skills of our candidates which will equip them to teach with competence and confidence in Iowa's high-needs schools.

Recommendation 8: Build upon existing policy and statute, and provide adequate, sustained funding and implementation support for teacher leadership.

Page 21: We too believe that recommendations in this task force report should be implemented via mandated funds.

Recommendation 9: Set the boundaries of the system, but allow districts to customize within those boundaries.

Page 21: We will work closely with our Cedar Valley and other Iowa school partners to help them customize policies, protocols, and practices to implement recommendations.

Page 22: We will work closely with districts in helping them secure a pool of future leaders by providing co-professional development opportunities and masters degrees. We are already working with a cadre of Waterloo school teachers who are pursuing a masters degree with a concentration in teacher leadership. In this masters degree ⅓ is content specific, ⅓ is instructional practices, and ⅓ teacher leadership. We think that mentor and lead teachers will need these skill sets.
**Recommendation 10:** Provide time for local planning and implementation inclusive of teachers in the decision-making process.

**Page 23:** We support this three-year, phase-in component of the tiered leadership model and compensation requirements.

**Recommendation 11:** Require districts to implement professional development structures that are aligned with the Iowa Professional Development Model that support each career pathway, and that utilize teacher leaders to ensure continuous collaboration and student growth.

**Page 23:** We suggest partnering with IHEs as part of this professional development structure.

**Recommendation 12:** Coordinate the development of teacher leadership pathways with teacher preparation programs.

**Page 23:** Teacher education programs and PK-12 schools systems should have common standards of evaluation to make manifest this recommendation.

**Page 23:** The TEP should embed content into one of our common courses that will prepare educators early in their preparation for the roles they will fill in the educational system. This content would probably best align with the information shared in early field experience seminars through the student teaching seminar.

**Page 24:** To facilitate a more systematic connection among preservice teachers, faculty in teacher preparation programs, and district teachers, we suggest collaborative professional development opportunities; mentor, master, and lead teachers receiving masters degrees; and master and lead teachers becoming liaisons with IHEs.

**Page 24:** At UNI, we are sentinel-like in our review of state and national policy reform that affects teacher preparation and PK-12 school systems. We convene legislators in town hall meetings, attend day-on-the hill events, and have several legislators on our advisory council. We frequently respond to reform initiatives by offering suggestions and soliciting changes when we feel impending reform initiatives do not take into account the implementation effects.

**Recommendation 13:** Create a residency year for entry into the teaching profession to build a more seamless transition from teacher preparation to practice/employment.

**Page 24:** We are not sure how this is different from the current induction phase besides the release time that residency teachers are given for participating on instructional teams and engaging in professional development opportunities.
Page 24: We are concerned that as mentor, master, and lead teachers work with residency interns, they will not have enough time to be host teachers for student teachers and field-based experiences.

Page 24: We could probably provide monthly seminars for our graduates who are residency interns. We definitely could provide the capacity within the Cedar Valley. We would have more difficulty in replicating this in other areas unless we expand the responsibilities of our student teaching coordinators or do this electronically.

Page 25: The evaluation of residency teachers should be seamless from preservice throughout induction through the levels of career, mentor, master, and lead teachers.

Page 25: We recommend that teacher education faculty who are working in these collaborative capacities with school districts be considered in the funding models that are being designed. Asking IHE faculty to take on additional responsibilities with residency teachers will require additional resources.

Page 25: We concur that IHEs could work closely with districts in working with the Iowa Department of Education and the Board of Education Examiners in developing credentials for mentor/lead teachers who work with developing teachers.

We appreciate your review of our supports and suggestions of the final report of the Task Force on Teacher Leadership and Compensation. If you have any questions pertaining to the University of Northern Iowa's response, please contact Dr. Dwight C. Watson, Dean of the College of Education at 319-273-2717 or dwight.watson@uni.edu.