

HECSE

Higher Education Consortium
for Special Education

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Jeannie Kleinhammer-Tramill, HECSE Publications Coordinator & Editor Angela Mucci & Roseanne Vallice, Associate Editors

Welcome Message

Welcome to the HECSE Newsletter

By: Jeannie Kleinhammer-Tramill, HECSE Publications Coordinator and Editor

Welcome to Volume 1, Issue 1 of the HECSE Newsletter

As HECSE Publications Coordinator and Editor, I'd like to welcome our membership to this first edition of the HECSE Newsletter. You will receive the Newsletter on a quarterly basis as an e-news publication so that you can distribute it to your campus colleagues and others who might find the contents helpful.

In this issue, our president, Chriss Walther-Thomas provides an overview of HECSE activities for this year. HECSE Consultant, Jane West, contributes a synthesis of legislative activity – particularly progress on the Higher Education Act and implications for persons with disabilities – that should be of interest to all readers. Deborah Smith gives an update on the Special Education Faculty and Teacher Education Evaluation Effort (SEFNA). Jane and Deborah have agreed to provide regular updates for the Newsletter because we believe this is critical information for all of our constituents.

Maya Israel, our HECSE Intern for 2007-2008, contributes a discussion of her work as an Intern and the opportunities that role has provided. Maya also sends an overview of the Personnel Preparation Profiles – a project HECSE has undertaken in order to capture a glimpse of the significant impacts that OSEP's Personnel Preparation grants continue to have in building the quantity of special education personnel and improving the quality of and capacity for preparation of special educators. For the first time this year, HECSE invited participation of up to 10 doctoral students who are our future leaders in the field. One of those students, Roseanne Vallice, provides her perspective on the Annual HECSE Membership Meeting in January, 2008.

Invitation to Contribute to the Newsletter

All HECSE members are invited to contribute to the Newsletter. Your contributions might include vignettes of progress in personnel preparation in your college or university, news of state or national policy issues that impact special education, or other contributions that would be of general interest to our readership. We would also like to include doctoral student voices as a regular column, so we welcome submissions of general interest by your students.

Thanks to Those who Have Helped

I want to sincerely thank several people for helping to make the HECSE Newsletter a reality. Roseanne Vallice and Angela Mucci, University of South Florida, have assisted with copy editing, format, and distribution, and will serve as Associate Editors. Finally, my thanks to all who have contributed articles and to you, the readers for your feedback and future contributions. ■

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Call for Articles

Please send us short articles for our upcoming editions of this newsletter in October and December 2008 describing your successes in personnel preparation. We're particularly interested in innovations accomplished through OSEP personnel preparation grants as well as any new trends or unique accomplishments in preparation of general and special educators.

HECSE President's Message

Dear HECSE Colleagues:

Greetings and welcome to the first HECSE newsletter! Dr. Jeannie Kleinhammer-Tramill (University of South Florida), our inaugural newsletter editor has done an excellent job creating this new quarterly publication. In this issue you will find HECSE news, resources, and information about upcoming events. We hope this publication will be a useful tool for HECSE networking. We encourage you to share your ideas, opinions, and resources.

Good News! Our new HECSE website will be unveiled within the next two weeks. Dr. Barbara Ludlow (University of West Virginia), Dr. Mike Behrman, and Ms. Ala Showers (George Mason University) are developing a site that will facilitate prompt updating, easy maintenance, and structural stability. As a HECSE member benefit, annually institutions may post two faculty or staff position announcements and two other items (e.g., new fellowship opportunities, honors, awards, promotions, retirements) on the site. A fee will be charged for additional postings and for announcements by non-HECSE institutions.



Dr. Chriss Walther-Thomas,
HECSE President

As most of you know, new federal legislation is rarely passed during election years. This year Congress will be in session fewer than 100 days. Nevertheless, this is a critical time for HECSE members to prepare for post-election action when the new President and the new Congress will get down to business. Behind the scenes, Congressional committees are working already on NCLB and IDEA reauthorization. As advocates for students with disabilities and public education, it is incumbent on us to be well informed, let our voices be heard, and help all of our students understand the importance of their political activism. I'd encourage you to do the following:

Study Candidates' Education Platforms and Let Them Know What You Think About Their Ideas. Visit candidates' websites and review their education platforms—or the lack thereof. For example, a review of the Presidential candidates' sites (see below) shows public education policy is a higher priority for some than it is for others. (Clinton— <http://www.hillaryclinton.com/issues/education>; Obama— <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/education>; McCain— <http://www.johnmccain.com/informing/issues>)

Email Your Representatives. Depending on whom you ask, elected officials (at every level) and their staffer members will tell you every constituent letter matters. Recently, a member of our Kansas Congressional delegation told me she assumes one voter's letter represents at least 500 constituents who feel the exactly same way but haven't taken the time to write. As education advocates, we need to help our representatives at every level of government develop a better understanding of critical special education issues (e.g., teacher recruitment and retention, meaningful consideration of cultural and linguistic diversity, long-term funding).

Below are a few key points candidates and elected officials need to know about students with disabilities and the educators who teach them:

1. Increased public funding is needed to ensure effective teacher recruitment, preparation, induction, mentoring, and ongoing professional development of highly-qualified special educators particularly those who are typically underrepresented (e.g., ethnically diverse, individuals with disabilities) in public schools and in higher education.
2. Increased funding is needed to ensure effective recruitment, preparation, and IHE placement of doctoral-level special education leaders (i.e., teacher educators, researchers, program administrators) particularly those who are typically underrepresented (e.g., ethnically diverse, individuals with disabilities) in the teaching/higher education profession.
3. Increased funding is needed to ensure effective preparation, induction, mentoring, and ongoing support of all teachers who are highly qualified to meet the educational needs of all students including those from the four key NCLB subgroups (e.g., students with disabilities, students who are culturally or linguistically diverse, minority students, and those from low-income homes).
4. Increased funding to facilitate effective preparation of school principals who are prepared to educate and advocate for students with disabilities and their families; develop, implement, and evaluate appropriate special education services; and ensure effective support for students, families, and educators.
5. Advocate for continued refinement and alignment of NCLB and IDEA to ensure students with disabilities and others who struggle academically receive appropriate and high- quality education based on (a) fair and appropriate decision making at all levels, (b) adequate federal funding, (c) effective teacher and administrator preparation, (d) effective curriculum and instruction, (e) comprehensive progress monitoring and student assessment, and (f) comprehensive long-term educational planning that reflects active student and family involvement.

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Special Education Faculty Needs Assessment

Special Education's Capacity to Produce a Highly Qualified Workforce

By: Deborah Deutsch Smith & Roxanne Watson
Claremont Graduate University

The Office of Special Programs (OSEP) is supporting an evaluation effort to provide information about the nation's capacity to produce a sufficient supply of qualified special education teachers. The primary focus of the evaluation is on the production of new special education doctoral graduates who assume faculty positions.

Nearly a decade has passed since a team of special education university faculty, researchers, policy analysts, and other stakeholders conducted a large-scale study of faculty supply and demand issues. Findings from that comprehensive effort indicated that: special education doctoral production had decreased by 30% over the previous two decades; nearly half of all doctoral graduates chose careers outside of academe; and nearly a third of all faculty vacancies remained unfilled. One result of the study is that relationships among the number of college and university faculty, the production of special education teachers, and services delivered to children and youth with disabilities became acknowledged. Since the passage of IDEA'04 and given the chronic and persistent shortages of special education faculty, questions arise about higher education's capacity to produce a sufficient supply of highly qualified special education teachers.

This evaluation efforts includes four major tasks:

Task 1: Assess the status and capacity of special education *doctoral programs*

- Pilot sites selected, pilot doctoral program survey being developed, distributed approximately by April 1, 2008
- Final surveys to be delivered to all special education doctoral programs in June of 2008; on site coordinators to be determined by May of 2008

Task 2: Assess the demographics, career goals, and characteristics of current special education *doctoral students* who are "in the pipeline"

- Pilot sites selected, pilot student survey being developed and to be tested concurrently with doctoral program survey, distributed approximately by April 1, 2008
- Final surveys to be delivered to all special education doctoral students in September of 2008; on site coordinators of program surveys to coordinate student survey distribution

Task 3: Determine career paths, demographics, and other characteristics of two cohorts of special education *doctoral graduates*: five years of graduates who participated in *The Faculty Shortage Study* and five years of recent graduates (i.e., June of 2001 through June of 2006)

- Pilot sites selected, pilot student survey being developed and to be tested concurrently with doctoral program survey, distributed approximately by November 15, 2008
- Contact information of graduates to be included in the study gathered by October 2008

Task 4: Determine basic characteristics of university-based special education *teacher education programs* (e.g., staffing patterns, projected retirements).

- Random selection of states in the six U.S. regions made in February of 2008, universe of special education teacher education programs in each selected state in process
- Teacher education program surveys to be developed and distributed in summer of 2009

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Washington Update

HECSE Pushes Higher Education Act to Break New Ground for Students with Disabilities and Special Education Teacher Preparation

By: Jane E. West

It has been ten years since the Congress reauthorized the Higher Education Act. As of May, 2008, congressional staff appear to be finishing up the tedious and long process of analyzing the House and Senate bills and developing compromises that will make up the new Higher Education Act of 2008. Hoping to complete action before the Memorial Day recess, the Congress will log one of few accomplishments in the final year of the 110th Congress. If the reauthorization is completed, it will be one of few initiatives to escape the political stalemate that stymies legislative progress during a presidential election year. And this is doubly true when all of the presidential candidates are also U.S. Senators!

HECSE has promoted numerous provisions targeted to special education and students with disabilities in both the House and Senate bills. There are two new programs authorized in both the House and Senate bills, teacher development requirements in both bills, access to federal financial aid for students with intellectual disabilities in both bills and five new programs in the House bill. This represents unprecedented attention to students with disabilities and special education in the Higher Education Act. The current Higher Education Act has only one program that directly addresses students with disabilities --the Model Demonstration Programs to Ensure Students with Disabilities Receive a Quality Higher Education-- funded at \$6.8 million and routinely recommended for elimination by the Bush Administration.

Students with intellectual and other significant cognitive disabilities are the population targeted by three new initiatives in both bills -- model demonstration programs, a technical assistance and coordinating center and access to federal financial aid, including Pell grants and work-study funds. Development of programs in higher education for these students has been on the rise in recent years. As students with intellectual disabilities leave high school, they are increasingly seeking higher education options. HECSE members, such as George Mason University, run such programs. A long time concern has been lack of access to federal student aid for students in these programs, rendering them only an option for the well-to-do. This legislation would change that situation and promote the development of new models in higher education to serve this population.

Other new programs in the House bill intended to promote access to higher education for students with disabilities include an Advisory Commission on Accessible Instructional Materials, Model Demonstration Programs to Improve Access to Instructional Materials and a National Study on Higher Education Access and Success for Students with Disabilities. When the House bill was under consideration on the floor, Rep. John Yarmuth (D-KY) offered an amendment endorsed by HECSE which would create "Teach to Reach" grants. These grants are intended to prepare general education teachers to instruct students with disabilities. Funds would go to partnerships of general education programs, special education programs and high need K-12 school districts. The amendment passed with bi-partisan support.



The House bill also includes a provision long endorsed by HECSE for the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need program. The provision prioritizes funding to graduate students preparing to be teacher educators in special education. This provision is one of many initiatives promoted by HECSE to address the critical shortage of special education faculty.

Some new provisions related to teacher development have raised concerns among the presidential higher education associations. Based on the recommendations of the bi-partisan NCLB Commission, these provisions hook the receipt of federal funds to the creation of goals to graduate teachers in shortage areas (including special education) and assurances that teacher preparation programs are graduating special education teachers with curricular content knowledge, are graduating general education teachers who are proficient in teaching diverse students including those with disabilities and are graduating students who are prepared to work in urban and rural areas. Some higher education associations have characterized these provisions as an intrusion into the curriculum of higher education and they fear this link to federal aid will be a precedent. The NCLB Commission developed this recommendation based on the input of numerous K-12 stakeholders.

Whatever the final outcome of this new iteration of the Higher Education Act, it is safe to say that HECSE will have left its mark. The final legislation is bound to represent unprecedented expansion in support for students with disabilities in higher education and for the preparation of teachers to instruct students with disabilities. ■

HECSE Virtual Intern's Report

HECSE Doctoral Student Internship

By: Maya Israel

As I look back over my past year as the 2007-2008 HECSE doctoral student intern, I realize just how transformative this professional opportunity has been.

In my former work as a special education teacher and then as a project coordinator on an alternative certification personnel preparation grant, I encountered policies that seemed counterintuitive to effectively educating students with disabilities. For example, although the personnel preparation project that I coordinated involved an effective partnership between the university and school districts in providing both coursework and classroom supports, there was an underlying struggle with the emergency certification provisions that allowed for teachers without knowledge of special education to teach students with disabilities. Prior to this internship, as I struggled with such issues, I understood the need to participate in affecting special education policy, but I did not know of ways this could effectively occur beyond writing letters to my representatives. I applied for the internship because I wanted to learn how to actively advocate for increased educational opportunities for students with disabilities as well as their teachers.

As I hoped, the experiences in which I participated this year gave me the tools and knowledge to begin partaking in advocacy for policy change. One aspect of my internship included participation in the annual HECSE meeting in Washington D.C. The policy briefings and panel discussions during the HECSE meeting provided me with a rich context for the current special educational issues. With this preparation, I felt secure in going to our scheduled Hill visits (although in at least one of these meetings, I was thrown by some "outside the box" inquires). That experience of receiving information about the current state of legislation and then taking that information to my representatives was extremely valuable. The mystery of *going to the Hill* was replaced with confidence with communicating with key legislative staffers.

The major portion of my internship has involved the development of the Personnel Preparation Profiles survey that will be distributed in early April to both the HECSE and TED membership. Here again, although I understood the critical issue of decreased OSEP funding for personnel preparation of special education teachers and faculty, I originally was unaware of effective means of bringing this issue forward. In discussions with Dr. Jane West and key HECSE board members, the Personnel Preparation Profiles project emerged as a powerful way of communicating the successes of OSEP funded personnel preparation programs to legislators and other key groups.

I would like to thank Dr. Walther-Thomas and Dr. West as well as other board members who have taken an interest in my professional development through this internship. ■

Doctoral Student Voices

Doctoral Student Participation at HECSE

By: Roseanne K. Vallice, M.Ed., University of South Florida

As a second year doctoral student specializing in Urban Teacher Education in the Department of Special Education from the University of South Florida, attending the HECSE annual meeting in Washington D.C. was truly an honor. I was privileged to be able to travel to Capital Hill, speak to two of Florida's congressional staff members, and urge them to support reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. The opportunities to view the inner workings of our government and to be able to interact with various individuals who play strong supporting roles in our educational system were amazing. I was fortunate to be able to represent the doctoral students at my university and strongly hope that this representation by future scholars from various institutions of higher education will continue to be a consistent part of the Annual HECSE meeting. ■

Call for Doctoral Student Perspectives

We invite short articles (200-500 words) discussing policy issues that impact special education at the federal, state, and local levels.

Email to: jktramil@coedu.usf.edu

Continued from page 2– HECSE President’s Message

Encourage Your Students to Study the Issues and Get Involved. Bertrand Russell once said, “One must care about a world one will never see.” In the long run, preparing our undergraduate and graduate students to become effective special education advocates may be the best work we do. Take time to teach them about the process. Encourage them to join professional organizations and get involved. Take them to DC for HECSE and OSEP meetings and Hill visits. Invite your representatives to come to your campus. Share information from the weekly *Washington Partners* bulletins with your colleagues and your students.

SAVE THE DATE FOR A SUMMER HECSE MEETING. If you plan to attend the OSEP Project Directors’ Conference, please plan to attend a HECSE wrap-up session on July 23rd (3:30-6:00 p.m.) at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, DC. We will discuss implications of calls for "evidence based" doctoral student preparation and concerns about off-cycle doctoral program completers. Jane will provide a Washington Update. Dinner discussion groups will follow the meeting. You're welcome to invite a colleague or a doctoral student to join us.

Get involved and help set policies that will guide this campaign and change the future. See you in DC! ■

Best,
Chriss Walther-Thomas
HECSE President
chrisswt@ku.edu

Continued from page 3– Special Education Faculty Needs Assessment

Our timeline and major milestone:

January	Initial Briefing and Overview of the work to be accomplished for the Special Education Faculty and Teacher Education Evaluation Effort (SEFNA), HECSE Meeting, 1/18/08.
April	SEFNA staff develops and conducts a pilot of the doctoral program and student survey. Four universities will participate and provide feedback on the process of survey delivery and distribution through “home” departments/ programs.
May	Pilot process completed and final procedures for the student survey completed. <i>Doctoral Program Coordinators and Points of Contact for SEFNA identified for ALL special education doctoral programs in the nation. (Each coordinator/point of contact will receive a small stipend for their assistance with the program surveys, distribution of student surveys (through their program’s email list-serve systems), and names of graduates.)</i>
June	Doctoral surveys delivered to each identified doctoral program in the nation.
July	Doctoral program surveys returned to SEFNA staff.
August	List of doctoral graduates (and contact information) for a five-year period provided to SEFNA – those who graduated from May 2001 – May 2006.
September	Surveys emailed by doctoral program coordinators to all current doctoral students (those in all stages of program completion).
November	Distribution of Special Education Teacher Education Program Surveys

The Special Education Faculty Needs Assessment (SFNA) team will be contacting all special education doctoral programs in the upcoming six months. It is important that a 100% response rate is obtained, as it was for the last study. Please help by alerting now all those who will be participating.

By May 1, 2008, the SEFNA Project’s Web site (www.cgu.edu/sefna) will disseminate information about the project’s evaluation effort. To contact SEFNA staff use this email address: sefna@cgu.edu ■

HECSE

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Visit us online at our **new** website:
<http://www.hecse.org/>

The Higher Education Consortium for Special Education (HECSE) is a private, non-profit organization representing the United States.

HECSE's primary mission is to serve its member schools by seeking solutions to challenges unique to college and university programs involved in the preparation of special education leadership personnel. These solutions include but are not limited to:

- The exchange of information and ideas unique to comprehensive special education personnel preparation programs, in general, and doctoral preparation programs, in particular,
- Renewal of its members through a variety of professional development and dissemination activities, and
- Professional advocacy for academic programs offered by its members.

The goal of HECSE initiatives is to facilitate continuous improvement in the quality of doctoral programs offered by member institutions.

Ads for Faculty Positions

We will run ads for faculty positions in the newsletter and on the HECSE website. HECSE members whose dues are paid in full can place 2 free ads per year. Additional ads can be placed for \$250.00 per ad.

April 8, 2008



Dear Colleagues,

We are requesting your help with an important project designed to showcase significant outcomes from Personnel Preparation and Leadership projects funded by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). During the coming months, the Higher Education Consortium for Special Education (HECSE), the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children (TED), and the National Center for Special Education Personnel and Related Services Providers (the Personnel Center) will be developing a set of exemplary OSEP-funded personnel preparation and leadership profiles to illustrate the impact these funds are having on special educator preparation. Through a variety of print and online publications, HECSE, TED, and the Personnel Center plan to share these profiles with stakeholders to demonstrate the significant impact of the IDEA personnel preparation program. As all of us who prepare special education teachers, teacher educators, school researchers and program administrators know OSEP's support has contributed greatly to the success of our ongoing efforts. Our goal is to broadly communicate the success of this critical program. This is the time for us to work together to get our message out about the importance of personnel preparation under IDEA.

Within the next week, you will receive a brief online survey asking you to describe **one** effective OSEP-funded personnel preparation or leadership project that has had a powerful and lasting impact on the preparation of new special education teachers or doctoral students preparing to become teacher educators. It may be a current project or one funded previously that has produced lasting effects. Along with general information, we will ask questions related to the overall impact and sustainability efforts associated with this project.

By participating in this project, you will help ensure we present a broad array of program profiles representing a variety of outcomes, institutions, geographic regions, and preparation emphasis areas. We plan to distribute information via online and via one or more print publications. These documents will be shared with state and federal leaders and a broad array of stakeholders. We hope you will identify a good example from your work and share it with us. If you would like to learn more about the profiles project or if you have questions about the survey, please feel free to contact the HECSE Doctoral Intern, Maya Israel, at mayaosh@ku.edu or any of us listed below.

Thank you in advance for your help with this important initiative. With best regards,

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