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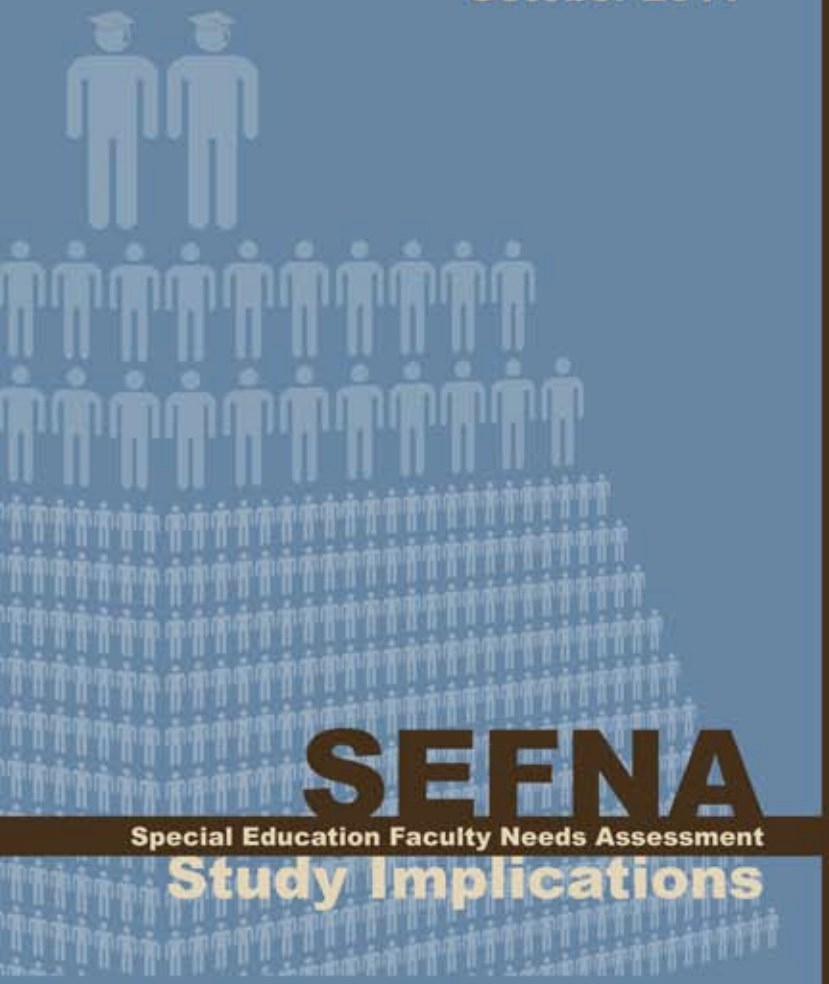

SEFNA

Special Education Faculty Needs Assessment

Study Implications

Disclaimer:

The SEFNA study was made possible through a grant between Claremont Graduate University and the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education (#H325U070001). The contents herein do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

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Why SEFNA Matters

- Demand for special education faculty has increased.
- There is a direct relationship between a shortage of faculty and a shortage of teachers.
- An impending shortage of special education faculty will negatively affect students with disabilities and their families.
- A substantial upsurge in retirements, as well as program expansion, are among the many reasons for the significant increase in demand for new special education faculty.
- Solutions to this overwhelming projected supply-and-demand imbalance must be direct and immediate.

Students with Disabilities

Outcomes for students with disabilities are improving. Within the last few decades, enhanced educational opportunities and the implementation of evidence-based practices have produced positive results:

- A reduced need for special education services due to the implementation of early intervention services for children ages birth to five
- Increased numbers of students achieving at or above basic levels of academic proficiency
- An increase in high school graduates
- A decrease in high school dropouts
- An increase in post-secondary education enrollment
- An increase in post-high school employment

Many factors have contributed to such improvements. Education researchers have developed effective instructional procedures, validated through rigorous research, for use by both general and special education teachers. College faculty prepare future teachers to implement these evidence-based practices. Ongoing professional development in schools provides current teachers with cutting-edge knowledge and preparation.

Highlights of SEFNA Findings

Actions taken after the release of The 2001 Faculty Shortage Study demonstrate that supply-and-demand imbalances can be improved.

- The supply of doctoral graduates assuming new faculty positions reached an all-time high.

The projected shortage of special education faculty will directly and negatively affect students with disabilities and their families.

- The impending faculty shortage will restrict the production of general and special educators with the necessary skills to provide effective instruction, particularly in inclusive classrooms.
- Despite recent improvement in the supply of doctoral graduates, the upcoming and excessive demand for new special education faculty will outstrip supply.
- Without a sustained workforce of faculty who prepare future educators, the chronic and persistent shortage of special education teachers will only worsen.
- A reduced supply of new researchers who can develop more effective practices will impair continued improvement in outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Excessive demand for new special education faculty is the result of multiple factors.

- For at least the next five years, all special education personnel preparation programs will experience an annual turnover rate of 21%.
- The problem is particularly troubling at doctoral granting institutions, where 1/2 to 2/3 of the special education faculty will retire between 2011 and 2017.
- Unlike other programs affected by the recession, special education teacher preparation programs across the nation are not closing.
- Moreover, these special education teacher education programs are expanding to include early intervention, blended special and general education, and specialized areas such as autism.
- Searches for new faculty are on the rebound after a brief decline in 2009 and are being re-structured to address program expansion.

Solutions to this predicted supply-and-demand imbalance must be direct and immediate.

- The federal role (e.g., increased funding dedicated to leadership [doctoral] preparation) that supports doctoral programs and their students must be intensified.
- Recruitment of doctoral students must target the characteristics known to increase the likelihood of an academic career path (i.e., students are younger at initial enrollment, express desire to become faculty members, and are willing to relocate after graduation).
- Support for doctoral students, regardless of its source, must remove financial barriers to full-time study and efficient time-to-graduation.

SEFNA Tasks

1. Assess the status and capacity of SE doctoral programs;

2. Assess the demographics, career goals, and characteristics of current SE doctoral students;

3. Determine the career paths, demographics, and other characteristics of two cohorts of SE doctoral graduates: five years of graduates who participated in *The 2001 Faculty Shortage Study* and five years of recent graduates;

4. Determine some of the basic characteristics of university-based SE teacher education programs;

5. Determine the graduation rates of OSEP-funded doctoral students through a follow-up study;

6. Conduct a comparison of funding levels for doctoral students across federal agencies; and

7. Triangulate data by examining job searches advertised in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* between June and October 2010.

Study Methodology and Response Rate

Task	Sample	Response Rate
1	97 SE doctoral training programs	97% (n=94)
2	1,779 SE doctoral students ('99–'09)	71% (n=1,263)
3	870 SE doctoral program graduates from 66 programs ('97–'07)	72% (n=626)
4	76 SE teacher preparation programs from 12 states in six U.S. regions	78% (n=59)
5	30 OSEP leadership preparation projects (FY '00 & '01)	100% (n=30)
6	85 active OSEP leadership projects in Spring '09 and extant IES, NSF, & NIH data	95% (n=81)
7	43 advertisements for SE positions posted in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* from June through October '10	79% (n=34)

Supply-and-Demand Equilibrium

From 1999 to 2009 doctoral programs increased production

- 16% more doctoral programs
- 7% greater enrollment
- 28% more doctoral graduates
- 11% more graduates assuming positions in higher education

OSEP investments positively affect the supply of new faculty

- New doctoral programs were developed as a result of funding.
- Graduation rates of OSEP-funded students are high.
- More faculty were prepared because of OSEP funding.

Attrition of college faculty is low

- Almost all faculty remain working in higher education full-time until retirement.
- Many continue to work part-time after retirement until replacements for them are found.

Demand for new faculty is high and searches are robust

- The 2008 economic recession affected universities' ability to recruit.
- Searches for new faculty rebounded in 2009.
- 79% of searches in 2010–2011 were successful.
- Unsuccessful searches are continuing and are not being discontinued.
- Doctoral granting programs represent 9% of all special education personnel preparation programs, but conducted 33% of job searches in 2010–2011.
- Massive retirements are projected.

Impact of the Predicted Faculty Shortage

Although there are more than 1,000 universities with special education teacher preparation programs, only 9% also grant doctoral degrees. Further, only 63% of their graduates become faculty.

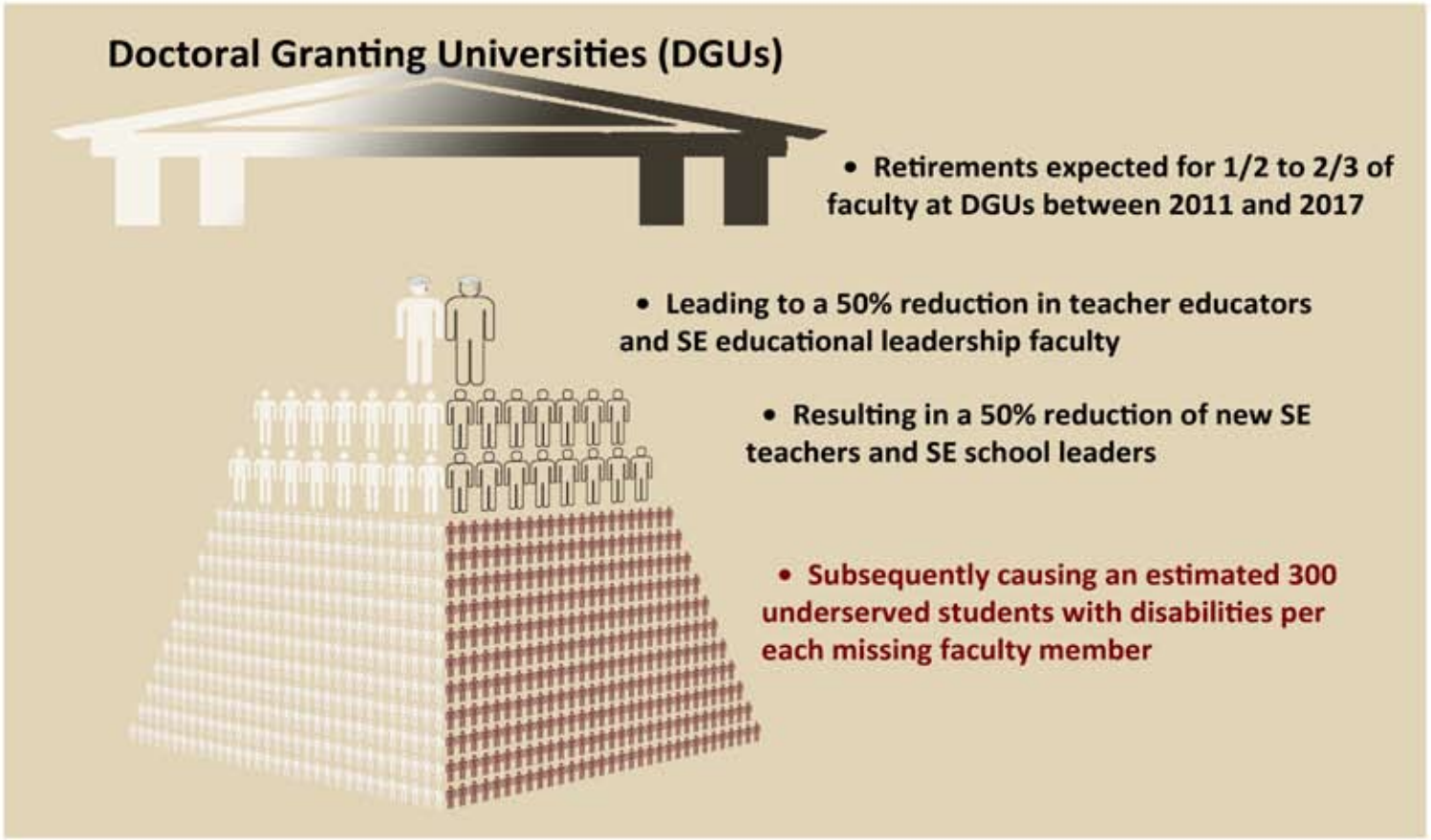
As researchers, these faculty:

- Develop and validate evidence-based instructional and behavioral interventions
- Prepare doctoral students to become the next generation of educational researchers

As teacher educators, these faculty:

- Prepare future general and special education teachers and school leaders in the use of evidence-based practices
- Prepare most of the nation's teachers with expertise in low-incidence disabilities (e.g., autism, visual disabilities, multiple-severe disabilities, hearing impairments)
- Prepare doctoral students to become the next generation of teacher educators

As illustrated below, it is predicted that up to two-thirds of the faculty working in doctoral granting special education programs will retire in the next five years. The end-result of such attrition is that, for every one fewer teacher educator produced, 300 students with disabilities will be underserved.



For more information about this study and to obtain a copy of *The Final Report*, please visit the SEFNA Web site at www.cgu.edu/sefna