

# CALIFORNIA COMMISSION ON TEACHER CREDENTIALING

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## ***It Could Better Manage Its Credentialing Responsibilities***

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### *Audit Highlights . . .*

*Our review of the credentialing process administered by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (commission) revealed the following:*

- The commission could better evaluate the effectiveness of the programs it oversees and better measure the performance of the teacher credentialing process.*
  - The commission could take additional steps to improve its processing of credential applications, including focusing its customer service activities.*
  - Several areas of the commission's process for developing program standards lack structure and could be improved.*
  - The commission suspended its continuing accreditation reviews in December 2002 and is evaluating its accreditation policy, and it does not expect to present a revised policy to its governing body until August 2005.*
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REPORT NUMBER 2004-108, NOVEMBER 2004

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing response as of November 2005

The Joint Legislative Audit Committee asked us to study the effectiveness and efficiency of the teacher credentialing process administered by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (commission). Our audit found that the commission could make improvements to better evaluate the programs it oversees and its internal operations, more effectively manage its application processing, and refine how it updates program standards.

### **Finding #1: The commission has neither fully evaluated nor accurately reported the results of two of its three teacher development programs.**

The commission's teacher development programs provide funding for individuals who do not yet meet the requirements for a teaching credential. However, the commission has neither sufficiently evaluated nor accurately reported on two of its three teacher development programs. Specifically, the commission did not have the effectiveness of the California School Paraprofessional Teacher Training Program (paraprofessional program) independently evaluated, as state law requires. The commission indicates that the high cost of this evaluation is a concern, but it could not provide documentation that it sought the funding it believes is needed for the evaluation. Further, because the commission did not develop ways to measure and monitor local program performance, nearly 70 participants whose participation in the paraprofessional program was scheduled to end by December 2003 have not completed credential requirements. In addition, the commission overstated the benefits of the Pre-Internship Teaching Program in a report to the Legislature and could not provide support for

certain assumptions in this report. Finally, although no requirement exists for the commission to evaluate its intern program, commission data indicates that the program has been successful in meeting its objectives.

We recommended that the commission establish performance measures for each of its teacher development programs. We also recommended that the commission ensure that the statistics it presents in its program reports to the Legislature are consistent and that it maintains the supporting documentation for these statistics. Further, we recommended that the commission monitor how local teacher development programs verify the academic progress of participants and establish consequences for underperformance. Finally, we recommended that the commission resume requests for budget increases to fund an independent evaluation of its paraprofessional program that assesses all the requirements in the applicable statute or seek to amend those parts of the law that it believes would be too costly to implement.

***Commission's Action: Pending.***

The commission indicates that it has established performance measures for each of its teacher development programs. In addition, the commission will now require annual reports from program sponsors on the academic progress of participants and the commission is in the process of establishing consequences for underperformance. Finally, the commission indicates that it plans to submit a budget change proposal to fund the independent evaluation of the paraprofessional program during fiscal year 2007–08.

**Finding #2: The commission could improve its ability to measure the performance of preparation programs and the teacher credentialing process.**

The commission annually reports on the number of California teaching credentials it issues and the number of emergency permits and credential waivers it grants. However, it provides this information with limited, if any, analysis of the trends associated with these numbers and does not account for external factors that could affect these statistics. In addition, if the commission and the other entities involved worked to remove current obstacles, the commission could use the results of the teaching performance assessment, annual data on retention of teachers, and administrator surveys that are currently in development to better measure various aspects of the process and the preparation programs.

We recommended that the commission include an analysis with the statistics it publishes in its annual reports to provide context to education professionals and policy makers for why the number of credentials, permits, and waivers it issues has changed. We also recommended that the commission collaborate with colleges and universities to determine what funding is necessary to activate and maintain the teaching performance assessment as the enabling legislation envisioned it. It should then request the Legislature and the Governor's Office to authorize this function in future budget

acts. Finally, to aid it in developing performance measures for preparation programs, we recommended that the commission keep itself informed of surveys and reports that other entities prepare.

We also recommended that the Legislature consider giving the commission a specific policy directive to obtain and use data on teacher retention to measure the performance of the process and preparation programs and provide this information in its annual reports.

***Commission's Action: Pending.***

The commission indicates that it will now include analysis of the statistics presented in its annual reports to provide context to education professionals and policy makers. The commission plans to collaborate with colleges and universities by spring 2006 to determine the funding necessary to activate the teaching performance assessment, and indicates that it will continue to work with colleges and universities to implement the teaching performance assessment on a voluntary basis. In regard to developing performance measures for teacher preparation programs, the commission states that it will keep informed of surveys and reports that other entities prepare, such as the California State University's annual employer survey. Finally, the commission indicates that it is considering the systematic collection of valid and reliable data from surveys and performance assessments as part of its review of the accreditation system.

***Legislative Action: Unknown.***

**Finding #3: The commission has not established specific performance measures for its divisions.**

The commission's February 2001 strategic plan (2001 plan), which the commission partially updated just after we completed our fieldwork, was outdated and did not establish the specific performance measures the commission needed to evaluate the results of its current efforts. In addition, the commission does not systematically track whether it is successfully completing the tasks it outlined in the 2001 plan. As a result of inadequate strategic planning, the commission has lacked specific performance measures to guide, evaluate, and improve its efforts.

We recommended that the commission regularly update its strategic plan and quantify performance measures when appropriate in terms of the results the commission wants to achieve. We also recommended that the commission present the commission's governing body (commissioners) with an annual status report on how the commission has achieved the goals and tasks outlined in the strategic plan.

*Commission's Action: Pending.*

With the appointment of eight new commissioners, and the election of a new chair and vice chair, the commission indicates that it is revisiting how it reviews and updates the strategic plan and quantifies performance measures. The commission anticipates that the strategic plan will be updated in spring 2006, which takes into account the likelihood of new appointments of commissioners for the remaining vacancies. In addition, the commission indicates that the executive director will reformat his annual report of accomplishments to fit the strategic plan.

**Finding #4: The commission has made efforts to streamline and remove barriers from the teacher credentialing process.**

Although state law mandates the framework of the teacher credentialing process, the commission has the responsibility to analyze the process periodically and report to the Legislature if particular requirements are no longer necessary or need adjustment. In exercising its oversight of the process, the commission has implemented some reforms and is contemplating others. The commission has also worked to reduce the barriers to becoming a California teacher. In addition to these efforts, the commission is considering whether to consolidate the examinations that it requires prospective teachers to pass.

We recommended that the commission continue to consider ways to streamline the process, such as consolidating examinations it requires of credential candidates. If the commission determines that specific credential requirements are no longer necessary, it should seek legislative changes to the applicable statutes.

*Commission's Action: Pending.*

The commission states that it continues to streamline the teacher credentialing process. For example, the commission indicates that it is gathering information from stakeholders and constituencies, and obtaining technical assistance on the feasibility and advisability of exam consolidation. It anticipates presenting results of this effort to the commissioners for consideration in early 2006.

**Finding #5: By better managing its customer service, workload, and technology, the commission could improve application processing.**

By focusing its customer service, better managing its workload, and taking full advantage of a new automated application-processing system, the commission could improve its processing of applications. Facing a significant volume of contacts, the commission has not taken sufficient steps to focus its customer service activities. Proper management of customer service is necessary because the large volume of telephone calls and e-mails that the commission receives takes staff away from the task of processing credential applications.

Although the commission typically processes applications for credentials in less than its regulatory processing time of 75 business days, applications go unprocessed for a significant amount of this time because staff members are busy with other duties. The commission has taken some steps to improve its process, including automating certain functions as part of its Teacher Credentialing Service Improvement Project (TCSIP), which is a new automated application processing system that the commission planned to implement in late October 2004. However, the commission has not performed sufficient data analysis to make informed staffing decisions. TCSIP offers tangible time-saving benefits, such as allowing colleges and universities to submit applications electronically and automating the commission's review of online renewals, but the commission does not plan to use either function to its full potential in the foreseeable future. Although online renewals offer the benefit of faster and more efficient processing, the commission has not sufficiently publicized this benefit. The commission could do more to inform teachers about the benefits of online renewal by performing the data analysis necessary to determine where the commission needs to do additional outreach and by better highlighting online renewal's availability and faster processing time. Finally, we noted that the commission could be more efficient by automating how it routes and responds to customers' e-mails.

We recommended that the commission gather meaningful data about the types of questions asked in e-mails to use with data from its telephone system to improve the public information it provides. To ensure the effective management of its application workload, we recommended that the commission routinely monitor the composition of the applications that it has not yet processed and collect and analyze data on the average review times for different types of applications. In addition, we recommended that the commission routinely have TCSIP create automated reports to track the average processing times and list applications that are taking more than 75 business days to process. To optimize the time-saving benefits of TCSIP, we recommended that the commission require colleges and universities to submit credential applications electronically to the extent that is economically feasible and consider expanding TCSIP to allow school districts to submit applications electronically, which would then allow for an automated review of routine applications. Further, to encourage more teachers to renew their credentials online and to determine whether additional outreach efforts may be necessary, we recommended that the commission gather data on and study the percentage of renewals it receives online for different types of credentials. Finally, we recommended that the commission automate its response to and routing of e-mails.

***Commission's Action: Partial corrective action taken.***

The commission has implemented or is in the process of implementing our recommendations related to customer service and application processing. Specifically, the commission indicated that it now gathers data on the types of questions asked in telephone calls and e-mails, and it uses this data to improve the information provided on its Web site and leaflets. In January 2005, the commission revised its Web site to make it easier to use and to address questions its customers routinely ask.

Since the implementation of TCSIP in February 2005, the commission indicates that it is monitoring average processing time for the four processing teams and that in fiscal year 2006-07 it plans to perform a time management study for each type of application. In addition, the commission is working to develop reports from TCSIP to track average processing times and to identify those applications that have taken more than 75 business days to process.

The commission agrees that it should use automated processes from TCSIP where possible, and thus it has convened a stakeholder workgroup to help it develop a process that would allow all commission stakeholders to electronically submit initial applications. To this end, the commission expects to have a process in place by January 2006 that would allow all colleges and universities to electronically submit applications and it is working towards a goal of February 2007 to have a process in place to use TCSIP to automatically review these applications. Further, in regards to the electronic submission of applications from school districts, although the commission indicates that a number of technological, fiscal, and logistical issues need to be resolved first, it is projecting an implementation date of July 2007 for this process.

To encourage more educators to renew credentials online, the commission indicates that it will gather information on the types of renewals received online and review this data quarterly to determine where to focus its outreach efforts. In addition, the commission indicates its new Web site has a clearly displayed link for online renewals and that both the Web site and its leaflets now state that online renewals are given a priority processing over paper renewals.

Finally, the commission indicates that it has automated its response to and routing of all incoming e-mails.

**Finding #6: The commission's process for developing teacher preparation program standards lack structure and could be improved.**

The commission is in the midst of a 10-year process of developing program standards that comply with the requirements of Senate Bill 2042, Chapter 548, Statutes of 1998 (act). The commission does not have an overall plan to guide its efforts to finish implementing program standards or its ongoing standard-setting activities. Further, the commission's recent experiences developing program standards to meet the act's requirements offer an opportunity to evaluate how to better manage its future efforts. Our review of five sets of recently developed program standards identified areas in the commission's process for developing program standards that lack structure and could be improved. Among other issues, the commission does not use a methodical approach to form advisory panels of education professionals that assist it in developing program standards; neither does it always put in perspective the results of its field-review surveys to the commissioners when recommending standards for adoption. Finally, we found that the commission had an inadequate policy for ensuring staff maintain important documents related to the development of program standards.

We recommended that the commission develop an overall plan to guide its efforts to update program standards. This plan should describe the commission's process for developing standards and should provide more structure for that process. We also recommended that the commission develop a methodical approach to forming advisory panels to ensure that it objectively appoints education professionals to those panels. Further, to provide commissioners with a better perspective on the results of field-review surveys, we recommended that commission staff report the actual results for each standard. Finally, we recommended that the commission implement a more specific record retention policy.

***Commission's Action: Pending.***

The commission indicates that it has completed the development and implementation of program standards to meet the act's requirements, with the exception of the teaching performance assessment. By spring 2006, the commission states it will have a plan to guide its ongoing standard-setting activities.

The commission indicates that it has developed a methodical approach to the appointment of advisory panels that includes evaluating a candidate's qualifications against the commission's requirements, and developing candidate rankings for deliberation and discussion.

Further, commission staff agrees with our recommendation to present the actual field-survey results to the commissioners and are prepared to do so the next time program standards are developed.

Finally, the commission indicates it will follow its record retention policy to ensure that important documents are maintained for specified periods of time in case they are needed later for general information, research, or legal proceedings.

**Finding #7: The commission suspended its continuing accreditation reviews of colleges and universities.**

The commission suspended its continuing accreditation reviews of colleges and universities in December 2002 to allow colleges and universities time to implement the commission's new standards and for it to evaluate its accreditation policy. Continuing accreditation reviews are an important component of the commission's accreditation system and help ensure that colleges and universities operate teacher preparation programs that meet the commission's standards. Although the commission has been working with representatives from colleges and universities to evaluate its accreditation policy, it does not plan to propose a revision to the commissioners until August 2005.

We recommended that the commission promptly resume its continuing accreditation reviews and take steps to complete the evaluation and revision of its accreditation policy promptly.

***Commission's Action: Pending.***

The commission indicates that the Committee on Accreditation and the Accreditation Study Work Group developed recommendations and options for consideration by the commissioners, which directed commission staff to send the recommendations to colleges and universities for review and comment. The commission notes that should it implement a revised accreditation system, a transitional period would be necessary as colleges and universities have advocated for a 24-month preparation period before being subject to a review.