



The College of Education and Human Sciences

# *Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education*

2020 ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY



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## Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education: An Introduction

The Department of Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education (TLTE) strives to be a leader in research focused on the professional development of teachers, the scholarship of teaching, and education across a broad array of settings. We aim to provide teacher education, professional development, and outreach services to diverse communities across Nebraska and beyond. All our teaching, research, and engagement efforts align with TLTE's mission to Prepare Teachers for Tomorrow's Communities, as well as with college and university priorities. We are responding to the shortage of highly qualified teachers in STEM fields, the need for teachers who are fully equipped to teach multilingual and multicultural learners, and the need for teachers who understand the concerns of families in refugee communities, reservation communities, rural communities, and other cultural enclaves. The department draws on the expertise of our faculty to study and respond to identified needs across Nebraska and the world. Many of our activities dovetail with UNL priorities; often, they are conducted in cooperation with other UNL units.

Much of the work during the past seven years was guided by identifying two grand challenges that the department decided to adapt (out of the four the campus and college identified- see Appendix 2).

### **GRAND CHALLENGE B: *Immigrant, Migrant & Multicultural Populations***

The goal was to create a focused research effort to link and support areas of strength so as to increase impact through more coordinated, collaborative efforts. We aimed to grow such an entity, beginning with an expanded faculty base around immigrant, migrant, and multicultural populations. We needed to know more about how to make first generation students' experiences more successful as well as how to effectively bridge their transition from community colleges to a four-year degree. To address these dilemmas, we intended to devote significant human capital to developing specific expertise on the impact of immigration and migration on children, youth, families, schools and communities. Expanding the professional preparation of family, teacher, school leader and community health professionals working with immigrant, migrant, and ELL population and Creating 'hallmark' curricula in our clinical and educator/school leader preparation.

## GRAND CHALLENGE C: *Mathematics & Science Education*

The goal was to increase expertise in the area of research and teaching that focuses on how children and youth develop STEM concepts and engage in STEM learning especially with under-served populations. College of Education and Human Sciences (CEHS), the College of Arts and Sciences, and the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources have joined forces to elevate mathematics and science education as a campus priority. This action is in direct response to the state need for stronger STEM knowledge among all of its residents and to the national call for more professionals in the STEM fields of mathematics and science. This partnership has stood the test of time. It has survived changes in personnel. It is broad in its approach and is expanding in the numbers of people involved, in the variety of topics addressed and in the funding that math and science projects receive. We aimed to capitalize on our strengths in math education and believed that it is imperative to duplicate these efforts on the science front. We focused on increasing our work to match the depth and breadth of our work in math.

### Opportunity

TLTE is on the cusp of significant changes. We have a new dean, an emerging campus strategic plan, and are currently moving to a responsibility centered management budget model. These changes make TLTE a dynamic and exciting place to be and while some of these changes will challenge us in new ways, we also see these as an opportunity to chart a new course. In that sense, the APR visit is particularly well-timed and can help the department shape our direction for the decade ahead.

### *Questions for Review*

#### LOOKING BACK

1. What evidence do you see that we are meeting our grand challenges?
2. What do you see as challenges to meeting our strategic goals (Appendix 2) and grand challenges?

#### LOOKING FORWARD

3. Where do you see the greatest potential for impact given resources, strengths, and challenges?

### Core Values

Robust teacher preparation and life-long professional development have the power to transform the lives of individuals, families, and communities. By engaging students, educators, and partners in our teaching, research, outreach, and service, we enact the following Core values:

**Knowledge and Innovation:** We innovate curriculum, pedagogy, and scholarship to address emerging educational challenges and opportunities. We also engage in subject matter knowledge and deep learning across the humanities and sciences.

**Diversity and Social Justice:** We practice democratic and civic engagement to achieve social justice through collaborative and restorative practices. We welcome, encourage, respect, support, and include diverse peoples and perspectives.

**Ethics and Community:** We create and maintain partnerships with schools and communities and build ethical communities with agency, empathy, care, and honesty.

These values inform our efforts in teaching, research, and engagement and, in turn, they serve as ways to examine our resource distribution, actions, and impacts.

## What We are Known For

UNL's Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education programs are known across the state, region, and the world for our work in the following areas:

**Curriculum and Teacher Education:** We focus on teacher preparation and professional development, mentoring and teacher induction, teacher identities, and professional learning communities.

**Innovative Learning Technologies:** We emphasize human-centered design thinking in education, instructional technology, as well as digital literacies.

**Language, Literacy, and Culture:** We concentrate efforts on the teaching and learning of language, literacies, and intercultural communication (e.g., multiculturalism, multilingualism, and immigration; foreign language, ESL/ELL/EFL, reading, literacy studies, English education, social studies, arts, and humanities).

**Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics:** We attend to teaching, learning, and curriculum in the sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

**Educational Policy and Reform:** We focus on educational policy, school reform, critical pedagogy, and social theory (e.g., multicultural education, service-learning, comparative and international education, and social justice education).

In response to the Grand Challenges (shared in Appendix 15) our college embraced, we have chosen to focus on STEM Education and M<sup>3</sup> (Immigrant, Multi-cultural, and Multi-Lingual Education).

## Who We Are

As an academic unit in the CEHS, TLTE benefits from the collaborative efforts of a wide variety of professionals. These include 28 faculty members (including department chair and full-time lecturers), 36 adjunct lecturers (most serve as field supervisors), 19 student-teacher supervisors, 35 graduate assistants, and four staff members.

The 21 tenure-line faculty members in the department (excluding Chair) have apportionments that include teaching, research, and service/engagement. The apportionment for most faculty is 50% Teaching (equal to a 2/2 class load with advising), 30% Research, and 20% service/engagement. Three professors of practice have a load that includes 80% Teaching and 20% service/administration and the professor of research is currently serving as associate dean.

### *Distribution of Faculty by Rank*

RANK	TENURE LINE	POP/POR	LECTURER	TOTAL
Professor <sup>1</sup>	6	1 (PoR)		7
Associate Professor	10	1		11
Assistant Professor	5	2		7
Lecturer <sup>2</sup>			3	3
Total	21	4	3	28

<sup>1</sup> Includes Department Chair

<sup>2</sup> Full time lecturers only

## How We Support Faculty

TLTE takes special care to mentor junior faculty (tenure-line and PoP) and ensure that they are successful in attaining tenure and/or promotion. Each junior faculty member is supported by a formally identified faculty mentor who leads a rotating peer committee that reviews annual accomplishments and provides formative feedback each year. The goal of the peer review committee is to ensure each faculty member is well supported. By the time faculty members go up for tenure and/or promotion, most promoted faculty are familiar with their work.

The department personnel committee provides a third-year review that sends a strong signal about progress toward meeting the criteria specified in the CEHS Guidelines for Promotion and Tenure. All faculty members are evaluated annually by the personnel committee for consideration of salary merit increases and to support their progress toward tenure and/ or promotion. Finally, fully promoted faculty are reviewed by the personnel committee on a three-year rotation. Recommendations are then made

by the personnel committee to the department chair. More details about the process are in department bylaws- Appendix 6 (TLTE Bylaws & Governance).

In addition to supporting full-time faculty, we also incorporate adjunct faculty and student teaching supervisors into our programming in ways that provide continuity of experiences for our pre-service teachers and opportunities for growth for our graduate students and adjunct faculty engaged in teacher education.

### **Supporting Research Excellence**

The department interacts with several centers and service units that provide scaffolding, collaborative partners, and support for research excellence. The supports from the college and the university ensure that faculty at all stages of development can reach their professional research goals.

***Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED)*** The university's ORED promotes high-impact research and creative activity, manages research compliance, and the routing and tracking of sponsored research. They also provide grant development workshops, proposal writing help, and other resources designed to support faculty research and creative work.

***Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools (CYFS)*** CYFS is a CEHS center that provides research and grant support, including support with proposal development, methodological and statistical expertise, and grant management. They also offer professional development opportunities for faculty and graduate students. Six of TLTE faculty are CYFS affiliates.

***Scholarly Enhancement Program (SEP)*** The Scholarly Enhancement Program supports and enhances scholarship for pre-tenure and pre-promotion faculty in CEHS. The Early Career Program is designed to increase the success of pre-tenured faculty in writing for publication, integrating their teaching, research, outreach, and the securing of funding to support their scholarship. Pre-promotion professors of practice focus on improvement of teaching and having local and regional impact. Twelve faculty members have completed SEP recently and three are currently taking part.

### **Supporting Teaching Excellence**

TLTE utilizes various university resources to support the teaching efforts and growth of our faculty.

***Center for Transformative Teaching (CTT)*** The mission of the new Center for Transformative Teaching is to collaborate with educators across departments and programs to promote evidence-based, inclusive, innovative, and effective teaching for all learners. Our department is also involved in shaping the path of this new center. Three faculty members are engaged with the center, one was part of the search for director, one is on the board, and one on the steering committee.

**Peer Review of Teaching Project (PRT)** Peer review of teaching is designed to encourage teaching excellence. Seven faculty participated in this program since 2012. They examine their practice for an entire academic year, focusing on evaluating course objectives, expected learning outcomes, and learning and assessment activities related to it.

## Resources

### Where it Happens

The TLTE department office is located on the University's city campus in Henzlik Hall, as are most faculty offices and designated teaching spaces. These facilities also include two science teaching rooms, a flexible teaching space (Henzlik 45), and a Maker Space (Henzlik 46). In addition, the department is a partner in the Schmoker Reading Center located in the Barkley Center on East Campus. The department will move to a new building in 2022-2023.

In light of our pending move into a new building and our focus on innovation, we aim to develop flexible instructional spaces, allowing different modes of teaching and varied modalities for learning. We also aim to develop spaces that will enable the exploration and modeling of new approaches and technologies that can be incorporated into teacher education. The features of innovative spaces include flexible classrooms, materials for hands-on learning, new technologies (e.g., OWL, telepresence robots), and outdoor spaces.

### Budget

The overall budget of TLTE has grown by 12% from 2013 to 2019 (Appendix 9b). Closer examination shows that the growth in the overall budget can be attributed exclusively to growth in grant dollars. In fact, state appropriation amount had not changed much and grew from \$2,946,452 to \$2,956,926 (a growth of \$10,000) while distance funds used to pay for field supervisors were reduced by about \$55,000 in the same period.

In expenditures, the department has shifted a growing amount of funds to support graduate students by 50%. This was a purposeful change aimed to increase our ability to support graduate students by giving them a larger role in teaching and supervision while decreasing the use of adjunct faculty in those roles.

The challenges faced by the department center around being able to pay field supervisors adequately for their critical work while supporting full time doctoral students. Opportunities to reshape the budget may be realized as we shift to a responsibility centered budget model.

### Partnerships and Collaborations

Our department's reach and impact are magnified through collaborative endeavors in and out of the university. Below are three prominent examples of TLTE partnerships within the university:

**Inclusive Early Childhood Education** TLTE collaborates with departments within CEHS to offer the undergraduate program Inclusive Early Childhood Education. Students in this TLTE



program take classes from faculty within the department, but also with faculty in Special Education and Communication Disorders (SECD), as well as Child Youth and Family Studies (CYAF).

***The STEM Continuum Alliance*** This working group started in 2017 and serves as a collaboration between TLTE and University extension to provide STEM education in formal and informal environments. The TLTE/4-H/ORED STEAM Continuum was designed to engage education research and Extension faculty around ideas related to STEAM education research, explore potential funding sources, and begin to build collaborative teams to seek research funding in education research. So far it has resulted in three research proposals.

***Pre-Service and In-Service English Education*** English education faculty collaborate with the English department around all aspects of preservice English education. English education and English faculty also collaborate around two intensive in-service professional development experiences in writing instruction: the Nebraska Writing Project (NWP) and the Husker Writers Project. The latter collaboration is a public writing initiative aimed at developing and sustaining collaborative writing partnerships between secondary students in southeast Nebraska schools, community agencies, and UNL undergraduate writing classes.

***Center for Science Math and Computer Education (CSMCE)*** The CSMCE strives to encourage, support, and challenge faculty in science, mathematics, and education to excel in all of UNL's missions of teaching, research, and engagement through involvement in educational and research activities. STEM Education faculty from TLTE have engaged with the center on a large number of grants impacting preservice and in-service teachers.

Please see the **Outreach and Community Engagement** section for more examples of TLTE partnerships and collaborations.



## Strategic Planning

TLTE's current strategic plan was based on the 2012 APR visit and campus priorities that have emerged in the interim, including Spires of Excellence and Grand Challenges. The campus has just released a new N2025 Draft report, and the college is defining a new strategic plan. We will use these documents with the 2020 APR report to inform our next strategic plan during the summer of 2020.

The following is a brief look at our 2014 strategic plan and the subsequent developments related to it. In this document, we are paraphrasing the more detailed plan provided in Appendix 2.

### **Contributions to UNL Enrollment and Research Expenditure Goals**

Since 2014, we have engaged faculty in growing efforts to recruit a diverse and talented pool of future teachers. The work has been done in collaboration with the teacher preparation programs in other departments, including Special Education and Communication Disorders and Child Youth and Family Studies. We have formed partnerships with school districts, Career academies, and Community Organizations. These partnerships are still evolving and are helping us stymie factors that caused the national drop in the number of students who want to become teachers.

Key activities include creating a summer camp for high school students interested in teaching careers, collaborating with local agencies to support immigrants with teaching experience transition to teaching in Nebraska schools, and the creation of the Teacher Scholars Academy (TSA). The TSA is a selective program that will grow the next generation of diverse educators who will lead the way for educational change. The program aims to fund the preparation of teachers who will be the backbone of school transformation as well as reflective thinkers who will continue to grow and develop professionally beyond their degree programs to engage their own students in diverse, adaptive learning experiences.

TLTE draws on the expertise of our faculty to respond to identified needs across Nebraska and beyond, including the shortage of highly qualified teachers in STEM fields, the need for teachers who are fully equipped to teach multilingual learners, and the need for teachers who understand the concerns of families in refugee communities, reservation communities, rural communities, and other cultural enclaves.

Examples of such initiatives include faculty working as part of the (Im)migrant, Multi-cultural, and Multi-lingual Education (M<sup>3</sup>) community and research endeavors as well as course offerings online via our newly implemented M.Ed. program.

## Contributions to the CEHS Spires of Excellence

TLTE is highly involved in each of the CEHS Spires of Excellence: International Education, Early Childhood, Innovative Inquiry, and 21st Century Teaching and Learning.

**International Education** We have worked diligently since 2012 to internationalize our programs and research efforts. We have added an international studies minor and have strategically used internal and external grant funding to create on-going relationships with institutions worldwide. For instance, we have strategic partnerships with universities in South Africa, Finland, Estonia, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, South Korea, and China. In addition, we have established a three-year rotation of tours to Europe with a focus on newcomer education and second language acquisition. Cities within the travel sequence include Amsterdam, London, and Rome. We also provide opportunities for international student teaching.

Moreover, we have established alternatives to travel experiences in our graduate programs including our online M.Ed. Program. The alternatives include local experiences that expose students to other cultures through interaction with immigrant communities. We have expanded the Global Online Language Distance Education Network (GOLDEN) professional development courses to include Spanish, and we host a growing number of Fulbright students. Additionally, we have one faculty member, Professor Hamann, who was a Fulbright scholar in Mexico (Fall 2019). We continue to attract international students to our graduate programs.

Our international efforts have grown, and we offer excellent core experiences and opportunities for students at all levels to engage with international experiences. The challenge we face is encouraging students and supporting them financially so more can be engaged.

**Early Childhood Education** Early childhood is an area that was an emphasis early in the CEHS strategic planning period. As the college shifted from the “Spires of Excellence” to the “Grand Challenges”, early childhood education became an area which we actively supported as partners to other departments. TLTE faculty continue to participate in collaboration with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute and the Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies.

Key projects and accomplishments include the Sherwood Foundation *Primarily Math* initiative in Omaha Public Schools and **Math Early On**, a professional development opportunity in math education for early childhood education providers funded by the Buffett Early Childhood Fund. We are collaborating with SECD on a new master’s degree and teacher endorsement program in early childhood special education (Birth-Kindergarten). We are also continuing work on Inclusive Early Childhood Education (Birth - 3rd Grade) with SECD and CYAF.

***Innovative Inquiry*** The department has focused on using and creating leading research methodologies to answer the “wicked problems” (Buchanan, 1992) that education faces. Some of the developments related to innovative inquiry include: creating an introductory course for Ph.D. students; focusing research on mathematics education and math coaches; facilitating a mixed-methods collaborative project with Cambridge University; and various action research projects in science education; problems of practice, and immigration. TLTE has also focused inquiry into the impact of new technologies on learning, for example, using AI to teach Chinese radicals and the integration of robotics and computer science into elementary classrooms.

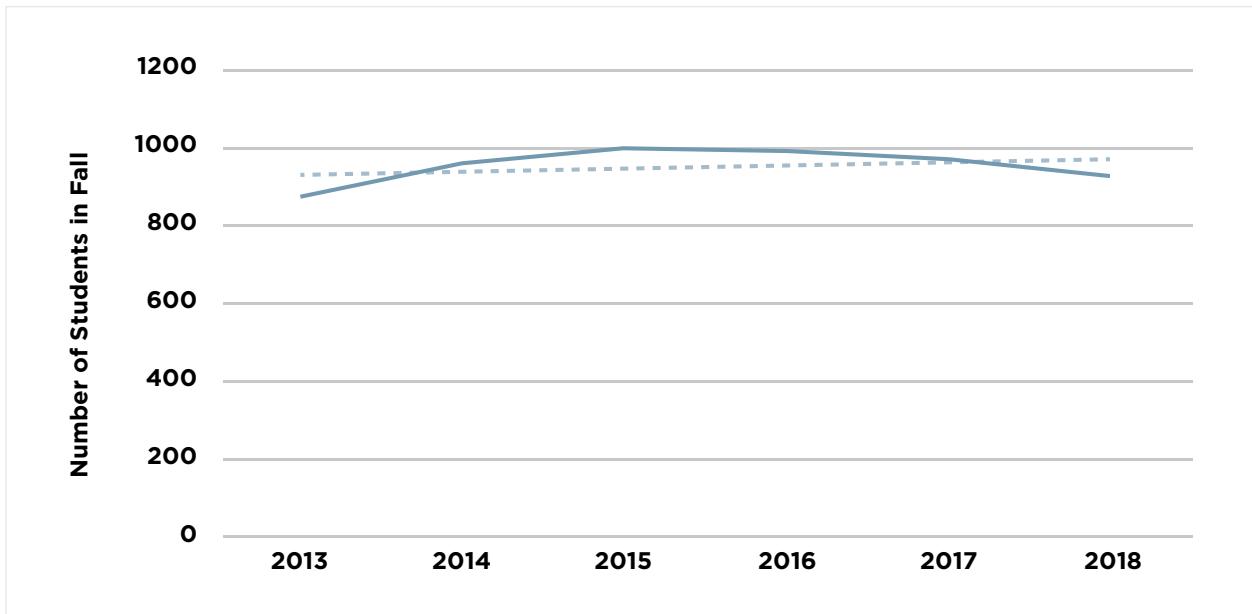
***21st Century Teaching and Learning*** One of our goals is to create a leading-edge teacher education program that encourages experimentation with new pedagogies and strives to provide research-based teacher education, professional development, and outreach to diverse communities across Nebraska. Recently (2016), we won an AACTE award for Innovative Use of Technology in Teacher Education. The following examples showcase our dedication to this area: TechEdge grants and conferences, a science education practicum in Lincoln Community Learning Centers, the incorporation of tablets throughout our elementary education program, and our Maker Space design experience that are integrated into our teacher education programs through TEAC 259 followed up by access to the design space. We have also created an elementary education pre-service teaching STEM block that combines math, math methods, science methods, and a technology class. TLTE has federally funded projects around Rural STEM and Computer Science Education and has revised our graduate programs in Internet-Based Education and Instructional Technology into a new program: “Innovative Learning Technologies.”

***(Im)migrant, Multi-cultural, and Multi-lingual Education (M<sup>3</sup>)*** Preparing teachers for immigrant, multicultural, and multilingual student populations is a primary focus in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education. Toward that end, all undergraduate elementary and secondary majors are required to take a multicultural education course and a course that prepares them to teach with multilingual learners. All elementary majors also complete a 15-hour practicum in a dual language classroom in Omaha Public Schools. TLTE is also the home of the International Consortium for Multilingual Excellence in Education (ICMEE) project, which provides professional development eWorkshops to in-service teachers on multilingual teaching and learning. Language education is a particular specialty of TLTE, as we prepare not only world language and English as a second language teachers, but we are also one of only two Nebraska IHE’s that offer the Dual Language endorsement. The department also works closely with immigrant, multicultural and multilingual community partners such as Lincoln Literacy Council, the Yazidi and other refugee communities, and the Malone Center. Faculty who identify within the M<sup>3</sup> strand in TLTE meet regularly to talk about research, teaching and outreach, and the group hosted an international conference on UNL’s campus in summer 2018 with participants from around the world.



## Undergraduate Programs

Undergraduate education programs are an essential element of the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education’s mission. The enrollment in TLTE undergraduate programs in Fall 2018 was 922. This is an increase of 5.5% from Fall 2013 but a decrease of 3.5% from Fall 2014. Figure 1 and especially the linear trendline show very little change. That should be viewed against the national trends seeing significant declines in the number of students in teacher education, for example AACTE reported a drop of 23% from 2005-6 to 2016.



**Figure 1:** students in undergraduate programs

We have two primary undergraduate programs supported by sociocultural foundations: elementary and secondary education.

## Elementary Education

TLTE's elementary education program offers three majors: K-6 Elementary, Early Childhood and Elementary PreK-6, and the 'dual' Elementary and Special Education K-6 major. Current enrollment in all elementary education majors is 669. Unique aspects of TLTE's elementary education are its multiple and varied practica, including the Schmoker Reading Center, its technology infusion, and its attention to international education. In elementary education, majors take part in five semester-long practica before the student teaching semester.

## Secondary Education

TLTE's secondary education program offers 15 majors within the following six endorsement areas: Business, Marketing and IT, English/Language Arts, Foreign Language, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Current enrollment in all secondary education majors is 437. Unique aspects of TLTE's secondary education include collaboration with content departments, its technology infusion, attention to English learners, and its attention to international education. We are currently working to unify the program to one major, thus increasing collaboration and articulation of program goals.

## Socio-Cultural Foundations

Socio-Cultural perspectives matter to teacher educators and teachers in the field because they call attention to easily overlooked issues that nevertheless influence teaching and learning. Collectively, coursework at the undergraduate level, including TEAC 330 (Multicultural Education) and 331 (School and Society), aims to foster a broad and deep understanding of educational practice that a) informs curricular philosophy, planning and enactment; b) develops a professional identity and integrity that supports the making of wise judgments regarding the many complex issues confronting educators; and c) grows capacities to understand, analyze, and explain educational issues, policies, and practices to improve education.

Foundations coursework serve the broader campus community since both courses satisfy ACE (Achievement Centered Education) requirements. The number of students served by the two foundation classes has gone down by 14%. Most of the enrollment drop has been in students who are not required to take these classes (from 418 in 2013-4 to 234 in 2018-9) and more specifically, fewer non-education students are taking TEAC 330 Multicultural Education.

## Meeting our Grand Challenges

TLTE's undergraduate programs are unique among teacher certification programs nationally for their focus on STEM education, teaching multilingual learners, and social justice education.

**STEM Education** Historically, STEM education in the elementary teacher education program focused on the integration of math methods and math classes designed specifically for elementary teachers' in-depth knowledge and technology integration throughout the program. During the Fall 2019 semester, we introduced the STEM block. In the STEM block,

we integrate math, math methods, and science methods with two days of practicum and a technology class that incorporates elements of engineering and computer science. This new approach is based on our previous research in Math block and Tech EDGE. Additionally, elementary majors are required to purchase and use a tablet computer throughout their time in the program and take two educational technology courses to prepare them to use technology seamlessly during instruction.

UNL TechEDGE is a partnership between Nebraska school districts and teacher education programs at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, whose goal is to define and implement best practices in using new literacies and 21st-century technologies in the elementary classroom. The partnership uses open lines of communication regarding what is happening with technology in schools currently and how to best reach these goals. This project provides existing teachers and teacher preparation programs with current best practices and research to improve student learning.

STEM in secondary education is realized broadly through the technology integration class that emphasizes human-centered design and social justice as pre-service teachers learn to use technologies in their classroom. Also, science education, math education, and business marketing and information technology education (BMIT) tracks are state-of-the-art with both BMIT and Math adding computer science education as a mandatory component.

**M<sup>3</sup>** All students seeking initial teacher certification in TLTE are required to take a course on teaching multilingual learners followed by embedded practices in other coursework. Multilingual learners, those students who enter U.S. K-12 schools speaking a home language other than English and who are not yet fully proficient in English, are an emerging and underserved school-aged population in Nebraska. By requiring this course, which few other teacher training programs in Nebraska require, TLTE aims to prepare all teachers to provide culturally and linguistically responsive instruction for Nebraska's multilingual K-12 learners.

Attention to social justice pervades TLTE's undergraduate education through both required coursework and special projects. For example, in 2019 TLTE faculty gained funding (in collaboration with CYAF), through a UNL Inclusive Excellence Development Grant, to launch a Racial Literacy Roundtable initiative. The initiative involves monthly hosted roundtables, wherein participants can develop emerging racial literacy skills. Though the roundtables are open to the public, they are designed with undergraduate pre-service teachers in mind. Guest speakers and facilitators use various relevant topics regarding race and racism in education to provoke thinking and ideas. The purpose is to build skills around examining and discussing race and racism to facilitate participants' development of critical skills, knowledge, and dispositions to help them continue growing and engaging with these critical topics as K-12 educators in Nebraska's schools.

## Challenges

Despite our departmental successes in undergraduate education, some challenges remain. These include growing our programs, improving and expanding our K-12 partnerships, establishing sufficient recruiting and retaining more students from a diversity of backgrounds, and maintaining an equitable distribution of faculty time in program and sub-program areas.

**Growing our Programs** Our undergraduate programs have shrunk over the past seven years by 3%. This decline is considerably less than the numbers reported nationally, but if we aim to support UNL goals of growth, we need to continue to increase enrollment in our programs. This is especially important in areas in which the state is experiencing teacher shortages, including Elementary Special Education, Business and Information Technology, Math, and Science.

**Improving and Expanding K-12 Partnerships** Practica in K-12 classrooms are an essential component of both elementary and secondary education. As K-12 classroom teachers and administrators' work continues to intensify, we must form partnerships that balance our undergraduate pre-service teachers as apprentice teachers with the increasing pressures felt by K-12 partners by every-changing curricula, standardized assessments, and other accountability measures. Toward this end, we are exploring ways to streamline practica and expand our network of K-12 partners. One such expansion is the moving of the elementary multilingual learner practicum (TEAC 297E) from Lincoln Public Schools to Omaha Public Schools.

**Recruiting and Retaining More Students from a Diversity of Backgrounds** Nearly 32% of public-school students are students of color, and over 22,000 of those students are English learners (Nebraska Department of Education, 2017). We, like most PK-16 education institutions, are grappling with how to respond to the demographic shifts we are experiencing (Gándara, & Mordechay, 2017). Despite these shifts, teacher education programs and the teaching profession continues to be overwhelmingly monolingual and homogenous (95.5% white) (US Department of Education, 2016). In the face of these challenges, TLTE has made strides toward recruiting and retaining pre-service teachers from a variety of ethnic, linguistic, and economic backgrounds. Yet more work remains. Our goal is to graduate cohorts of teachers who represent the demographics of today's K-12 Nebraska learners.

**Sufficient and Equitable Distribution of Faculty** For a variety of reasons, the number of full-time tenure-line faculty in the elementary education program has decreased, resulting in understaffing in key content areas, including literacy, science, and mathematics education. Similarly, in secondary education, we have long attempted to move away from single-faculty content area programs and we have had only limited success. Key faculty hires must be made in order to match full-time faculty positions (tenure-line and professor of practice) to program enrollments.

## Opportunities

Although challenges exist for our undergraduate programs, we have many exciting projects, collaborations, and programs that serve and provide opportunities for a diverse array of students. Notable among these are the Teacher Scholars Academy, Teacher Diversification Pathways, Indigenous ROOTS, Future Teachers of Color, and Educators for Social Justice Reform.

**Teacher Scholars Academy** The mission of the Teacher Scholars Academy is to grow the next generation of diverse educators that will lead the way for educational change. The program



aims to prepare the teachers who will be the backbone of school transformation, reflective thinkers who will continue to grow and develop beyond their degree. We intend that teachers who emerge from the academy will be engaged in ways that prepare students for the future. This program will support the preparation of exceptional teacher/leaders who are competent and confident in facilitating learning for all of Nebraska's students, who can promote learning in a variety of settings using inquiry, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration, who will become a generation of teacher leaders who will motivate schools to innovate, and who will, in turn, create a generation of students ready to fully participate in and lead society.

The Teacher Scholars Academy is a cohort program that provides a substantial scholarship for future teachers in our department and other departments in our college. This year we welcomed 40 teacher-scholars to UNL (30 are in TLTE) from across the country and in all areas and levels of teaching. The program aims to counter the teacher shortage in Nebraska by providing free college education (all four years, including housing) to students who want to teach in Nebraska. The first-year teacher-scholars take a class together and participate in service-learning opportunities. They have also attended the Racial Literacy Roundtables funded by the University of Nebraska Inclusive Excellence Development Grant. In addition, teacher-scholars hosted guest speakers in November and presented their service-learning projects to a public audience at the end of the semester.

**Teacher Diversification Pathways** The Teacher Diversification Pathways is a broad-based initiative to explore and to improve the pathways to teaching for culturally and linguistically diverse students (CLD) in the state of Nebraska. For instance, we are building partnerships with local and regional community colleges to strengthen the pipeline for CLD students to transfer to UNL. The pathways involve improving articulation of course transfers, grant development, cross-institutional re-envisioning of courses, support at critical points, and co-teaching. In addition, we are strengthening the pathway for community college instructors to enter our graduate programs.

We are also strengthening our direct relationships with districts that have significant CLD student populations, especially those in education career pathways and academies in economically, linguistically, and culturally diverse cities (e.g., Columbus, Grand Island, Omaha). These relationships include working with districts on Grow-Your-Own-Teacher (GYOT) programs as well as Education Pathways programs. We began the GYOT pilot program with Omaha paraeducators in Spring 2019. We have also designed a course (TEAC 161) to engage more directly with open-option/undecided students.

**Partnership with Rural School Districts** We are collaborating with Nebraska rural school districts to support schools throughout the states. We collaborate with school districts to provide recruitment opportunities at UNL. School districts are invited as "employer of the month," and we (with our certification officer) are working to connect our students with rural student teaching opportunities that may lead to job offers in which school districts are offering incentives including housing and a stipend. For example, we have been working with Schuyler, Nebraska to offer incentives for student teachers including housing and a stipend.

**Indigenous ROOTS** As another example of TLTE's commitment to teacher diversification, the longstanding Indigenous Roots Teacher Education Program's (ROOTS). Its primary goal

is to graduate and certify Native American students to teach in Nebraska and throughout the Midwest in schools and educational settings that primarily serve K-12 Native American students. Using a “Grow Your Own” model, the program has established strong partnerships with Nebraska’s Native American communities (Macy, Santee, Walthill, Winnebago), school districts, tribal community colleges, and the Nebraska Department of Education. Fifty-two students have graduated since the program started in 1999; ROOTS celebrated its 20th year in 2019.

***Future Teachers of Color*** With regard to retention, the Future Teachers of Color (FTOC) group is an informal discussion-based affinity group tailored for culturally and linguistically diverse future educators of all kinds who are currently enrolled in our programs. The goal of FTOC is to provide space for engagement, reflection, learning, support, and community building with other CEHS multicultural and multilingual students. As a co-led group, recent grads, current CEHS students, and faculty members share their stories, insights, and advice with one another. Informal peer mentorship is a key component of this group.

***Educators for Social Justice Forum and Conference*** The Educators for Social Justice Forum (previously called the Educator Advocacy Forum for Teachers of Diverse Learners) focuses on the unique needs and challenges faced by teachers of color and teachers who teach students with multicultural, multilingual, immigrant, migrant, and refugee identities. Educators are rarely given time or space to have honest conversations, share issues, or collaborate on problems of practice. General meetings, teacher forums, or school-based discussions rarely honor the cultural and linguistic assets of teachers, nor do they give priority to community building or advocacy development among teachers. We are working to co-create a supportive, collaborative learning community that serves as a mechanism to combat the cultural, linguistic, and gendered isolation that teachers of color and teachers who work with students and communities of color often experience. This program was initiated in 2018–2019, and will have an annual spring conference.



## Graduate Education Programs

TLTE's graduate programs support professional educators at all stages of their careers and offer programs that prepare educators, researchers, and leaders to foster research-grounded ideas that aim at improving the human condition across all educational settings. Graduate study in TLTE cultivates connections across and engagement with graduate faculty whose individual and collective expertise is integrated in the following areas: curriculum and teacher education; innovative learning technologies, language, literacy, and culture; educational policy and reform; and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education.

### Doctoral Degree Programs and Specializations

We have two doctoral programs and two specializations. Typically, the Ph. D. program enrolls 12-15 students per year, and the Ed.D. program, offered biennially, enrolls an average of 10-20 students. Doctoral specializations include the following (Appendix Grad Recruitment Flyer):

**Teaching, Curriculum, and Learning:** This specialization focuses on advancing research about teacher preparation across disciplines and teacher professional development in connection to curriculum theory, philosophy and ethics of education, mentoring and teacher induction, teacher identities, professional learning communities, teaching and learning, and education across all settings.

**Innovative Learning Technologies:** This specialization prepares educators to use technology to support teaching and learning. This may occur in an array of settings, including classroom instruction, instructional design and development, and digital learning. Upon completion, participants will be cognizant of theory and research related to best practices, take part in creating effective use of technology in instruction, and assist others in using technology effectively for teaching and learning.

**Ph.D. Program** The Ph.D. program prepares researchers and educational leaders to serve and work in a variety of professional positions, including universities, private industry, non-profit organizations, research agencies, policy agencies, and school systems. We view

Ph.D. students as essential partners in developing new knowledge and preparing the next generation of educators and scholars. From 2009–2019 we enrolled approximately 258 Ph.D. students. At UNL, doctoral students are expected to complete their degrees in ten years, with possible extensions.

We promote excellence by providing Ph.D. students with constructive experiences that enhance their academic and professional success by:

- ✔ Committing to being part of and fostering a diverse community of scholars known for its collaborative efforts, especially across disciplinary boundaries;
- ✔ Demonstrating a commitment to the study of problems of practice and contributing to policy development and analysis;
- ✔ Providing mentored opportunities for teaching in higher education;
- ✔ Preparing students to conduct and disseminate educational research to a variety of audiences;
- ✔ Working with faculty who offer opportunities to participate both in domestic research collaborations, and international research initiatives, overseas conferences, and comparative travel-study;
- ✔ Assisting individuals to tailor programs of study to their scholarly and professional interests;
- ✔ Encouraging and promoting academic writing for different audiences and stakeholders.

**Ed.D. Program** The Ed.D. cohort program, in conjunction with the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED), is designed for working educators (with a completed Master’s degree). The Ed.D. can be completed in three years but typically takes four years. The program supports ten to twenty highly motivated educators who come from a variety of backgrounds, including preK-12 schooling, teacher education, professional development positions, higher education, teacher-leadership and advocacy roles, and community education programs. Cohort participants make this journey together with dedicated graduate faculty who support individuals in their study and improvement of their own educational practices. Within a collegial and supportive environment, students analyze problems of educational practice to understand the relationship of theory and practice and to use knowledge for making meaningful differences in real-world settings.

The Ed.D. program offers educators the opportunity to address problems of practice in order to create and sustain effective teaching/learning contexts in the concrete realities of P-16 classrooms, work, and community settings. The program conceptualizes scholarship of practice as “both substance and process,” critical to educators who can analyze, evaluate, model, and teach in a cross-section of educational settings (Shulman, et al., 2006). Ed.D. students also have the opportunity to partake in unique and enriching study-abroad and U.S.-based international, learning experiences. From 2009–2019 we enrolled approximately 127 Ed.D. students.

## Master's Degrees and Specializations

We have two master's degree programs, the M.A. and the M.Ed., and three specializations. From Fall 2009–2019, we have had approximately 1032 MA students enrolled.

***M.A. Program*** The M.A. program includes optional specializations in elementary teaching (typically for certified elementary education teachers), innovative learning technologies, and world language education (as part of the GOLDEN network). Graduate students seeking initial teacher certification have the option of enrolling in the M.A. leading to initial certification in elementary education, secondary English education, world languages, ESL education, secondary mathematics education, and secondary science education. From 2010–2019, we have enrolled 639 graduate students as initial teacher certification students.

***M.Ed. Program*** The online M.Ed., which went into effect during summer 2018, serves in-service classroom teachers and other working professionals seeking to advance their career opportunities and notions of self-efficacy in the field of education. Along with other graduate students, M.Ed. students have the opportunity to partake in unique and enriching study-abroad and domestic learning experiences. Study abroad is a mixture of actual travel (e.g. South Africa in 2019) and local experiences that expose students to other cultures through interaction with immigrant communities.

***Graduate Certificates*** We have six graduate certificates. These range from 12-18 credit hours and can be a stepping stone to M.A. coursework. Certificates support the professional development of experienced K-12 teachers and educators who are prepared to extend their education and better serve their schools and communities. Since Spring 2014, we have had 136 students enroll in graduate certificates: early literacy, K-3 mathematics specialist, response to intervention: Reading, social justice and diversity education (approved in August 2019), TESOL, and world language teaching: German or Spanish. Several graduate certificates include courses in departments other than TLTE, offering intradisciplinary perspectives and opportunities for teaching collaboration.

***Added Endorsements for Practicing Teachers*** We support teachers who seek added endorsements as part of graduate degree programs in ESL, bilingual education, information technology, instructional technology leadership, assessment leadership, biology, chemistry, earth and space science, physics, and reading specialist. Several added endorsements include courses in departments other than TLTE, offering intradisciplinary perspectives and opportunities for teaching collaboration.

## Challenges

Our department has ambitious goals and continuously strives for excellence regarding our graduate education programs. As such, we have a variety of challenges we need to overcome in order to meet and exceed expectations. For instance, we have insufficient numbers of faculty members to manage programs, lead advisory committees, and teach advanced graduate courses while simultaneously maintaining undergraduate programs. We also have core advanced graduate courses that are not being

taught regularly (i.e., ethics and education, philosophy of education, history of education, ethics and education, reading comprehension, the psychology and history of reading, mathematics education, and science education). The M.A. curriculum needs improved graduate preparation in research methodologies, as well.

In addition, we need to support graduate faculty efforts to maintain and increase research-related efforts as well as improve faculty members' mentoring repertoires in support of graduate faculty and students. We need increased funding not based on teaching assistantships for Ph.D. students.

In recent years we have seen stagnant enrollment numbers in M.A., M.Ed., and graduate certificates. TLTE needs stipend funding for the increased recruitment of M.A. students and needs to hire a staff graduate advisor to process all administrative prerequisites and paperwork for graduate students pursuing initial certification as part of our advanced degree programs.

## **Strengths and Opportunities**

In light of inherent challenges, we also recognize several strengths and opportunities for our graduate education programs. We enjoy collaborative graduate faculty that connect within the department and externally with other departments, colleges, and universities. We also experience the consistent implementation of globally-minded programs and endeavors that reach across the world and engage graduate students via travel study and graduate faculty research opportunities. TLTE is seeing consistent efforts and success in publishing and presenting with graduate students as well as increasing (with some success) recruiting and supporting diverse populations of graduate students in Ph.D. and master's degree programs.

## **Purposeful and Current Efforts to Increase the Quality of Graduate Education in TLTE**

In the department of Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education, we recognize the challenges we face and leverage our strengths and opportunities in order to increase the quality of graduate education. We encourage and enact transparent processes that promote faculty governance and expertise in all graduate programs. We engage meaningfully in graduate education as part of the Big 10 and as part of a land-grant institution. We schedule regular graduate committee and graduate faculty meetings where we encourage and improve reviews of curricular actions. We also provide opportunities to engage with research via invited talks by graduate students and faculty, faculty program initiatives, and published work.

We transparently communicate across the department to regularly report admissions data to faculty and improve communication with graduate students, including the TLTE Graduate Student Association. We also enact day-long graduate student and faculty orientations and complete annual reviews of graduate student instructors as a formative tool for mentoring in teaching. We have designed and maintain a graduate student and faculty handbook as well as a dynamic and informative graduate web site that facilitates the navigation of programs and highlights the ongoing work of graduate faculty and students. Online, we promote faculty and graduate research and teaching via graduate study website profiles, Digital Commons, and social media. We encourage and enact review processes of admissions files to simultaneously increase equity & quality of graduate student cohorts.



## Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity

The scholarship of TLTE faculty members is innovative and responsive to the present educational moment and, at the same time, embodies faculty commitments to addressing issues and creating new possibilities for learners, teachers, and policymakers. TLTE faculty members' diverse research interests are in line with CEHS mission of enhancing lives and connecting communities. Individually and collectively, we work to understand and contribute to the research base regarding local, regional, national, and transnational issues in education.

TLTE is a teaching and research-oriented department. Most of the faculty in our department have a 50% teaching apportionment and a 30% research apportionment. The total collective FTE devoted to research across these faculty members is six. As a teaching and research-oriented department, we expect that teaching and research endeavors will often be co-informing and synergistic. As such, we strive to ensure that our doctoral students have authentic teaching and research experiences that prepare them to make meaningful contributions to their subfields and disciplines. The faculty, together with our undergraduate and graduate students, make significant contributions to the teaching and research-oriented environment in the department.

### Primary Areas of Research

Much of the department's research can be clustered into the following areas: Curriculum and Teacher Education; Innovative Learning Technologies; Language, Literacy, and Culture; Educational Policy and Reform; and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). Importantly, these research areas also respond to the Grand Challenges: STEM and Immigrant, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education (M<sup>3</sup>). Moreover, many of our research lines intersect with more than one of the areas.

***Curriculum and Teacher Education*** With a faculty dedicated to the development of educators, there is robust and diverse faculty interest and effort in research focused on teacher preparation and professional development, including curriculum studies, philosophy

and ethics of education, mentoring and teacher induction, teacher identities, and professional learning communities. Our work in this area includes funded and unfunded research. For example, there are several Spencer Foundation Small Grants that have been awarded to work in teacher education and indigenous education.

### **STEM**

**Innovative Learning Technologies** The ubiquity of networked, digital technologies in society in general and learning environments, in particular, are a natural source of inquiry and innovation for TLTE faculty. A number of our faculty focus some part of their research efforts on the evaluation, application, and design of technology-supported learning experiences-- including digital literacies (i.e., research into AI and design processes).

**Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Education** Faculty in TLTE conduct robust research in teaching the sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

### ***M<sup>s</sup> (Im)migrant, Multilingual and Multicultural Education***

**Language, Literacy, and Culture** Faculty in TLTE focus their research on the teaching and learning of language, literacies, and intercultural communication. This includes foreign language, ESL/ELL/EFL, reading, literacy studies, English education, and social studies. As with much of the research in the department, collaboration is central.

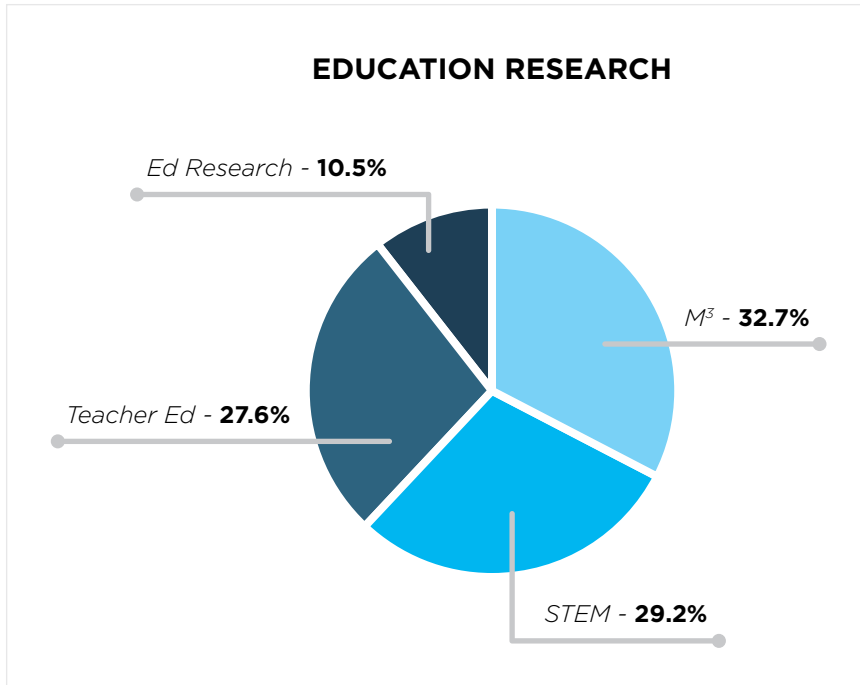
**Educational Policy and Reform** Faculty in TLTE conduct research in educational policy, school reform, critical pedagogy, and social theory. This includes foci in multicultural education, service-learning, comparative and international education, and social justice education. Faculty members have conducted research and written extensively about transnational students and their teachers, schools, and communities.

## **Scholarship**

Scholarship in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education takes many forms: publications of scholarly articles, new uses of technology aimed at inventive engagement with teaching and learning, and presentations in local, national, and international contexts. Scholarship in TLTE is reviewed by peers within our professional communities, reaches both lay and professional audiences, and advances the empirical and conceptual knowledge bases for teaching and learning.

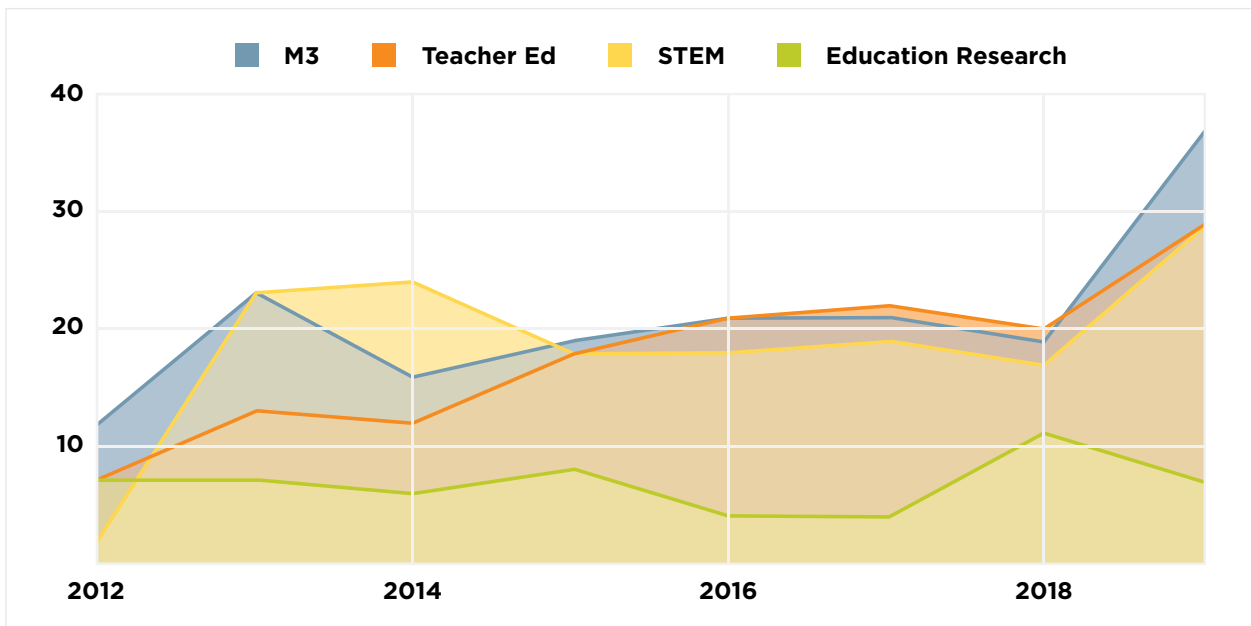
**Publications** From 2012–2019, TLTE faculty have produced 514 scholarly publications, ranging from peer-reviewed articles, practitioner publications, book reviews, and conference proceedings, to full-length books. These publications span a diverse array of areas within education and collectively contribute to advancing the academic and practitioner knowledge base on local, national, and international levels. As shown in Figure 2, publications across the past seven years are distributed relatively evenly between the three primary research themes, with another 10% of published scholarship coming from other educational research lines that do not fit within any of the three primary categories.





**Figure 2:** Publication distribution 2012-2019 by thematic category (514 total works).

Tracking these publications across time (see Figure 3) illustrates the sustained increases in faculty total and thematic output since 2012--culminating in a more than three-fold increase in output in 2019 compared to 2012. The potential for sustaining these research productivity increases in the future relates to continued collaboration within and beyond the three major research categories, continued college and department capacity building, faculty commitment to knowledge work at the intersection of their teaching and research expertise, and systematic efforts to provide faculty program administration support and meeting relief.



**Figure 3:** Published work distributed across time by thematic subcategory.

**Presentations** Presentations, panels, and poster sessions within local, regional, national, and international contexts are another important mechanism for raising the profile of the scholarship within our department, the college, and the university as a whole. We are committed to disseminating scholarship and research in local, national, and international contexts. From 2012 through 2019, TLTE faculty have shared over 300 presentations at conferences across Nebraska, North America, and the world.

## Challenges

In a department where all tenure-line faculty hold a 70% or greater apportionment in non-research areas (teaching and service), it can be challenging to cultivate and protect the extended periods needed to produce high-impact knowledge work. It is also important to note that TLTE has more students than any other department in the college. Given the teaching and service demands of the department, the research productivity of the TLTE faculty exceeds their research apportionment targets as determined by the college.

Furthermore, as university budgets tighten, departments like TLTE get increasingly squeezed for resources. Consequently, not only are faculty required to take on more and more service while maintaining the same expectations for research production and teaching, but the continued reduction of available resources for travel to conferences makes it more difficult to disseminate research and scholarship and maintain and build meaningful research collaborations with colleagues in different institutions.

## Strengths and Opportunities

Research in TLTE is diverse in foci, eclectic in approach, and committed to increasing equity and justice in education. One of the most notable strengths is grounded in the belief that intra- and inter-institutional collaboration is necessary and vital.

TLTE values research collaborations aimed at diversifying the field of teacher preparation. Several notable collaborations are unique in their scope and their approach and highlight the department's commitment to justice in teacher education. These include Indigenous ROOTS and Indian Education for All as well as the Paraeducator Career Ladder project in Omaha. In addition, TLTE (and M<sup>3</sup>, the multilingual, multicultural, and immigrant Initiative) has established a partnership with Yazda, a local non-profit established to support the Yazidi ethno-religious minority and other vulnerable groups in Lincoln and around the world.

TLTE faculty also value collaborations with one another, with many faculty participating in research projects that are responsive to the particular questions that surface from teaching and learning in the department and within the state. Notable research collaborations in this area include ICMEE, math education, English education, literacy, science education, and social studies education.



## Outreach and Community Engagement

TLTE considers outreach and engagement an essential part of our Department, College, and Land-Grant mission. Outreach and engagement activities provide opportunities to impact communities and build partnerships that enhance our teaching and research. Engagement supports the development of professional teachers, provides better services for children, youth, and families, and improves systems for delivering and managing professional development.

The following are examples of outreach and engagement initiatives led by TLTE faculty that systematically enhance knowledge and contribute to the learning and well-being of our constituents. These exemplars demonstrate strong connections between our expertise and mission.

**Indigenous Roots** The University of Nebraska Lincoln and its consortium partners Little Priest Tribal College and the Nebraska Department of Education provide The Indigenous Roots Teacher Education Program (ROOTS), which prepares American Indian students interested in working with children in area schools, with opportunities to become certified elementary education and bilingual teachers employed in Nebraska's schools that serve American Indian students. In its 20 years of operation, it has graduated 52 Native teachers.

**Project Para** For over 25 years, the primary mission of Project Para has been to provide training opportunities for paraprofessionals across Nebraska and nationally through web-based training partnerships with local schools. The State of Nebraska has recognized the web-based training as one method for meeting "highly qualified" and other training requirements. The project had a significant impact on schools. The training site had 26,031 (9,165 in Nebraska) registered participants from 2,087 (283 in Nebraska) school districts. These represented all fifty states, the District of Columbia and nineteen countries. This site and the service it provides are particularly crucial because paraprofessionals have minimal opportunities for training. The training approach represents an innovative partnership between the University, the Nebraska Department of Education, and local schools and serves

as a valuable model for outreach and collaboration in providing and supervising training. It is a creative outlet for developing new educational technology.

***International Consortium for Multilingual Excellence in Education (ICMEE)*** ICMEE is a 5-year federally funded project (2016–2021) that uses eWorkshops to train educators (e.g., school psychologists, administrators, special education teachers, teachers of deaf students, social studies, and English language arts teachers) in working with multilingual students and to research the impact and outcomes of eWorkshop participation. Last year over 900 teachers across approximately ten states completed eWorkshops and reported high levels of satisfaction with the learning opportunity. Research on the eWorkshops has shown statistically significant growth in participants' beliefs towards multilingualism in schools.

The project is a collaboration with Nebraska and Colorado school districts, as well as the WIDA consortium that serves forty states and territories. Further, the grant has helped foster relationships with researchers across western Europe (currently Germany, Finland, and England) who are collaboratively exploring issues related to the preparation of teachers of multilingual learners. The eWorkshops have also been used by hundreds of pre- and in-service teachers in Finland and Germany.

***Nebraska STEM Leadership Program*** This program provides support for master teacher specialization in science, technology, engineering, and math education. Teachers are equipped with the content and leadership skills to support and mentor colleagues in order to build capacity for and enhance STEM education in rural Nebraska elementary schools. By focusing on rural communities and rural teachers, we are building a community of committed STEM teacher-leaders to support one another and impact STEM learning in rural Nebraska.

***The Kit and Dick Schmoker Reading Center*** The Schmoker Reading Center was created in 2003 by faculty from the TLTE, SECD, and CYAF to provide an opportunity for all teachers to focus on the needs of children and young people who are striving readers. Instruction is individualized and based on assessments given by the tutors. The goal is that each future teacher can support growth in ability and motivation in reading and writing.

***Other Outreach Initiatives*** TLTE engages in many other outreach and community engagement initiatives, including the Omaha Public Schools Career Ladder Project, a fully funded partnership with Omaha Public Schools and the Buffet Foundation, where paraeducators receive opportunities to earn their teaching credential. Another collaboration with Omaha Public Schools is grounded in a professional development grant from the NEA. TLTE faculty also lead and engage in service-learning efforts, serve on state advisory committees, provide consulting, design travel study opportunities, work with the Nebraska Department of Education and have even created a Design Studio with outreach and community engagement components. Overall, TLTE has expansive, meaningful, and impactful partnerships with schools and agencies in Nebraska, as well as internationally across the globe. For more information on a wide range of outreach and community engagement projects undertaken by members of the department, please see Appendix 12.

## **Challenges and Opportunities Regarding Outreach and Community Engagement**

The challenges that TLTE faces concerning outreach and community engagement are not unique to TLTE. They are challenges inherent in such work: time, resources, relationships, silos, and politics. Further, TLTE grapples with the sincere challenge of translating research into practice and ensuring that the work we do as scholars is having an impact on both the academic intellectual communities to which we belong as well as on the practitioners with whom we collaborate.

The challenges we face are not unique to our department, but they are also the opportunities we grapple with to improve our outreach and community engagement efforts. We seek to ensure that the efforts we put into outreach and community engagement are accounted for in our workloads and in-line with our other scholarly activities. We are creative in seeking out resources and using grants, awards, and other resources to enhance and grow our outreach and community engagement. We value, invest in, and grow our already strong working relationships with the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) and various schools and organizations. We also see opportunities in growing those relationships around the state. Overall, the challenges we face are our opportunities to continue to grow and expand our reach.



## Academic Plan

The Department of Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education's mission statement, Preparing Teachers for Tomorrow's Communities, is more than a platitude. TLTE faculty members carefully assess and address UNL priorities, state, regional, national, and international issues surrounding opportunity gaps, changing demographics, and an increasing need for a well-rounded education in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. We remain responsive to these issues as we research, teach, and engage with communities. We aim to

- ✔ Create a strategic plan. Our last strategic plan was formulated in 2014 with updates in 2016. We will create a strategic plan in summer 2020 using new university and college strategic plans as a guide as well as the results of the APR report.
- ✔ Improve the recruitment of pre-service teachers, especially students of color. We have a few initiatives in this area. The key to continued success is supporting and rewarding faculty engaged with this work and working more closely with college and university-wide recruiting.
- ✔ Increase student retention by providing interaction with faculty and support groups for critical points, including freshman year, Praxis exam, scholars of color, and mental health support.
- ✔ Improve the reputation of UNL by creating a media plan that highlights the accomplishments of students, faculty, and staff. The plan includes dedicated social media channels, communications with alumni, a mass media strategy, and an emphasis on awards.
- ✔ Allocate college funds and seek out additional supports for graduate students through Foundation funds, grants, and partnerships with units inside and outside UNL. For example, we have emerging partnerships

with the College of Engineering, Lincoln Literacy Council, and BVH Architecture.

- ✔ Hire strategically - Our current hiring plan (2019-20) calls for 3 hires in Elementary education: Mathematics, Science, and Literacy. Unfortunately, we are anticipating three retirements this year. We will continue to strive for all programs to have more than one faculty member.
- ✔ Increase grant funding by using existing resources to support pilot studies and grant proposal development.
- ✔ Maintain and expand a productive relationship with university and community partners.
- ✔ Focus on student, staff, and faculty well-being and a positive work place. The demands on all stakeholders are high, and we aim to create an environment that supports well-being and provides support during more demanding times.
- ✔ Gain significant resources to expand our emphasis on innovative learning technologies. These resources are needed to create an infrastructure for piloting Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Virtual Reality (VR) applications. This includes specialized hardware and computing time.



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