

## Methodology

These findings are based on data from a nationwide, randomly selected sample of 716 teacher educators at four-year colleges in the United States. The survey was conducted by the Farkas Duffett Research Group (FDR Group) for the Thomas B. Fordham Institute. It was fielded between November 9, 2009, and March 8, 2010. The margin of error for the overall sample is plus or minus four percentage points; it is higher when comparing percentages across subgroups.

The survey was preceded by three focus groups of teacher educators, which were held in Ohio, North Carolina, and California, and moderated by the FDR Group (more below). Direct quotes from participants in the focus groups serve to contextualize the survey findings and provide illustrative examples of professors' experiences and views.

### THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The survey instrument was designed for three modes: paper, Internet, and telephone. The research process proceeded as follows:

- A first-class letter was mailed to a national random sample of 5,977 teacher educators on November 9, 2009. The letter described the research and provided a link to the Web-based version of the survey.
- E-mail messages were sent to approximately 3,600 teacher educators (the number for which e-mail addresses were available out of the original 5,977). Three e-mail messages were sent between November 19 and December 3, 2009, inviting teacher educators to participate and providing a link to the Web-based version of the survey.
- A first-class postcard was mailed to the original 5,977 teacher educators on December 14, 2009, reminding them about the survey and providing a link to the Web-based version. A total of 482 surveys were submitted online.
- Between January 11 and January 28, 2010, follow-up telephone calls were made to non-respondents, who were encouraged to complete the survey online; those who preferred to respond via telephone were encouraged to call a toll-free number to complete the survey at a time convenient for them. A total of forty interviews were completed via telephone.
- A paper version of the questionnaire (along with a letter describing the research and a postage-paid envelope) was mailed to non-respondents on February 8, 2010, via first-class mail. Surveys received through March 8, 2010, are included in the results. A total of 216 surveys were submitted in hard copy.

The systematic, non-stratified random sample of teacher educators was drawn from a comprehensive database of names and school addresses of current teacher educators in four-year colleges throughout the United States. A small oversampling of professors teaching in the nation's top-ranked education programs was included to ensure that the sample would include enough of this sub-group for comparison purposes. Of the 125 who ultimately participated,<sup>23</sup> 103 came from the original sample and twenty-two from the oversample. No meaningful differences were found. The response rate, calculated by dividing the total number of completed interviews (738) by the 5,424<sup>24</sup> teacher educators who were ultimately invited to participate, is 14 percent.

The sample was provided by Market Data Retrieval, a subsidiary of Dun & Bradstreet; data collection and tabulation services were provided by Robinson & Muenster Associates.

## TREND DATA

The survey instrument included more than seventy items and was extensively pre-tested with teacher educators prior to fielding. This survey is a follow-up to an earlier one conducted in 1997 by Public Agenda for the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation entitled *Different Drummers: How Teachers of Teachers View Public Education*.<sup>25</sup> Many of the questions in the current survey have been repeated, permitting an analysis of trends over the past dozen years. The demographic characteristics of the 2010 and 1997 samples were quite similar except for gender; the 2010 sample consisted of a comparatively smaller proportion of male teacher educators (38 percent unweighted compared with 50 percent in 1997). To ensure that the two samples would be comparable, the data in the current study were weighted to align the male/female breakdown to that of the original sample (50 percent male and 50 percent female). The sample weights applied were as follows: male, 1.311; female, 0.808.

## FOCUS GROUPS

Prior to the design of the survey, three focus groups were conducted with teacher educators, one in Dayton, Ohio, another in Raleigh, North Carolina, and the third in Los Angeles, California. The purpose of the focus groups was to gain a firsthand understanding of the views of teacher educators, to develop

23. Top-ranked education programs defined by *U.S. News & World Report* "Best Education Programs" (ranked in 2009).

24. Total mailed (5,977) minus undeliverable sample (553) equals the number who were ultimately invited to participate (5,424).

25. The two principal researchers of the FDR Group, Steve Farkas and Ann Duffett, are co-authors of *Different Drummers* (along with Jean Johnson of Public Agenda).

new hypotheses based on their input, and to design the survey items using language and terms with which education professors are comfortable. Quotes in this report are drawn directly from focus group discussions. Participants were recruited to the FDR Group’s specifications to ensure a proper mix of participants; all groups were moderated by the FDR Group.

#### SEGMENTATION ANALYSIS—CREATING REFORMERS AND DEFENDERS

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on a host of attitudinal variables and it revealed groupings of highly correlated items. These were reduced to two segments, Reformers and Defenders. These groups and the remainder of the sample were divided into mutually exclusive categories based on particular survey responses (below).

Respondents were categorized as Reformers (n=85) if they responded in the following manner to these three survey items:

- The teacher education system needs “fundamental overhaul” or “many changes” (Question 1);
- The statement that “Teacher education programs need to do a better job of weeding out students who are unsuitable for the profession” came very close to their view (Question 17); and
- The statement that “Teacher education programs often fail to prepare teachers for the challenges of teaching in the real world” came very close to their view (Question 19).

Respondents were categorized as Defenders (n=98) if they responded in the following manner to these three survey items:

- The teacher education system “works very well—it only needs minor tinkering” (Question 1);
- The statement that “Teacher education programs are often unfairly blamed for the problems facing public education” came very close to their view (Question 15); and
- The view that “Teacher education programs often fail to prepare teachers for the challenges of teaching in the real world” is not too close or not close at all to their view (Question 19).

Respondents who were neither Reformers nor Defenders (n=555) were placed in the third category.