



# Making straight A's

What's in a name?  
More than you  
might think.  
Formerly a school,  
the newly anointed  
College of Education  
is earning a reputation  
as a leader in partnering  
with the community.

BY JIM PATTERSON

**T**he last time a UTA school became a college, Richard Nixon was in the White House, *M\*A\*S\*H* was a new show on TV, and the University had recently conferred its first doctoral degrees.

It was 1973, and the schools of Business, Engineering, Liberal Arts and Science had just elevated to college status—a milestone for an institution that was a junior college until 1959.

On Aug. 6, 2003, UTA added a fifth college when the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board boosted the status of the School of Education.

“The significance of the change from school to college is more than just the name,” said Dana Dunn, UTA’s interim provost and vice president for academic affairs. “It signifies an expanded scope and range and is very important to the community at-large. It shows a greatly developed entity that’s very well-connected within the University.”

With departments of Curriculum and Instruction, Kinesiology, and Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, the newly crowned college has grown by more than 700 percent in the past six years. It is recognized as a leader in urban education and lies within a 60-mile radius of more than 180 school districts with a combined student population approaching one million.

The college is pursuing accreditation from the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. NCATE officials made their initial visit in October, and a decision is expected this spring. UTA would be the only university in the U.T. System with the prestigious designation.

"The accreditation says we are the best," said education Dean Jeanne Gerlach. "Students seek out nationally accredited schools, as do faculty."

One such student is Colleen Koval, a kinesiology major who plans to earn a master's degree in teacher education.

"Having NCATE accreditation will assure that only highly qualified teachers will emerge from the program and be recognized throughout the country as meeting the highest standards in our profession," she said.

## The history of education

Any talk of being mentioned among the best may have seemed far-fetched a few years ago. When Dr. Gerlach came to UTA in 1997, her charge was to build what was then the Center for Professional Teacher Education into a school. She accomplished the mission quickly: On Jan. 1, 1999, the School of Education debuted with Gerlach as its first dean.

"UTA had a solid faculty with a lot of teaching experience. It was just a matter of getting everything together," she said. "Once we became a school, we added more programs, more accreditations and took in the Department of Kinesiology."

More growth followed with the approval of additional degree, endorsement and certification programs. But in the early days, the unit's progress mirrored the pace of a pre-schooler learning to read.

The program was established in 1963 as the teacher education section of the Department of Psychology within what was then the School of

Liberal Arts. Fifteen years would pass before it became a free-standing center.

Charles Funkhouser, the Center for Professional Teacher Education's first director, remembers the early years.

"When I came here, the program did not meet state accreditation requirements, so teacher education did not enjoy equivalent status with the other preparation programs of the institution, such as nursing, architecture and social work," said Dr. Funkhouser, now chair of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies.

It wasn't until 1989 that the first education degrees were awarded when the master's of education was approved. Undergraduate degrees were authorized 10 years later. The college now offers six undergraduate degrees with 13 options, three master's degrees and a Ph.D. in collaboration with the School of Urban and Public Affairs.

## Connecting with the community

One factor in the College of Education's rise is its focus on collaboration. Any effective teacher education program must ally itself with the public schools, and the college is doing that through two initiatives within the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

UTA partners with the Arlington Independent School District in the National Network for Educational Renewal, which addresses how best to prepare teachers and students. UTA is one of only 23 universities nationwide to be selected for the program, which was initiated by educator/author John Goodlad and the Agenda for Education in a Democracy.

"NNER invites only those institutions that exemplify the mission of their network," said Carol Sue Marshall, associate dean of teacher education. "That mission includes reforming education as a simultaneous effort by all institutions involved."

The Holmes Partnership, funded by the Sid W. Richardson Foundation, establishes a model for a comprehensive professional development program in science, math and technology that enables practicing and future teachers to continue strengthening their skills over the course of their career.





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The initiative involves the College of Education, the UTA College of Science and the Hurst-Euless-Bedford Independent School District. It contains undergraduate and graduate components leading to master's degrees in science, mathematics and education.

The college is also heavily involved in the K-16 movement, one of the most visible concepts in American schooling today. K-16 focuses on all aspects of education from kindergarten through four years of college.

"We have worked closely with our two-year institutions and with K-12 schools to be sure that all the citizens of Texas have access to higher education," said Gerlach, who also serves as UTA's associate vice president for K-16.

Part of this effort is the recommendation that good teaching matters if students at all levels are to succeed in school and eventually have access to higher education. The University has been training good teachers—and plenty of them—for decades. Almost 20 percent of the Arlington ISD's degreed work force, which includes mostly teachers, hold UTA degrees.

"So many districts struggle to find qualified employees," said Charlene Robertson, former AISD public information officer. "Arlington is fortunate to have UTA as a reliable source of candidates for new positions."

## More than just teaching

Those positions also include administrative posts. David Tapia completed UTA's principalship certification program in 1999 and is now the principal at Arlington's Ferguson Junior High School.

"The program showed me just how much in administration that you have to be aware of," he said. "The way that we were able to intern as assistant principals for four days a week and then come together for class one day a week was a great learning process."

Principalship and superintendency are two of the high-profile certification programs offered within the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies.

Classroom teachers interested in principal certification must complete 24 semester hours of coursework and internships. The program, which

began in 1993, can be earned solely at the Arlington campus. There's also a joint venture involving U.T. Dallas and the UTA/Fort Worth campus where certification can be earned at any of the sites by connecting through UTA.

The superintendency program, the largest such program in the state, began in 2000 to help meet an expected shortage of qualified leaders to occupy the top spot in Texas school districts. Participants complete the one-year, field-based curriculum in groups, or cohorts (see story on p. 19).

"There is definitely a need for qualified administrators in every district and a need for this program," said superintendency Director Ron Caloss. "And as time goes by, I think you'll see more and more women and minorities in these positions."

## Exercising the right to learn

Becoming a school superintendent is far from Arresha Turner's mind right now. She's more concerned with where she'll be on Friday nights this fall.

A senior working toward a bachelor's degree in athletic training, Turner is benefiting from \$1.2 million in upgrades to facilities in the Kinesiology Department. Included in the 10,000 square feet is a spacious area for trainers-to-be to hone their talents.

"The growth of the Kinesiology Department has been great for everyone," Turner said. "The





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new facilities have helped me a lot and have motivated students to work harder.”

She'll also benefit from the Athletic Training Education Program being accredited recently by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs.

“Our program is now one of only four in the state and the only one in the U.T. System to have CAAHEP accreditation,” said Director Lou Fincher. “Earning CAAHEP accreditation allows us to take our program to the next level. I strongly believe that we offer the best athletic training program in Texas, but one of my goals is that our program become recognized nationally. I think we're on our way.”

Kinesiology faculty and staff moved into their new Activities Building digs in summer 2003. The labs and classrooms feature the latest technology.

“The exercise science research laboratories include a total of 10 new labs,” said department Chair Barry McKeown. “These labs are state of the art and a dream come true for our faculty.”

They're also essential to the new master's degree in physiology of exercise (see story on p. 24). The program relies heavily on research, and the facilities have the equipment to make the precise measurements necessary to study how the body responds to exercise.

To build on the gains in kinesiology and other areas, the College of Education has embarked on a comprehensive development plan, Partners for the Future, with priority areas for funding. Student scholarships are at the top of the list.

Ben Bowles, a senior from Era, is funding part of his education with Kinesiology Department scholarships. Someday, he wants to return the favor.

“Hopefully, I will get a job in a high school around the area and be able to give back to UTA by sending some of my students there,” he said.

Not a bad way to keep the College of Education's momentum going. ■

Online: [www.uta.edu/coed](http://www.uta.edu/coed)

## Program addresses need for superintendents

Newspaper headlines report the troubling shortage of certified teachers in Texas and nationwide. Rarely mentioned is the shortage of qualified administrators, particularly school superintendents. Now in its fourth year, the College of Education Superintendency Program is helping meet that need.

Director Ron Caloss notes that 62 percent of the superintendents in Texas' 1,054 school districts are eligible to retire. However, teachers and principals cannot simply take the top spot. The office requires state certification, and that, Dr. Caloss says, requires training.

UTA's one-year program packs a lot into 15 credit hours for those up to the challenge. The students, working in a group called a cohort, must already hold mid-management or principal's certification, must be currently practicing administrators and must submit a letter of recommendation from someone in their district.

In September 2000, the first cohort began with 18 students from 15 school districts. Last fall, the cohort had 28 people. To attract those first participants, Caloss sent letters to superintendents in more than 75 North Texas districts.

Since then, no advertising has been necessary. News of the program has spread. Already, two graduates are serving as superintendents, while several others are assistants in districts throughout the area.

This year's cohort members come from the Maypearl, Dallas, DeSoto, Crowley, Birdville, Midlothian, Fort Worth, Cedar Hill, Grand Prairie and Palmer school districts.

Willa Gibson plans to be one of the new administrators, perhaps an assistant superintendent. After 20 years in education, the athletic director in the Birdville Independent School District joined the UTA program to see district administration from the superintendent's view.

“I wanted to know how things are handled on a day-to-day basis,” she said.

She's getting that from the program—and its leader.

“I can't say enough great things about Dr. Caloss,” she said. “He really makes it all worthwhile. Sometimes courses like these can just be a study in endurance, but he keeps it exciting and interesting every week.”

Cohort members, who meet Saturdays, begin their year with a course, The Superintendency, taught by Caloss, who was a superintendent for 23 years. Each student also completes a 150-hour internship in his or her district. “They attend board meetings, serve on committees, observe and critique everything they see,” Caloss said.

In the second semester, the students continue their internships in addition to completing courses in advanced school law, and curriculum and personnel. The year ends with a course on school finance.

“This is a field-based program,” Caloss said. “They have to get out and get involved.”

Lynn Dehart, the principal at North Dallas High School, began his education career 17 years ago as a member of the first alternative teacher certification program in Dallas. After seven years as a principal, the next step is into the superintendent's office.

“Education runs on certification, and the UTA Superintendency Program is the best one around,” Dehart said.

“To obtain the superintendency certification, you must pass the state test, and this program gets you ready for that.”

Caloss, who retired in 1999 after spending the last eight years of his career leading the Hurst-Euless-Bedford ISD, emphasizes again and again the importance of such training. “There's going to be a dire need for superintendents, just like there's a dire need for teachers and principals. The UTA program is the largest of its kind in Texas, and the need is great.”

He's also convinced that school districts will be pleased with those who return from the program, newly certified and prepared to serve.

“These students have the traits necessary for success as superintendents. They all have passion, adaptability and courage. You need passion, because you've got to love the work. It can be painful, difficult and lonely at times. You need adaptability because schools and situations are constantly changing. From year to year, accountability standards change, demographics change, and you have to switch gears, always be adaptable. Finally, you need the courage to make decisions—tough decisions about taxes, staff, curriculum, even political matters.”

The Texas State Board for Educator Certification offers two certificates for administrators—principal and superintendent. With the shortage of superintendents, Caloss says current principals and mid-management professionals who complete UTA's program should have top jobs beckoning from all over Texas.

— Sherry Wodraska Neaves