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Specialized Recruitment: An Examination of the Motivations and Expectations of Pre-Service Urban Educators

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# Specialized Recruitment: An Examination of the Motivations and Expectations of Pre-Service Urban Educators

**UCLA/IDEA**

**Publication Series**

## Retention Report Series: A Longitudinal Study of Career Urban Educators

A Research Report

prepared by

UCLA's Institute for

Democracy,

Education, & Access

**Kimberly Barraza Lyons**  
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**UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, & Access**

**University of California, Los Angeles**

### **Retention Report Series: A Longitudinal Study of Career Urban Educators**

The papers in this series reflect the on-going work of researchers studying the career pathways of educators who received specialized urban teacher preparation through UCLA's Center X Teacher Education Program (TEP). This longitudinal study extends from 2000-2006, adding a new TEP cohort each year, to track more than a thousand urban educators in their first through tenth year of the profession. Together, the papers that report this longitudinal research seek to inform teacher retention policy by addressing the unique challenge of creating and supporting career pathways in education that serve high poverty schools and students. The papers in this series are available to download from the IDEA web site located at [www.ucla-idea.org](http://www.ucla-idea.org).

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# **Specialized Recruitment: An Examination of the Motivations and Expectations of Pre-Service Urban Educators**

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This paper was prepared for the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, April, 2004, San Diego, CA

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Attrition, not supply, is increasingly being recognized as the reason behind the continuing teacher shortage. During the 1999-2000 school year, more than 232,000 teachers entered the workforce, but more than 287,000 left. This ongoing exodus makes teacher attrition the “largest single factor determining demand for additional teachers in the U.S.” (McCreight, 2000, p.4) and a contributing factor to the social, academic, and economic instability found in schools across the nation. While some teachers simply retire after years of service or take on other roles within the field of education, the majority of individuals entering the teaching profession never stay long enough to reach retirement age. Approximately 46% of teachers leave the profession within their first five years and it is the rapid departure of beginning teachers that most significantly contributes to the continuing scarcity of qualified classroom teachers (Ingersoll, 2003b). Whether talking about teacher turnover – changing workplaces – or teacher attrition – leaving the profession all together – the instability of the teacher workforce is detrimental to our schools and the students within them.

The schools most seriously affected by the high rate of teacher turnover represent the highest priority for policy action. These high-priority schools, often referred to as “urban,” “high-poverty,” or “hard-to-staff,” are predominately schools located in cities and their immediate surroundings, schools that are under-resourced and under-funded, that are situated in low-income communities of color and that serve a majority of academically low-performing children whose parents have comparatively low-levels of formal schooling. While teacher turnover and attrition contribute to organizational

instability in all schools and academic under-achievement for all children, turnover in high-poverty schools far exceeds that in more affluent schools, exacerbating the already serious social and academic challenges facing such schools (Ingersoll 2001, 2002, 2003a, 2003b). According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003), "the turnover rate for teachers in high poverty urban schools is almost a third higher than the rate for all teachers in all schools" (p. 10), making the placement and retention of qualified teachers in low-performing, high-need schools one of the most pressing policy issues currently facing education.

For decades, researchers have studied teachers' beliefs and perspectives about what it means to be a teacher and their reasons for entering and exiting their chosen field. Numerous studies suggest that teachers' individual characteristics and the social and professional contexts in which they teach affect their views of teaching and their decisions to remain in the profession. However, while the economic and organizational structures of teaching surely affect retention rates, few studies investigate the role teacher preparation, specifically specialized urban-focused preparation, plays in encouraging teachers to stay in high-priority schools. As Weiner (2000) contends,

*Urban teacher education suffers from both a scarcity of firm data and a lack of sustained, serious intellectual scrutiny. Reliable statistics on urban schools and urban teaching, on problems as basic as retention rates among new urban teachers, let alone identification of the reasons for their leaving, are elusive.*

This paper represents a first step in an on-going investigation to better understand how urban teacher education might contribute to increased teacher retention.

The first hurdle to understanding teacher preparation's role in retention is our limited knowledge of the types of individuals attracted to specialized programs and their reasons for entering either a particular program or the profession as a whole. The National Center for Education Statistics' Schools and Staffing Surveys (SASS) provide baseline information on the staffing, occupational, and organizational aspects of schools as well as teacher demographics and teachers' perceptions of their workplace and profession. Much of what is known about teacher retention comes from the data these surveys provide. Yet, information is limited. SASS cannot tell us how the characteristics of the general teaching population compare with graduates from a specialized program, either prior to their decision to teach or after. Neither can it closely examine graduates of a particular pre-service program as they progress through the teacher pipeline.

To address this research gap, a longitudinal study of graduates of an urban, social-justice focused teacher education program was begun in 2000. Using survey responses elicited from two cohorts of the program's pre-service educators, this paper provides a cross-sectional, descriptive analysis of the characteristics and beliefs of individuals choosing to enter a specialized pre-service program. Additionally, previous research on the relationship between teacher characteristics and retention is reviewed. By detailing the backgrounds, skills, and dispositions of pre-service teachers enrolled in an urban-focused, social-justice based program, the paper lays the foundation for a comparative analysis of teachers nationwide with those exposed to an urban-focused, social-justice based program. Information reported here allows us to better focus recruitment efforts

and better tailor certification programs to attract and prepare teachers most committed to the urban schools that need them most.

Specialized Teacher Education and Pre-service Teacher Demographics:

To examine whether specialized pre-service teacher education affects the rate of teacher retention in education, we must first define “specialized” and understand how teachers attracted to such programs differ, if at all, from pre-service teachers at large. UCLA’s Teacher Education Program (TEP), the specialized program under study, is an intensive 2-year program leading to state certification and a master’s degree. The program is housed in UCLA’s Center X and is part of a larger educational center dedicated to providing education and professional support and development to teachers in the high-priority schools in and around Los Angeles. Its mission is to provide “high-status pre-service education and radically improve urban schooling for California’s racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse children” (Center X, 2004). Its purpose is in part:

*to integrate coursework and field experiences over a two-year period and to prepare program graduates to be transformative professionals [who] envision and endeavor to make public schools democratic public spheres, where all children, regardless of race, class, gender, and age can learn what it means to be able to participate fully in a society that affirms and sustains the principles of equality, freedom, and social justice.*

(TEP Handbook, 2003)

Since its inception in 1995, the program has sought to answer the call for a “new multicultural teacher education” that would, as Cochran-Smith (2003) asserts, challenge



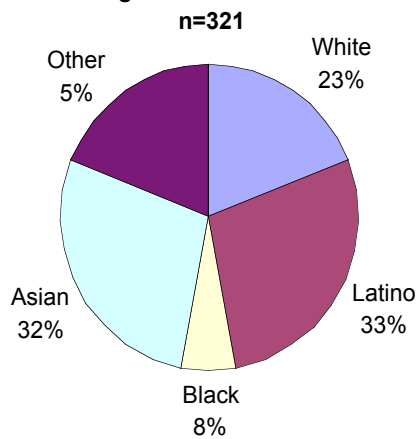
“the ideological underpinnings of traditional programs, place knowledge about culture and racism front and center in the teacher education curriculum, including teaching for social justice as a major outcome, and value the cultural knowledge of local communities” (p. 20). According to Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998), most teachers are prepared in programs based on the “positivist tradition” in which the university provides beginning teachers with theoretical knowledge about teaching that the beginning teacher practices in the schools. Yet, exposure to “multicultural issues” in an otherwise traditional teacher education program has been shown to be an ineffective way to educate pre-service teachers about cultural differences or how to accommodate and build upon such differences in the classroom (Weiner, 1993). In Center X, teacher preparation is situated in the urban communities in which program participants will soon be teaching. Combining practice with theory, Center X continually exposes its prospective teachers to a paradigm of teaching and learning that problematizes deficit perspectives surrounding race, gender, class, and language. Data gathered on individuals attracted to such a program reveal that they are similar to and different from pre-service teachers nationwide.

### Does Diversity Matter?

By the year 2040, it is expected that nearly half of all students will be students of color, but teachers of color currently make up less than 10 percent of the workforce (NEA, 1997). Research suggests that students’ achievement is improved when they are taught by

teachers with similar racial and ethnic backgrounds as themselves (Dee, 2001). Further, teachers who share their students' racial and ethnic backgrounds also tend to share their students' knowledge and interpretation of their community and the world, resulting in the formation of deeper relationships and more effective teaching practices (Foster, 1993; Monzó and Rueda, 2000; Milner, 2003). Perhaps more importantly, teachers of color may be more willing to engage in socially-just practices at their school sites, helping to bring about educational reform (Quiocho & Rios, 2000). Yet, many college graduates of color hold negative views of teaching and are disinclined to enter the profession (see Howard, 2003). Believing that race matters, UCLA's Center X has made a concerted effort to recruit teachers of color and the results are evident.

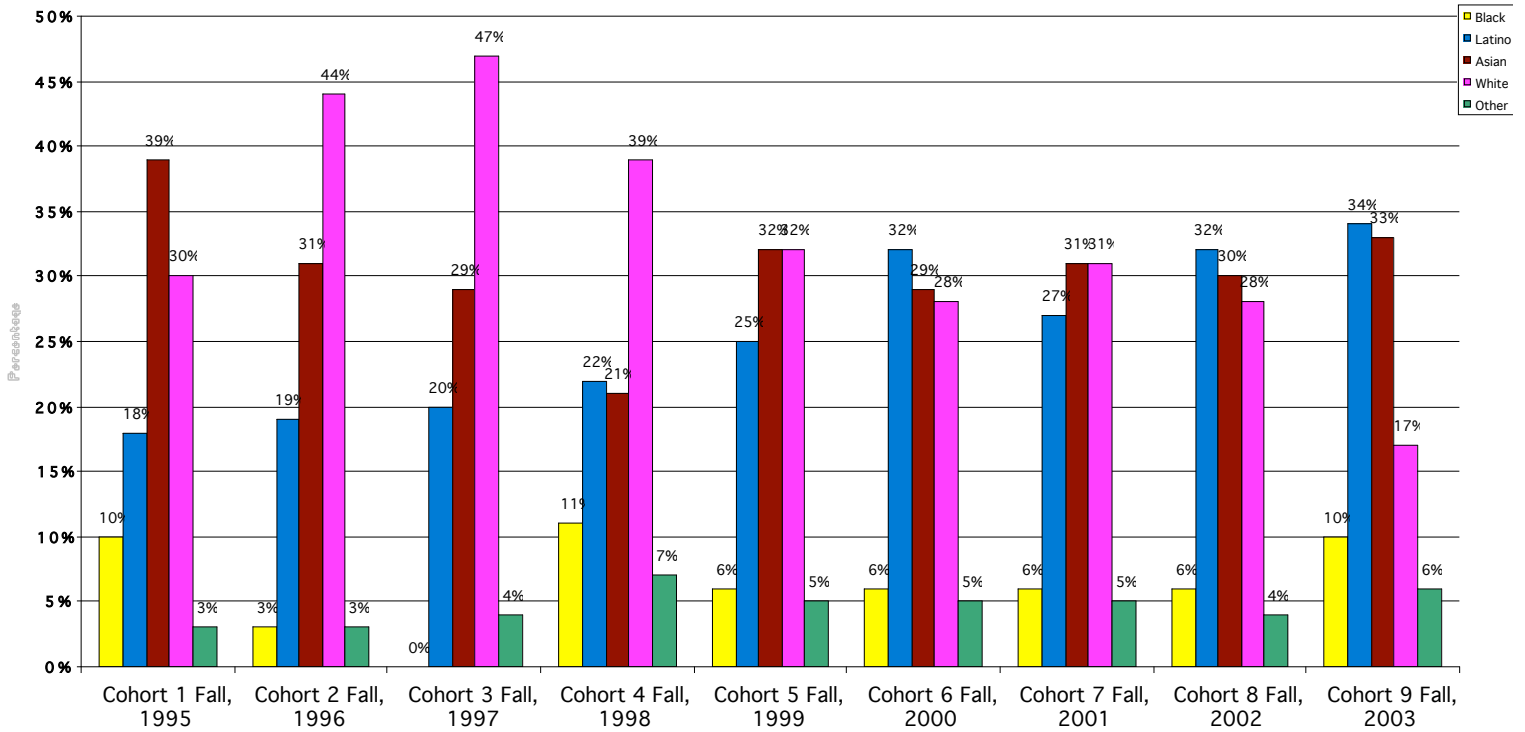
**Racial/Ethnic Background of Current TEP Candidates**



Of the 321 students enrolled in the program between 2002 and 2004 for whom racial or ethnic background information is available, at least 33 percent of the students identify themselves as Latino and 32 percent as Asian. White students comprise 23 percent of the

population and Black students 8 percent. Although the percentage of Black entrants has remained relatively constant throughout the past 9 years the percentage remains smaller than desirable. The Latino population has consistently increased.

Race/Ethnicity Across Nine TEP Coh



This diversity is especially noteworthy given what research says about the types of individuals attracted to the profession and the types that stay. Henke, Chen, and Geis’s (2000) examination of the National Center for Education Statistics’ Baccalaureate and Beyond study revealed that, in general, white college graduates are more inclined to be teachers than graduates of any other race or ethnicity; Latino college graduates are more inclined than African-Americans to become teachers and Asian graduates are less

inclined to enter the field than any other racial or ethnic group. According to the same study, expectations for length of stay in teaching differ by race as well. Asian/Pacific Islanders are less likely than Latino and white graduates to expect to be teaching after three years and blacks were half as likely as whites to report long term teaching expectations. But, the same study reports that, at the time of its writing, race/ethnicity was not associated with whether new teachers had left without returning (Henke et al., 2000, p. ix). Previous studies support this claim. In 1994, Bobbitt, Leich, Whitener, and Lynch found a less than one percent difference between the attrition rates of African-American and white male teachers, a finding supported by Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, and Weber (1997) who were also unable to find significant differences in the race/ethnicity of teacher leavers.

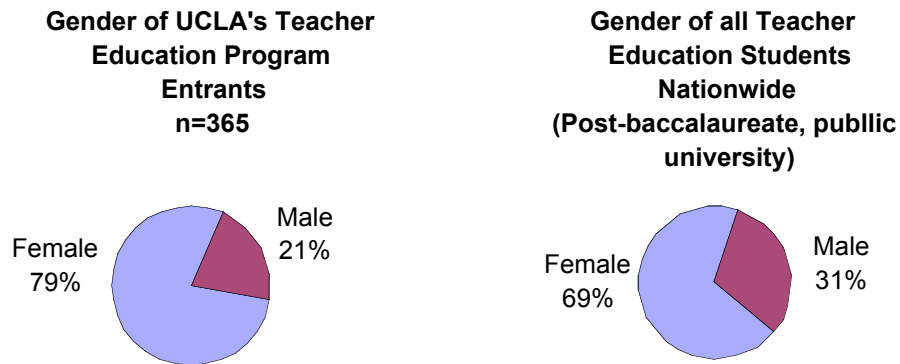
Regardless of the potential for variation in long-term commitment levels, recruiting teachers of color can positively affect student achievement levels and social structures in high-priority schools. The on-going trend toward increased diversity in UCLA's teacher education program is positive and one that Center X expects to continue through focused recruitment efforts. These efforts are essential to continually attract persons of color into the teaching profession and, in particular, urban schools. As Lanier and Little (1986) asserted nearly two decades ago:

*It is increasingly clear that the enriching perspectives brought to teacher education by minority students from various ethnic subcultures will be lost unless more successful recruitment programs are supported.*

(p. 538)

The Effects of Age and Gender

Over 90 percent of TEP entrants are in their 20s and nearly 80 percent are women. These characteristics differ only slightly from pre-service teachers across the nation, as 69 percent of students in post-baccalaureate, public university programs are female with an average age of 29 years (Feistritzer, 1999).



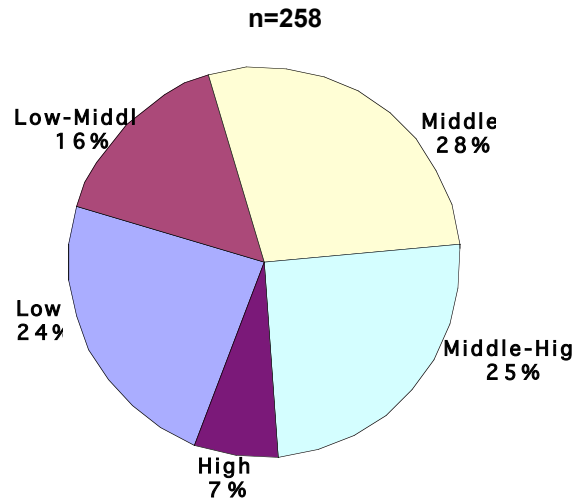
Women have traditionally made up the vast majority of the teaching force and currently represent nearly two-thirds of the teaching profession; the typical teacher is a white woman in her early 40s (NEA, 1997).

With regard to gender and retention, Chapman and Hutcheson's (1982) discriminant analyses of 690 elementary and secondary teachers in Indiana found no significant differences in age or gender that could account for or predict teacher turnover or attrition. Other research has found that the turnover rate for women in their 20s and 30s is the highest of any group (Theobald, 1990; Bobbitt et al., 1994; Boe et al., 1997). But, according to the results of the NCES's 1989 Teacher Follow-up Survey, there does

not appear to be a significant gender difference in the rate of *permanent* teacher leavers. These findings are further supported by studies of teachers in Michigan and New York (Boe et al., 1997; Chapman & Green, 1986; Theobald, 1990, Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996). It appears that many younger women return to teaching after taking time off to bear and/or raise children and this appears to be the case for Center X students as well. All five of the 357 program candidates who anticipated they would leave education temporarily within the next five years were women in their mid 20s.

### Does Class Matter?

Diversity within the program extends beyond gender and ethnicity. The socio-economic backgrounds of incoming candidates vary as well. Historically, the teaching profession has attracted individuals from lower and middle socio-economic class and has been viewed as a way for such individuals to increase their socio-economic status (see Lortie, 1975). The socio-economic status of UCLA's teacher education program would seem to bear this out.



Nearly a quarter of students report that they attended high school in a neighborhood that would be considered low-income, more than three times as many than report attending school in a high-income area. An additional 16 percent report that they were raised in a low-middle income area. It should be noted that this information is self-reported and, therefore, dependent upon candidates' perceptions of class. However, candidates' perceptions of class are directly linked to their reasons for entering the teaching profession. For example, 83 percent of low income candidates report entering teaching to help students in low income communities, as opposed to 68 percent, 63 percent, and 53 percent of students from low-middle, middle, and middle-high income communities, respectively. As will be discussed later, many program participants enter teaching in the hopes of promoting social justice and "giving back to their community" or a community similar to the one from which they came.

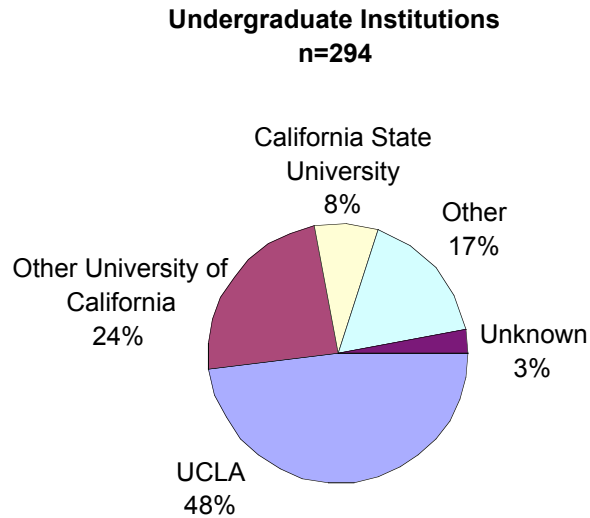
The socio-economic backgrounds of these pre-service teachers may affect their future retention in the field. Dworkin (1980) found that socioeconomic status (SES) affects a teacher's decision to leave the profession, in that individuals from upper SES groups tend to leave at a higher rate than those of lower socioeconomic groups. This is contradicted by Chapman (1983) and Boland and Selby (1980) who report that teachers from lower SES families tend to have higher rates of attrition. An examination of Center X survey responses reveals findings similar to those of Chapman and Boland and Selby. Approximately 80 percent of low-income students reported that they envision their teaching careers extending beyond the classroom, more than any other income group. Additionally, while no candidate anticipated leaving education entirely, 27 percent of low-income students expected that five years after leaving the program their primary role in education would be other than that of a full-time classroom teacher. Again, this percentage was higher than for any other income group.

#### The Educational Pipeline for Specialized Programs

A slight majority of students, 55 percent, report that they are entering the teacher education program directly after having received their undergraduate degree. The remaining 45 percent indicate they took at least one year off before entering the program. While current TEP candidates hail from over 60 undergraduate institutions across the nation, nearly half of them completed their undergraduate work at UCLA. Twenty-four percent of candidates attended another school in the University of California system,



most graduating from UC Berkeley. Most students were non-education majors, as few California schools offer undergraduate majors in education.



The undergraduate institutions from which Center X draws its candidates combined with their reasons for entering the program and the profession, seem to indicate that they are predominantly high-status men and women who are drawn to teaching more out of idealism than as a means to increase their socio-economic status (see Weiner, 1993). However, the fact that the majority of candidates report coming from low to low-middle socioeconomic communities contradicts this. Future analysis of the demographics of teacher stayers and leavers and the reasons behind their decisions to stay or leave may be able to shed more light on this contradiction.

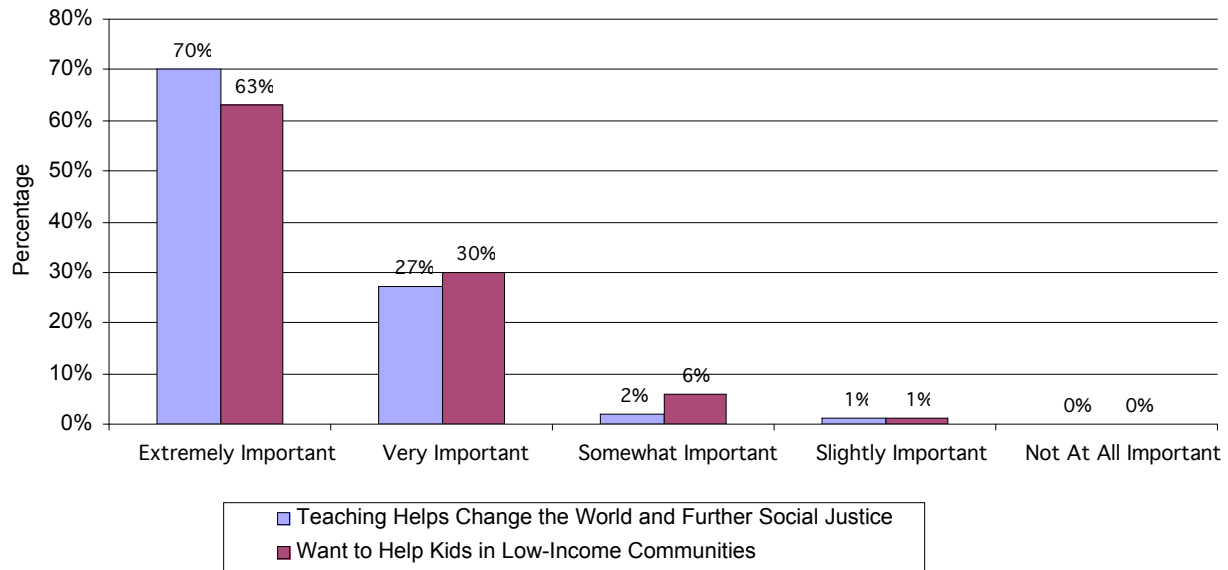
There is much debate as to whether teachers with strong academic backgrounds and those from elite undergraduate institutions are of a higher quality or remain longer in the profession. Over thirty years ago, Pavalko (1970, in Schlecty and Vance, 1983).

found that of the female teachers he studied, those with the highest IQ were most likely to leave and concluded that “although teachers are recruited disproportionately from girls of higher intelligence, it is those of lower measured intelligence who continue working.” His finding was echoed by his peers (see Levin, 1970 and Sharp and Hirschfield, 1975). Based on their longitudinal study of North Carolina teachers, Schlechty and Vance (1983) found that the teaching profession was increasingly unable to recruit and retain “able females” and that the teachers most likely to leave teaching were those who had received the highest scores on the National Teacher Exam and those most likely to stay were the ones who had scored lowest (see also Lanier and Little, 1986). More recent studies indicate that the majority of early teacher leavers include individuals with high IQs, GPAs and standardized test scores as well as those with non-education majors (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Murnane, 1996, 1991; Sclan, 1993). Moreover, teachers who have earned advanced degrees within the prior two years leave at the highest rates (Boe, et al., 1997). In contrast, Adams and Dial (1994) found in their study of more than 2,000 first year elementary teachers that teachers with graduate degrees were retained *longer* than those with bachelor’s and that “education was a significant determinant in teacher survival even after controlling for sex, age, and ethnicity” (p. 361). Given this discrepancy in the literature, future longitudinal retention analysis of Center X’s graduates will pay particular attention to the subjects’ academic background.

Why do they want to teach?: Reasons for entering the profession

While Wilson, Floden, and Ferrini-Mundy (2001) contend that a major gap in teacher preparation research is our lack of knowledge about how best to prepare teachers for urban schools, we may also be hindered by our limited understanding of who enters the teaching profession and why. We can't know how best to prepare urban educators if we don't really know who it is we are preparing. Examining who enters the profession and why will enable policymakers and teacher educators to better focus recruitment strategies and teacher preparation programs that will attract the types of individuals most committed to teaching and urban schools. Before considering retention rates, career paths, and the influences renewing, or exhausting, urban teachers' commitment to social justice and urban school reform we must examine why they commit in the first place. The first and most overwhelming reason behind candidates' reasons for entering the program is a belief that teaching can help change the world.

Primary Reasons for Entering Teaching  
n=360



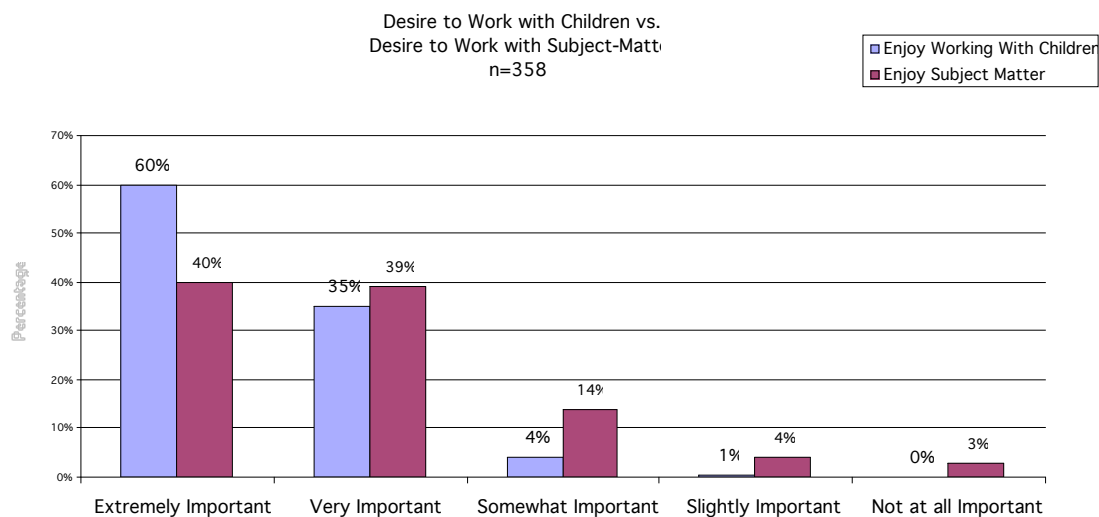
Clearly motivated by activist ideals, Center X entrants express high levels of initial commitment to furthering social justice through education. All but 3 percent of incoming students stated that their belief that “teaching helps change the world and further social justice” was either extremely or very important to their decision to pursue a teaching credential. Further, it is evident from the data that Center X students see the pursuit of social justice through education rooted in working with low-income, high-need students. Open-ended survey responses allowed candidates to cite additional reasons for entering the teaching profession. Latino students were most likely to offer an additional reason, many providing comments similar to “I want to make a difference,” “I want to give back to [the] community,” and “I want to provide what low-income kids miss at school.” One

Latino student stated that she saw a “need to help minorities voice their rights, especially in those communities where their voices are rarely written and often omitted.”

In her case study of pre-service teachers Su (1997) found that minority teachers expressed a much stronger desire to challenge conventional curricula and promote social change than did white teachers and often entered the profession intending to remedy inequities. Further, based on their review of the literature surrounding minority teachers and schooling, Quirocho and Rios (2000) posit that, for teachers of color, teaching can often become “a site where social justice and the opportunity to make a difference in their own ethnic communities, as well as the lives of minority students, [can] be realized” (p. 518). This assertion is clearly echoed in the responses of Center X candidates.

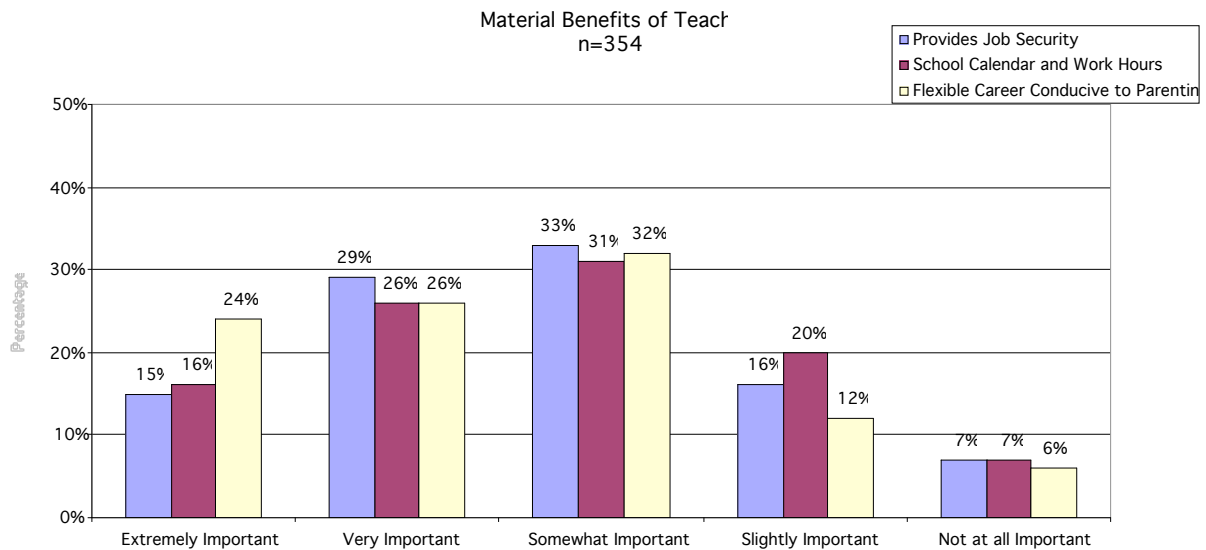
While the high percentage of pre-service teachers expressing a belief that teaching can change the world may be unique to entrants of a specialized program, other reasons entrants gave for entering the teaching profession may not be. Lortie’s seminal 1975 book “Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study,” reports that teachers enter the profession for reasons that fall into five main categories, or themes. Nearly three decades later, similar themes emerge from data collected on Center X participants. The first of Lortie’s identified themes, the interpersonal theme, refers to prospective teachers’ stated desire to work with children. Lortie found that women and men were equally as likely to enter teaching because they like working with children. Data of Center X entrants show slightly different results. Women were more likely than men to report being interested in becoming a teacher out of a desire to work with children. Approximately 60 percent of

incoming females said working with children was an extremely important factor in their decision to pursue a credential versus 40 percent of men. However, this finding may not be significant given the relatively small percentage of men in the program. While Lortie reports that twice as many respondents chose the interpersonal theme as chose “interest in a subject-matter field” (p.28), the preference ratio for interest in subject-matter versus interest in working with children was much smaller with the Center X group. While 60 percent of all program entrants reported that a desire to work with children was extremely important, 40 percent of respondents indicated that their enjoyment of their subject matter was an extremely important reason to pursue teaching.



Although significant, the margin was not as wide as Lortie reports. Further, 47 percent of entrants pursuing a single subject credential reported that subject matter enjoyment was extremely important compared to 34 percent of multiple subject students. Lortie reported a similar difference.

Patterns within the Center X data also fit with two other themes identified by Lortie. Incoming candidates identified both “material benefits” and “time compatibility” as reasons to enter teaching. The Teacher Education Program Novice Survey included the following items that would fit into these two categories: 1) “provides job security,” 2) “school calendar and work hours,” and 3) “flexible career conducive to parenting.” However, while Lortie identified teachers’ works hours and schedules as “a potent recruitment resource,” these items were not overwhelmingly identified as attractors to the profession for incoming Center X students. The majority of students cited job security, work hours, and flexibility as only somewhat important to their decision to enter the profession.



The lack of importance that Center X candidates place on material benefits and time compatibility could indicate that the individuals entering the program have a greater

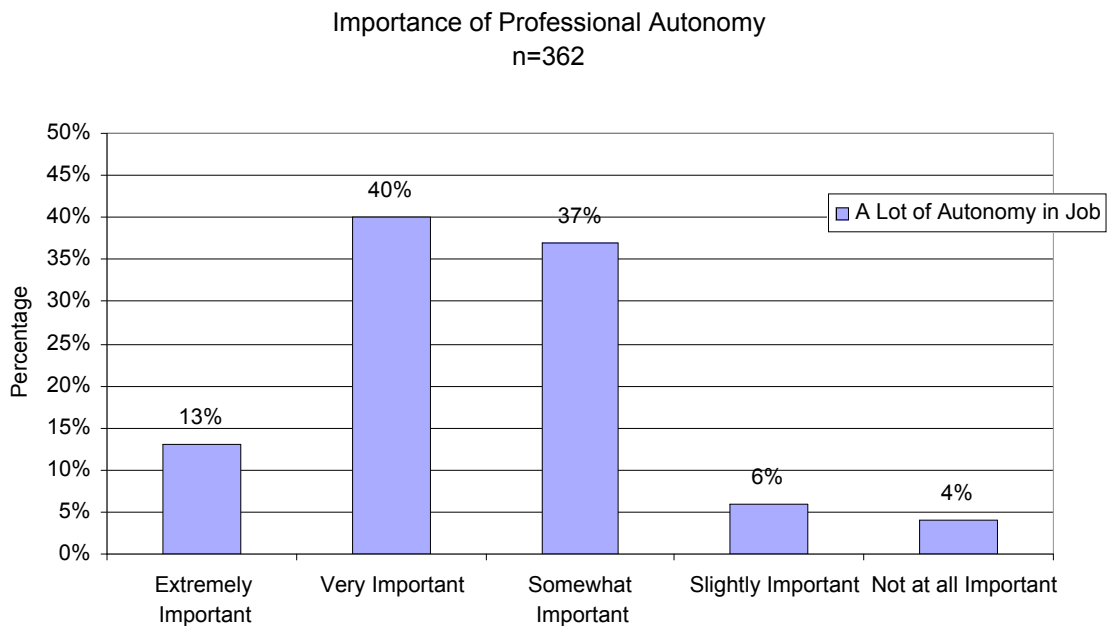
commitment to the profession itself and a deeper understanding of the time required to “change the world.” On the other hand, given the relatively young age of the majority of program entrants, it may be that they have not reached a point in their lives when they feel increased pressure to balance career and family. Future longitudinal examination of these novices will be needed to track attitudinal and behavioral changes.

The amount of autonomy that teachers have in the workplace is increasingly being tied to teacher turnover. In 1984, Goodlad reported that teachers held little control over site-level decisions directly affecting their work. Two decades later, little has changed. In her qualitative study of 59 teachers, Yee (1990) found that those deemed “highly involved” in their work were more likely to attribute their professional retention to supportive workplace conditions – including appropriate workload, opportunities for collegial interaction, professional development, participation in decision making - than to pay. Those who left the field cited unsupportive workplace conditions as their primary reason for doing so.

Research suggests that teacher turnover is directly related to lack of autonomy and workplace control. If true, one compelling reason to track the retention and attitudes of pre-service teachers is to determine whether their perception of the importance of autonomy increases or decreases depending upon their length of stay in urban schools and the profession. The issue of autonomy is particularly salient for urban school teachers whose workplaces tend to be highly centralized bureaucracies where educators have the least amount of autonomy and collegial support (Weiner, 2000). Results from the Center



X survey provide baseline information concerning the level of importance these prospective urban teachers place on autonomy upon entering the field. When asked about whether they had decided to go into teaching because of the autonomy the job may afford, only 13 percent indicated that it was extremely important in their decision to become a teacher.

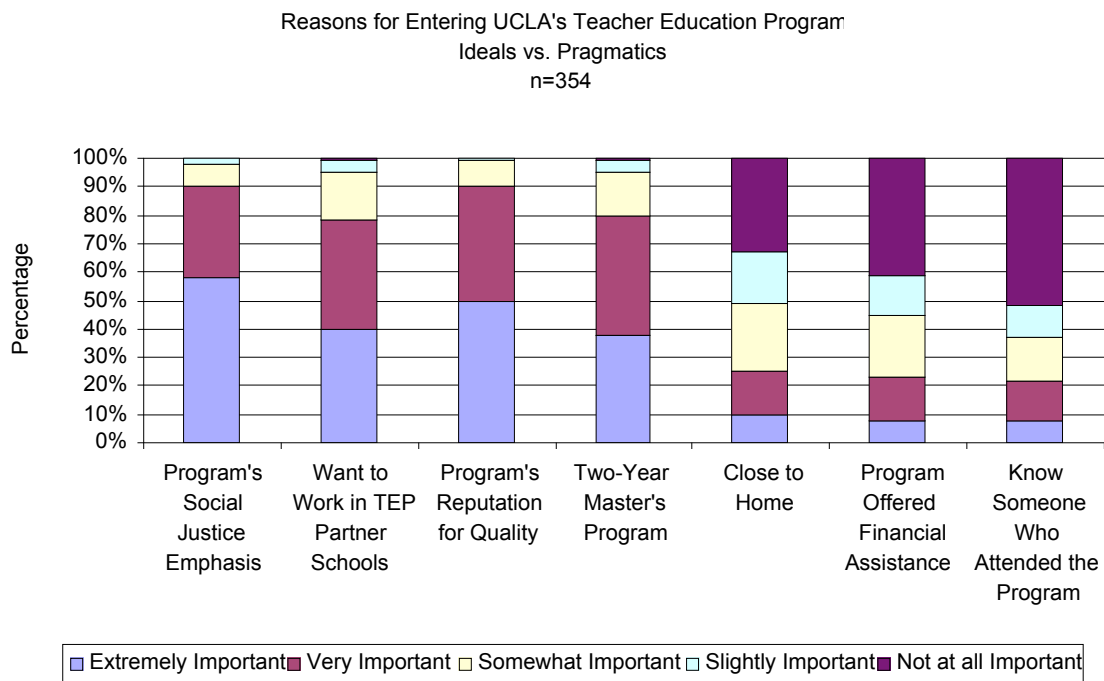


While more than 40 percent of candidates reported that autonomy was very important, over one third indicated that it was only somewhat important to their decision to enter the teaching profession. There was very little difference between responses given by students entering the program directly after completing their undergraduate degree and those who previously held jobs in other fields. The lack of difference is not surprising because the majority of candidates not entering the program directly after graduation spent only one

to two years in the workforce. Many of the non-direct entrants report that the work they did prior to entering the program was related to teaching, such as being a camp counselor, a teaching assistant, or an after-school tutor. Because the program attracts few individuals looking to re-career, it would be difficult for most candidates to comparatively assess the importance of professional autonomy. At this point, it is difficult to ascertain whether the importance, or lack thereof, of autonomy to incoming teachers reflects their expectations – they assume teachers have little and therefore don't expect much – or their naïveté about the environments in which they will soon be working. Continued longitudinal research of these candidates will probe whether the importance these individuals place on autonomy increases once they have been in the field.

#### Why do they want to teach here? Reasons for choosing Center X

In addition to understanding why incoming students are pursuing a teaching career, it is important to understand why they were drawn to a specialized social justice-oriented program. Similar to the reasons given for entering the teaching profession, when asked why they entered Center X specifically, incoming students' reasons tended to be more philosophically based. However, they expressed some pragmatic reasons as well.



Reflecting reasons given for entering the field of teaching, 90 of the students indicated that the program's social justice emphasis was extremely or very important to their decision to enroll in the program. Similarly, 78 percent of students indicated that their desire to work in the program's partner schools – some of the lowest-performing and highest-priority urban schools in and around Los Angeles – was an extremely or very important factor in their decision to enroll in the program.

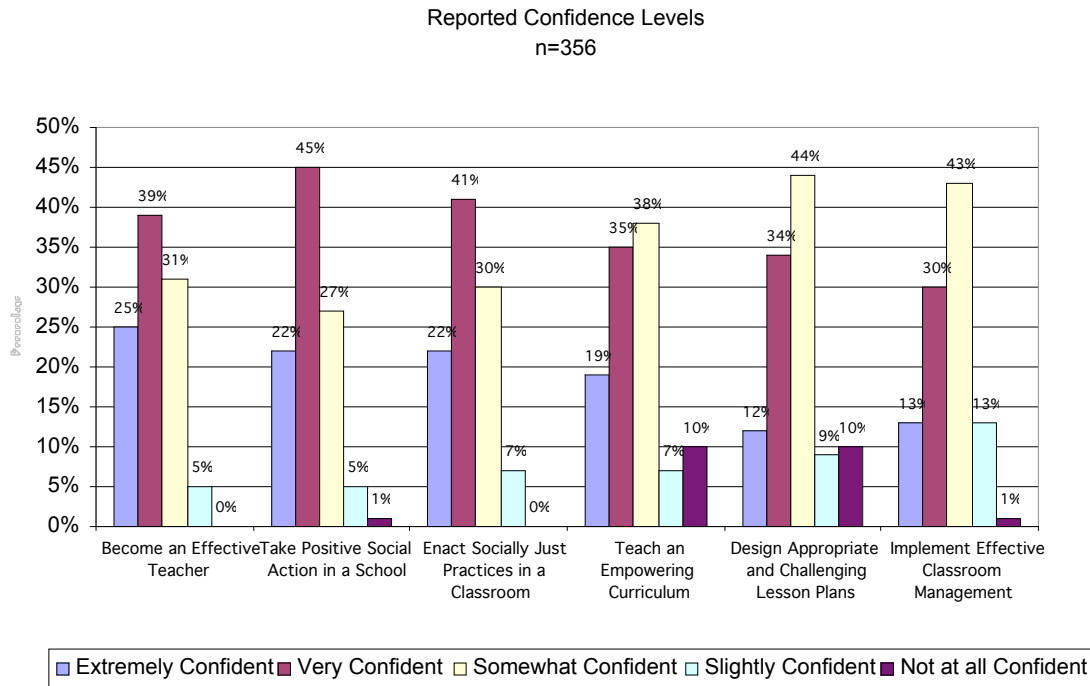
But students do not choose TEP simply based on ideals. A full 90 percent of students cited the program's reputation for quality as extremely or very important to their decision to enroll. Further, 80 percent of students reported that the fact that the program is a two-year, Masters program was either an extremely or very important reason for choosing it. When asked about the program's proximity to their home or ability to offer

financial assistance, 32 percent and 41 percent indicated that these reasons were not at all important in their decision to choose TEP, respectively. Sixty-two percent of students indicated that knowing someone who had attended the program was only slightly or not at all important in their decision. Considering that the program has only graduated approximately 700 students over the past 6 years it is plausible that the majority of students do not even know graduates of the program. However, candidates were acquainted with the program's curriculum and some of its faculty members. When asked to supply another reason that they might have selected TEP over another credentialing program, some students mentioned they had heard talks given by affiliated professors or had been inspired by the works of critical pedagogists studied in the program.

#### Is Recruitment Enough?: Expectations for the Future

Understanding the backgrounds and motivations of pre-service educators attracted to a specialized social-justice preparation program is crucial to sustain focused recruitment efforts and effectively prepare teachers for high-priority schools. But, it is only half of the equation. The extent to which educational reform can be successfully implemented is dependent upon the retention of these specially prepared teachers. Educational reformists have long contended that school improvement efforts, which can take years to realize, require a stable and consistent workforce. This means that teachers, those ultimately responsible for implementing curricular changes, have to continue to teach, and teach in the same school, if reform efforts are to have any impact inside

classrooms. To this end, entrants were asked about their perceived abilities for future success in the classroom and their anticipated length of stay in the profession.



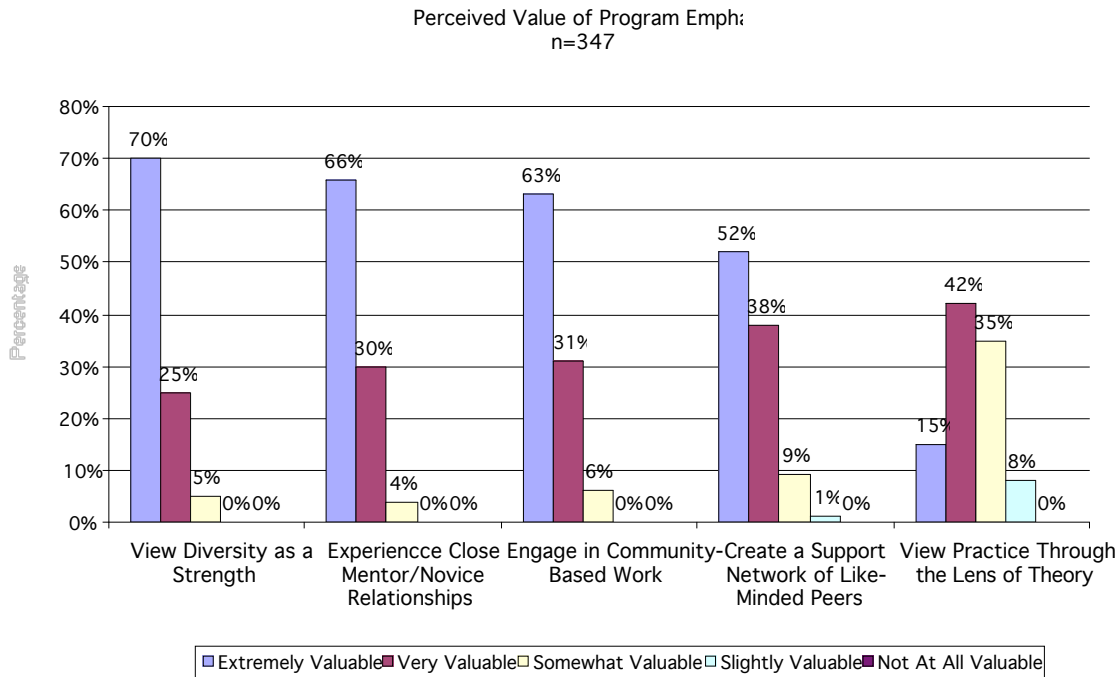
A full 25 percent of students indicated they felt extremely confident about their abilities to become an effective teacher and 23 percent expressed extreme confidence in their abilities to take positive social action in a school. There is a strong correlation between the two responses. Those respondents who indicated they felt extreme confidence in one ability were most likely to indicate they felt extreme confidence in the other. This would seem to indicate that entrants perceive of an effective teacher as someone who takes positive social action in their school. However, it may also be a reflection of the limitations of survey methods. Knowing they were entering a program that promotes social action, candidates may simply be reporting what they believe the program wants to

hear. Novice students were least confident in their abilities to design lesson plans and manage a classroom. Interestingly, based on surveys given upon completion of the program, students seem to be no more convinced of their abilities in these areas after their first full year of teaching. According to data from these surveys, lesson design and classroom management are the areas in which they feel the program did the least to prepare them (see Quartz and Lyons, 2003). These findings echo those of previous researchers (see Weiner, 2000). It may be that the very things attracting teacher candidates to the program are those that create inner professional turmoil. Weiner (1993), reflecting upon her own experience with urban teachers, asserts:

*These young idealistic student teachers struggled to reconcile their desire to change the world with their classroom practice. The conflict emerged primarily as a problem of exercising authority, determining who they were when they were in charge. Because they entered teaching to change education – and society – they had a considerable investment in making sure their classrooms were ‘democratic,’ or ‘free.’*

(p.119)

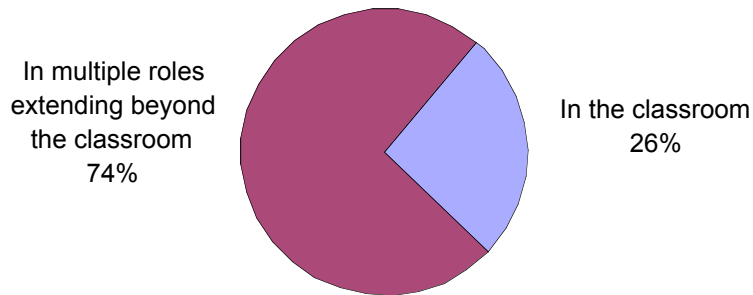
UCLA’s teacher education program considers itself a specialized program for a number of reasons, including its focus on multicultural curricula, its emphasis on social justice, and its practical commitment to preparing teachers to work in high-priority urban schools. As expected, the program’s foci are specifically chosen in an effort to support pre-service teachers’ development as urban, social justice educators. Incoming students were asked about the extent to which they valued five select program emphases.



Given that the vast majority of students reported that they were attracted to the program for its emphasis on social justice and working in low-income communities, it is not surprising that the vast majority also view diversity and community activism as extremely important, with 70 percent and 63 percent reporting as such, respectively. Although Center X is a research-based and theory-driven program, incoming students were less inclined to view theory as important to their future work as educators. Only 15 percent viewed this program emphasis as extremely valuable.

Believing that teachers' retention is tied to their opportunities to develop as educators, candidates were asked to envision their future educational career. Responses indicate that nearly three quarters of incoming students view their professional role as extending beyond the classroom.

**How TEP entrants envision their careers**  
n=355

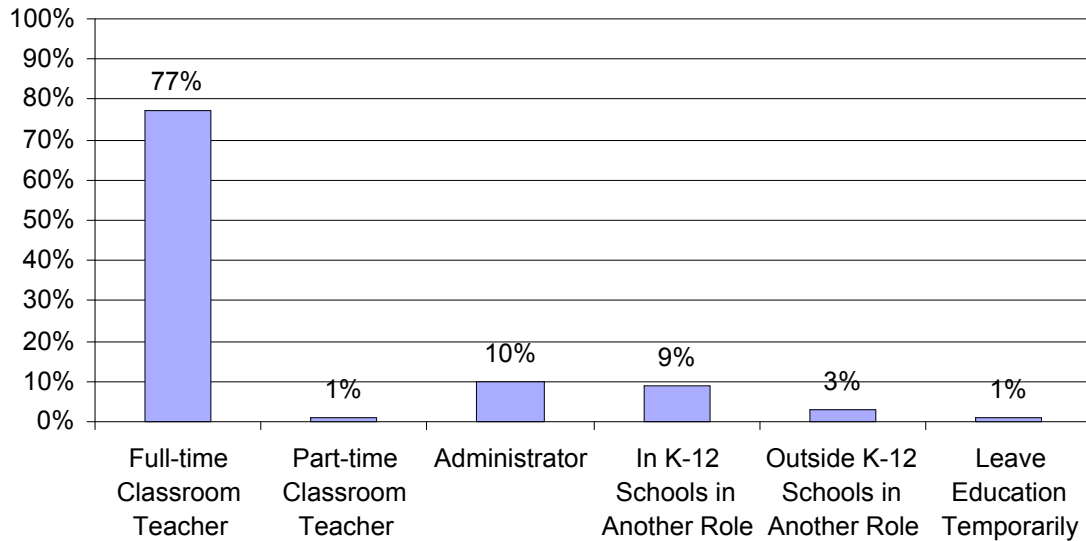


It is interesting to note that, considering that the majority of classroom teachers nationwide are women, 31 percent of men compared to 25 percent of women responded that they saw their role as being primarily rooted in the classroom. How candidates envision their careers varied not only by gender, but by ethnicity. White students were much more likely to envision their role as being rooted primarily in the classroom than students of any other race or ethnicity; 40 percent of white students reported seeing their role as being primarily rooted in the classroom as compared with 16 percent of Latino students, 18 percent of Black students and 24 percent of Asian students

The fact that incoming students see their professional role as extending beyond the classroom does not necessarily indicate that they view these roles as disparate from that of a classroom teacher.



## TEP Entrants Anticipated Primary Role in 5 Years



More than three quarters of incoming TEP students report that they plan to remain as full-time classroom teachers for at least four years. Perhaps more importantly, although 22 percent of entrants expect to have positions in education other than as a full-time classroom teacher, not a single student expects to permanently leave the field.

### Conclusion

An analysis of 1987-1988 data from a nationally representative sample of teachers reveals that, while reporting higher levels of initial commitment to teaching, beginning teachers are more likely to leave the profession than their more experienced colleagues (Sclan, 1993). This may be attributed, in part, to the long-documented fact that beginning, inexperienced teachers are often assigned to the most difficult schedules in the most

under-resourced schools (Boe, et al., 1997; Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Chapman and Green, 1986; Lortie, 1975). Yet Center X candidates are prepared for and placed in high-priority urban schools from the beginning. This, combined with the fact that candidates overwhelmingly express an explicit desire to be in urban schools, may account for the fact that 77 percent of the program's entering candidates report that they expect to be in the classroom five years in the future and all expect to remain in education. To date, overall retention rates of program graduates are higher than would be expected for educators who work in high-priority, urban schools across the nation (Quartz, Goode, Lyons, Bruno, Thomas, & Masyn, 2004).

According to this cross-sectional analysis of Center X participants, entrants tend to be young, well-educated females from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Rather than viewing teaching as an easy-in/easy-out occupation that provides job security and a flexible work schedule, these individuals have chosen to enter the profession because they are committed to changing the world through social-justice education. Confident in their abilities to become effective social-justice educators, these pre-service teachers are not looking for the easiest or fastest route to a credential, but are attracted to a high-status, two-year master's program that emphasizes equity through education.

Based on the assumption that anyone with subject matter expertise can teach, current politics and policies typically aim to curb the teacher shortage by focusing on economic incentives to attract individuals to the profession and alternative certification

programs to prepare them for it. While the recruitment of pre-service teachers is important, it is the *focused* recruitment of committed and capable individuals to the profession that is needed. If, as Weiner (1993) maintains, it is true that research “usually treats teacher-candidates as a homogenous group, ignoring sociological, historical, and demographic data about who chooses teaching as a career” (p. 118) then understanding who it who is attracted to teaching and, specifically, who is attracted to specialized urban teacher preparation programs such as Center X becomes imperative in order to attract the type of individuals ideologically committed to educational equity and reform. While Center X is more the exception in teacher education than the rule, the program is not unreplicable. The findings presented here lay the groundwork for extensive comparison studies that will enable teacher educators and policymakers to determine the extent to which specialized pre-service education combines with background characteristics to recruit, prepare, and retain educators committed to urban schools for the long haul.

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