A group of early-career teachers will be honored at an event next spring by the Texas Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (TACTE), celebrating their success as recent graduates of the state’s teacher preparation programs. While the teachers will take top billing, the event also will celebrate the stunning success of TACTE’s advocacy agenda in uniting dozens of diverse educator preparation programs around a common vision for teacher preparation.

The agenda was born 2 years ago, when TACTE rallied in anticipation of the release of a state study on elementary preparation programs conducted by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ). Prior to the report’s release, the state’s 67 higher education-based preparation programs joined in developing a unified response plan. Taking a proactive approach, TACTE employed an advocacy strategy (as promoted in AACTE’s Advocacy Toolkit) of gathering information, developing their messages, and implementing a communications plan.

A significant part of the group’s strategy focused on acting in solidarity. TACTE members came to agreement on the messages they wanted to convey and remained committed to the talking points in conversations with colleagues, presidents and provosts, state legislators, education stakeholders, and the news media. Key TACTE representatives were interviewed and quoted in multiple news articles, and the consistent drumbeat of concerns disseminated by the news media was critical to emphasizing that all preparation programs were in agreement regarding the NCTQ review, how Texas preparation programs adhere to state and national standards for the profession, and that even those programs rated highly by NCTQ did not value their rating.

In the midst of responding to the report, TACTE decided to capitalize on its success, expanding its efforts by developing an advocacy agenda that extended beyond the NCTQ report. By developing a formal vision statement for university-based teacher preparation in Texas, TACTE not only countered NCTQ’s rhetoric but also asserted itself as a leader in the state, identifying indicators of program effectiveness. That so many preparation programs agreed on a shared vision for teacher preparation shows understanding of the need for evidence of program effectiveness, a willingness to be transparent about how teachers are prepared, and unified progress toward comprehensive improvement in all programs across the state, rather than mere pockets of transformation.

The vision document concludes with a pledge to collect evidence to measure progress toward achieving the vision. The spring 2013 event honoring successful recent graduates will help TACTE honor that pledge, as researchers will conduct confidential focus-group discussions and interviews with the honorees based on the standards presented in the vision statement. The teachers will be asked to identify the most critical elements of their preparation and those areas that they think need improvement. Results will be shared with all TACTE members (and possibly beyond) once researchers compile the data. The event will also offer the honorees several professional development sessions that address areas of common concern among new teachers such as classroom management, burnout, and career management.

For more information on these advocacy efforts, contact TACTE President Art Hernandez at art.hernandez@tamucc.edu.