

*A joint statement from SHAPE America and the  
National Association for Kinesiology in Higher Education*

## **Student Recruitment for Physical Education and Health Education Teacher Education Programs**

### **Position**

There is a pressing need to address recruitment and admission challenges for physical education and health education teacher education (PETE/HETE) programs. Many PETE/HETE programs are struggling to recruit students and this has important implications for PETE/HETE's contribution to the teacher pipeline, teaching quality, and K-12 student learning. It is clear that compared to alternative certification methods, teachers prepared in teacher education programs are better prepared and tend to stay in the profession. It is also clear that demand for physical education and health teachers is strong. Jobs are available; the recruits to fill the jobs in most states are not. Future recruits who come from accredited PETE/HETE programs help ensure a competent, high-quality teacher force delivering physical education and health education in schools.

### **Background**

The purpose of PETE/HETE programs is to prepare teachers who for the most part will teach in K-12 schools in the United States. A recent 50-state snapshot of the U.S. showed that 42% of states have experienced a decrease in PETE/HETE programs over the past decade and 50% predicted further reductions over the next five years (SHAPE America & NAKHE Joint Task Force, 2018). The West and Midwest regions have seen and are predicted to see the greatest reductions compared to South and Northwest regions of the U.S.

The program reductions and closures are tied to fewer applications to PETE/HETE programs, and this in turn is part of a national trend of fewer applications and admissions to teacher education programs more generally. From 2008-2014 there was a 36% decline in enrollment in teacher education programs (Aragon, 2016). In some institutions the number of admissions is further impacted by high admission criteria on the ACT or SAT (Ward, 2018). The net effect nationally is that there are fewer individuals entering teacher education and this has implications for the financial viability of these programs and their ability to contribute to the supply of future physical education and health education teachers (Boyce, Lund, & O'Neil, 2014; Ward, 2018).

The cause for the decline has not been determined empirically but may include competition with other degrees and thus careers, concerns about the stability of the profession, and concerns about salaries (Ward, 2018).

It is clear there are jobs for physical education and health education teachers and that in some states there is a considerable undersupply. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) report *The Condition of Education* (2013) shows that nationally, the number of teaching positions in elementary and secondary schools in all subjects is projected to rise 14% from 2010 to 2021. While individual statistics for physical education and health education teachers have not been reported, some evidence indicates that the demand is high throughout the U.S. (Ward, 2018).

To illustrate this further, consider three of the country's largest states: Florida, New York and California. In Florida, the Department of Education (2017) reported that the percentage of total courses taught in physical education by teachers not certified in the discipline statewide for 2014-15 was 58%. The New York City comptroller reported that of 1,700 public schools, 506 (32%) schools lacked a licensed physical education teacher, actions which violate the state's requirements for physical education (Stringer, 2015). In a survey of 200 California school districts, 12% of the districts ( $n = 24$ ) reported shortages of physical education teachers (Podolsky & Sutcher, 2016).

Physical education and health teachers, state legislators, and district superintendents are struggling to find ways to address the teacher shortage in schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2016). As a result, there has been a rush to support alternative routes to teaching in most states. These alternative routes place pedagogically unprepared or poorly prepared individuals in schools who are unqualified in the subject matter they are to teach (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2016; Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Heilig, 2005; Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, & Marinell, 2018).

The problem is further exacerbated because the teachers who are alternatively certified do not perform in the first three years of teaching as effectively as university-trained teachers and represent a significant bulk of the nearly 48% of teachers who leave the teaching profession in the first five years (Barth, Dillon, Hull, & Higgins, 2016; Papay et al., 2018; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016).

### Guiding Principles

- Teacher quality is the single most important school-based factor in student learning in physical education and health education. Unprepared and unqualified teachers are not a solution to the teacher shortages and do not serve students well.
- Every student should be taught by qualified and specifically trained physical education and health teachers.

### 3 Student Recruitment for PETE/HETE Programs

- SHAPE America and NAKHE support a diverse, qualified and sustainable teaching force that can prepare all students to engage in lifelong physical activity and responsible health practices.
- Reduction in and elimination of PETE/HETE programs threaten not only the future of physical education and health education teacher certification and research in higher education, but also the availability of qualified physical education and health education teachers to fill shortages in schools.

#### **Recommendations**

##### **Recommendations for federal policy makers**

- Develop legislation that places value on the physical education and health education disciplines and emphasizes the importance of placing qualified physical education and health teachers in schools in their state over unprepared and unqualified individuals.

##### **Recommendations for state policy makers**

- Support placing qualified physical education and health education teachers in schools in their state over unprepared and unqualified individuals.
- Strengthen support for teacher education programs in their state.

##### **Recommendations for SHAPE America and NAKHE**

- Increase efforts to promote the hiring of qualified physical education and health education teachers in media sources.
- Provide support to state associations in the form of up-to-date information on the teaching demand for physical education and health education teachers.
- Actively lobby against alternative pathways to teaching.
- Actively lobby for incentives for individuals to enter teaching through university PETE/HETE programs.

##### **Recommendations for state associations**

- Actively lobby against alternative pathways to teaching.
- Actively lobby for incentives for individuals to enter teaching.
- Promote the profession with high school students, counselors, physical education and health teachers, parents, and legislators.
- Educate university admission officers to ensure they have up-to-date information on the demand for physical education and health teachers in their state.
- Educate legislators, state boards of education, and departments of education to ensure they have up-to-date information on the demand for physical education and health teachers in their state.

- Encourage members to promote teaching physical education and health education to students as potential careers.
- Lobby for highly qualified certified teachers to fill teaching positions.

### **Recommendations for universities and PETE/HETE programs.**

- Educate university admission officers to ensure they have up-to-date information on the demand for physical education and health teachers in their state.
- Engage in active recruitment efforts with high school students and undecided students in the university to increase enrollment in PETE/HETE programs.

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