

## STATEWIDE

### Teacher programs graded

Those at Marygrove, Adrian, Olivet get the worst scores

August 12, 2007

BY LORI HIGGINS

FREE PRESS EDUCATION WRITER

Nickolus South feels fortunate to have received a teaching certificate and master's degree through Marygrove College in December. The program, he said, prepared him well for his teaching job at Edison-Oakland Academy in Ferndale.

"My experience was tremendous," said South, 33, of Flint, who teaches math to fifth- and sixth-graders.

#### Advertisement

Which is why he's shocked that the teacher-preparation program at Marygrove was ranked last among the 31 programs in the state, according to a report from the Michigan Department of Education that is to be discussed Tuesday at a state Board of Education meeting.

New federal rules require the department to give performance scores to each teacher-preparation institution in the state. Those considered low-performing -- Olivet College, Adrian College and Marygrove -- will have two years to improve before state sanctions -- which are still being developed -- kick in.

Kathleen Straus, board president, said Friday that the reviews are important.

"Our high school graduation requirements are really demanding," said Straus, referring to the toughened mandates that begin with the freshmen class this year. "We want to make sure teachers are well-trained to teach, and to teach all the kids."

States were left to decide how to come up with the performance scores; in Michigan the criteria is heavily weighted toward pass rates on the Michigan Test for Teacher Certification exams. The state education department also looks at results of surveys of student teachers, program completion rates, diversity in enrollment and whether the schools are preparing teachers in special education, math and science.

Programs could get a total score of 70, with 30 coming from how their teaching candidates did on the test. Oakland University in Auburn Hills and Hope College in Holland each had the top score, 68.

Mary Otto, dean of the OU School of Education and Human Services, said the program has excelled

because of the amount of classroom experience candidates are required to have before they graduate.

"Our graduates are able to walk into the classroom and hit the ground running," Otto said.

Flora Jenkins, director of the Office of Professional Preparation Standards at the state education department, said the scores provide transparency.

"It's making what the institutions do and how they perform more transparent and informing the public, so they can make informed decisions about teacher-preparation institutions they'd like to attend."

Marygrove excelled in every category, except test scores.

The heavy weighting of the overall scores to how students do on the test "is not serving Marygrove, or its population, or its mission," said Gale McFedries, teacher certification officer.

The school's students tend to be older, about 75% are transitioning from other careers, most had been away from school for many years and many are working full time while working toward their teaching degree.

The program "is serving them well, even though the tests may not be reflecting that. No test can tell you everything," said Chuck Okezie, chairman of Marygrove's education department.

"Those who do go into the student-teaching arena are very well-received, and receive high marks from their sponsor teachers," said Renee Ahee, spokeswoman for the college.

Still, there's room for improvement, and the college is working toward that, McFedries said. Jenkins said the state education department would work closely with the three low-performing schools to come up with an assistance plan based on the reasons they ended up at the bottom of the list.

For Adrian and Olivet, the focus likely will be on the student-teacher surveys. Adrian had none of its students complete the survey, and Olivet only had a 37% response rate. Neither received the 10 points they could have earned for how students rated the effectiveness of the programs and the response rate.

Otto and Jenkins cautioned against drawing too many conclusions based on the scores, which they said don't completely illustrate the strengths of a program.

"It's very important that it not be considered as some magic evaluation. It's one piece of information," Otto said.

Contact **LORI HIGGINS** at 248-351-3694 or [lhiggins@freepress.com](mailto:lhiggins@freepress.com).

#### **Links referenced within this article**

lhiggins@freepress.com  
<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/mailto:lhiggins@freepress.com>

**Find this article at:**  
<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2007708120660>