A DUAL IMMERSION CLASS AT CANALINO SCHOOL IN CARPINTERIA
The University of California is taking great strides to address the state’s chronic teacher shortage by systematically studying and improving the most important factor for determining the quality of TK-12 education: the quality of teachers.

Composed of four integrated project aims (see figure on opposite page), nine UC campuses, over one hundred researchers, and $1.5 million in seed funding through the UC Office of the President Research Catalyst Award, the California Teacher Education Research and Improvement Network (CTERIN) is poised to improve the preparation of California’s TK-12 teachers. A necessarily ambitious project, CTERIN has the resources to advise the state with key findings generated from a coordinated effort informed by California’s state education agencies, key stakeholders representing teachers, students and families, and the California State Universities (CSU) and Private/Independent colleges that prepare the majority of the State’s teachers.

“The consortium needed to be large and widespread to understand the impact of education policy and practice within and across the diverse communities our vast system serves,” says lead investigator, UCSB associate teaching professor, and Chair to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, Dr. Tine Sloan. “By coordinating research and networked improvement efforts in a centralized system, we hope to not only understand how the preparation of our teachers is serving school children, but improve our teacher education systems and practices to do better by them.” From urban areas of Los Angeles to migrant worker communities in the Central Valley, CTERIN will be conducting large scale studies through a new statewide data system, while simultaneously supporting researchers and teacher educators to do deep dives into understanding classroom practice, thereby helping teachers and students thrive. Sloan and her extensive team know that the Center’s four focuses—teacher preparation pathways, educational policy, variances across Teacher Education Program (TEPs) practices, and how to prepare teacher educators at the doctoral level—might seem discrete but are invariably intertwined.

In the two years since its launch, CTERIN has supported a knowledgeable statewide network of research teams, creating a feedback loop to inform and direct center activity. In northern CA, groups of

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CTERIN IS CREATING A NEW PARADIGM FOR RESEARCH-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION

Faculty members and doctoral students from across the UCs convene for Networked Improvement Community (NIC) activities at UC Irvine.
researchers are investigating how to recruit, retain, and support bilingual teachers, teachers of color, and teacher educators of color. Another project has teamed with the UC program CalTeach, which serves as a pipeline for undergraduates to become science and mathematics teachers, to understand STEM teacher retention in underserved schools. In southern CA, researchers are asking if new teachers feel prepared to teach students with disabilities, while another team develops an assessment instrument for UC-wide use to improve the racial climate within TEPs.

And, while one large-scale Networked Improvement Community (NIC) across all UC teacher preparation programs studies and improves the preparation of teachers for multilingual learners, another NIC examines the practice of faculty who supervise student teachers in classrooms. “I am seeing the excitement of teacher educators involved in the NICs, as it expands their learning when they can work with colleagues from across multiple programs,” says Dr. Sloan. Dr. Lisa Sullivan (UC Davis), the project lead for the teacher supervision NIC, notes that “the data shows that across our programs, supervisors want additional professional development, opportunities to collaborate, and resources to supervise student teachers in ways that meaningfully enhance their growth and learning.

The data also reinforces their invaluable role in preparing candidates to be reflective practitioners.” Just as the effectiveness of teachers is one of the most important variables to student success, so too is the quality of teacher educators’ practice. Currently, teacher educators develop their expertise in a variety of ways. For example, some focus exclusively on supervising student teachers, others teach courses and design programs, others do research, a few do all of the above. The ability to do “all of the above” requires specialized training that CTERIN’s Educating Teacher Educators (ETE) Initiative plans to improve. ETE is developing a multi-UC campus program that will provide doctoral students with coursework and systematic training in advanced teacher education research and practice. A crucial component of the full program is already finishing its inaugural year: the first cohort of CTERIN Teacher Education Fellows. This group of 21 doctoral students selected from across the UC system have formed a network of master teacher educators, creative scholars, and leaders in the broader field of teacher education research, policy, and practice.

“Working with the first cohort of Fellows has been exhilarating,” says Dr. Jason Duque at UC Santa Barbara, co-PI and leader of the ETE Initiative. “The place and time—and especially the people involved, with their talents and interests and commitments—it just feels like we have a new and different opportunity to shape things.” And quite dramatically, they do. If every single well-prepared teacher educator has a hand in preparing 25 to 200 K-12 teachers a year, who then go on to teach 30 to 150 students a year, the effect of one successful teacher educator is exponential.

“We are a large California public research university system,” says Sloan. “UC has made profound scientific advancements to fields like Agriculture and Medicine, and so too will we to TK-12 Education. As this project specifically examines the ways in which teachers and their educators are prepared, we believe the opportunities here will provide ever-rippling effects to our state, the nation, and most importantly, our school children.” Learn more about CTERIN activity at cterin.ucop.edu.