



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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PHILADELPHIA, PA 19107

OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL

March 8, 2004

Mr. David G. Imig
President and CEO
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
1307 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Imig:

This **Final Audit Report** (Control Number ED-OIG/A03-D0021) presents the results of our audit of the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education (CTTE) at the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE).

AUDIT RESULTS

Our audit objective was to determine if ERIC CTTE had adequate management controls in place to ensure that a range of information on alternative teacher certification was disseminated by ERIC CTTE for the period January 1, 2002, through June 30, 2003. For purposes of this audit, we assessed and classified the significant management controls into the following categories:

- The selection and review of articles and documents and the preparation and posting of abstracts for Resources in Education (RIE) and Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE).
- The selection of topics for and preparation of clearinghouse publications.
- The response to AskERIC and other information requests.

We concluded that during the period January 1, 2002, through June 30, 2003, ERIC CTTE had adequate management controls in place to ensure that a range of information on alternative teacher certification was disseminated by ERIC CTTE, and that ERIC CTTE provided unbiased information on the issue of alternative teacher certification.

Because of inherent limitations in any management control structure, errors may occur and not be detected. Also, projection of any evaluation of the system to future periods is subject to the risk that procedures may become inadequate because of changes in conditions, or that the degree of compliance with the procedures may deteriorate.

OTHER MATTERS

We noted a minor management control issue that we brought to the attention of AACTE. AACTE did not have formal policies and procedures in place to ensure that actual or potential conflicts of interest would be identified and disclosed to the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) Contracting Officer, along with the actions to avoid, mitigate, or neutralize the actual or potential conflict of interest, pursuant to the contract clause "Organizational Conflicts of Interest." In a written response, dated December 31, 2003, AACTE noted that in the unlikely event that a conflict of interest were to arise, experienced ERIC CTTE staff would follow procedures and protocol detailed in the contract clause "Organizational Conflicts of Interest." AACTE added that its objectivity in hosting ERIC CTTE is assured by the diverse nature of its membership. In addition, AACTE noted that it addressed all requirements in the most recent contract proposal, and that conflict of interest was not raised in the contract negotiations or highlighted in any subsequent correspondence or directives from the Department.

BACKGROUND

Established in 1966, ERIC is a federally funded, national information system providing access to education related information. The Department's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), formerly the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), supports ERIC. ERIC consisted of 16 subject specific clearinghouses, 10 adjunct clearinghouses, an affiliate clearinghouse, and support components, such as the ERIC Processing and Reference Facility, which produced and maintained the ERIC database. The ERIC database contains over one million records. ERIC components participated in AskERIC, a system-wide effort to disseminate information through electronic question answering, digital referencing, and other services. Users of ERIC include education professionals, students, parents, school board members, researchers, and journalists. In January 2004, the Department began to implement a reengineering plan for ERIC; the Department intends to contract with a vendor or team of vendors to operate an all-inclusive online bibliographic and full-text ERIC database.

Each ERIC Clearinghouse was a separate contracted entity that collected and processed data within the scope of its specified education-related subject matter. The scope of ERIC CTTE covered school personnel issues, including recruitment, selection, licensing, certification, training, and pre- and in-service preparation, evaluation, retention, and retirement; theory, philosophy, and practice of teaching; organizational, administrative, financial, and legal issues pertaining to teacher education programs and institutions; and all aspects of health, physical, recreation, and dance education.

The Department awarded the ERIC CTTE contract (ED99CO0007), valued at \$2,416,762, to AACTE for the period January 1, 1999, to December 31, 2003. The ERIC CTTE contract called for AACTE to:

- Acquire, select, and review approximately 1,000 education related documents per year. Then, from these selections, prepare approximately 700 abstracts for input into ERIC.
- Review selected education related journals and prepare approximately 900 abstracts annually for input into ERIC.
- Prepare approximately 4 major publications, 10 digests, and 5 other products per year.
- Provide user services, such as answering questions and providing outreach and training.

AACTE is a national organization of more than 740 liberal arts colleges, state universities, research institutions, and various education organizations that prepare teachers and other education personnel. AACTE represents the institutional interests of its members, gathers and disseminates data, proposes and analyzes public policy initiatives, supports professional advancement, and represents the teacher education community before state and national governments.

OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Our audit objective was to determine if ERIC CTTE had adequate management controls in place to ensure that a range of information on alternative teacher certification was disseminated by ERIC CTTE for the period January 1, 2002, through June 30, 2003. To accomplish our audit objective we interviewed ERIC CTTE's Director and Associate Directors, the IES Division Director for ERIC, and the Department's Contracting Officer Representative. We reviewed the ERIC CTTE contract and statement of work, ERIC CTTE publication plans, and criteria contained in the *ERIC Processing Manual* for the review, selection, and processing of abstracts. We also reviewed the following contract deliverables from the audit period:

- We randomly selected 2 of the 11 CIJE comprehensive journal titles and 4 of the 19 CIJE selective journal titles received by ERIC CTTE during the audit period. For each of the randomly selected journal issues, we reviewed the extent to which articles were selected for abstracts and if the article abstracts were entered into the ERIC database. We excluded health, physical education, recreation, and dance journals from our review.
- We reviewed the topics covered by the 95 RIE documents that were received by ERIC CTTE during the period March 2002 to June 2003 and that were rejected for abstracting, to determine if alternative teacher certification was the subject matter of any rejected items.
- We obtained, from the ERIC Processing and Reference Facility, a file of accessioned RIE and CIJE abstracts from January 2002 through July 2003. We

- reviewed all 13 of the 746 abstracts from the RIE database and all 4 of the 1,435 abstracts from the CIJE database that had alternative teacher certification as the major descriptor, which indicates the primary subject of the document or article. The abstracts were reviewed to determine the nature (i.e., supportive, critical, or neutral regarding alternative teacher certification) of the information presented.
- We reviewed ERIC CTTE's 2002 and 2003 proposed publication plans to determine which proposed publications relating to alternative teacher certification were issued, and if not issued, the reason why.
 - We reviewed the 4 major publications, 10 Digests, and 8 other publications and products issued by ERIC CTTE, during the audit period, to determine if the publications covered the issue of alternative teacher certification. We then reviewed the one major publication and two Digests that were pertinent to the issue of alternative teacher certification, to determine the nature (i.e., supportive, critical, or neutral regarding alternative teacher certification) of the information presented.
 - Of the 10 monthly phone/correspondence logs on file at ERIC CTTE for our audit period, we judgmentally selected the log for the last month in the audit period, June 2003. We also randomly selected the log for November 2002. We reviewed the two selected monthly logs, containing 70 information requests, to determine the topics of the information requests. We reviewed the two information requests that concerned the topic of alternative teacher certification to determine the nature (i.e., supportive, critical, or neutral regarding alternative teacher certification) of the information provided.
 - We reviewed 113 AskERIC e-mail information requests received during the audit period. AskERIC requests that provided CTTE the option of providing either supportive or critical information regarding alternative teacher certification were considered pertinent to our review. We noted 12 e-mail files consisting of 7 AskERIC responses that we determined were pertinent to our review. We reviewed the 7 e-mail responses provided by ERIC CTTE to determine the nature (i.e., supportive, critical, or neutral regarding alternative teacher certification) of the information provided.

To achieve the audit objective, we relied, in part, on computer-processed data contained in the ERIC Master File and ERIC Data Validation and Processing System (EDVAPS), specifically the accessioned RIE and CIJE abstracts and rejected RIE documents, respectively. We assessed the reliability of this data by comparing the file record counts of both the ERIC Master File and EDVAPS data. We also performed tests of the accuracy and completeness of the ERIC Master File's abstracts pertaining to alternative teacher certification by comparing the data to search results obtained from the online ERIC database. Based upon our preliminary data assessment, we concluded that the ERIC Master File and EDVAPS data were sufficiently reliable for use in meeting the audit objective.

We conducted on-site fieldwork from October 1, 2003, through October 3, 2003, at the AACTE offices in Washington, D.C. We held the exit conference on January 20, 2004.

Our audit was performed in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards appropriate to the scope of the review described above.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. § 552), reports issued by the Office of the Inspector General are available to members of the press and general public to the extent information contained therein is not subject to exemptions in the Act.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance extended by your staff during the audit. You are not required to respond to this report. If you desire to discuss it, please call Teri Lewis, Assistant Regional Inspector General for Audit, or me at (215) 656-6900.

Sincerely,


Bernard Tadley

Regional Inspector General for Audit

cc: Mary Dilworth, Vice President for Research and Information, AACTE