



MARQUETTE
UNIVERSITY

College of Education
Office of the Dean

Greetings Education Majors –

Since you might be wondering what exactly is going on with Marquette's recently announced *Teach For America* (TFA) partnership, I'm writing to provide you with some information.

Teach For America is an organization that recruits outstanding graduates from some of the best colleges and universities in America to teach for two years in challenging urban or rural schools. Its mission is to build a movement to eliminate educational inequity, and its vision is for all children in this nation to one day attain an excellent education. Sound familiar? That's why TFA has recruited so actively at Marquette.

A fundamental difference between a traditional teacher preparation program like yours and TFA is that its corps members, also known as interns, already have their undergraduate degrees. Although education was not an original career choice, they are either: (1) strongly considering that possibility, (2) feel called to serve as a matter of social justice, or (3) both. Typically, the interns draw school assignments in the areas of early childhood, elementary, secondary, bilingual, or special education.

Before being accepted into this highly selective program, candidates must submit application materials and undergo extensive interviewing. If they are accepted and agree to their assignment, they undertake intensive training that begins in the following June. **The intern training consists of TFA coursework and practice teaching in an urban district's summer school program.** In August, the corps members head to their assigned teaching placements. Since they are not yet certified, they work under a provisional license authorized by a state department of education.

Soon after they arrive at their schools, corps members begin taking additional courses in teacher education at a partner university like Marquette. Upon successful program completion, **corps members earn initial state teaching certification, and many of them continue on to earn an Education-related Master's degree.**

In their school placements, **the corps members receive significant support from both the Teach for America supervisors in the region and institutions that have been identified as University Collaborators.** Because the corps members' urban teaching assignments are challenging and their training relatively brief, they welcome all the supervision, feedback, and other help available to them.

The TFA corps members will basically be integrated into our existing post-baccalaureate teaching licensure program, and even as graduate students, they'll be held to the same performance standards as any Marquette student seeking a teaching certificate. Only a small part of their teacher education curriculum will be different, and that's because they're credited for coursework taken during their summer training. You may not know it, but we already draw graduate students to the post-bac program from a wide range of disciplines who enroll because they don't find their current career choice satisfying.

You should know that the College of Education spent considerable time and energy determining if Teach For America represented an appropriate fit for us. To help make this judgment, an MU team took a trip this past summer, with our partners from Cardinal Stritch, to Loyola Marymount University (LMU). Our reason for visiting LMU's School of Education was that its TFA program is one of the most successful in the country. We learned a great deal from our colleagues there and left convinced that we could effectively serve as University Collaborators for the TFA/Milwaukee region.

Equally important, we saw TFA's vision and mission, the promotion of educational equity, aligning squarely with our own. The prospect of steering talented, passionate young people like you to the classroom -- especially ones who might not otherwise have chosen teaching as a profession -- was compelling to us. And, we felt that adding our signature brand of Marquette quality to the training the corps members received would position them to be, again like you, true difference makers.

We think that Teach For America represents a welcome addition to the many current initiatives aimed at helping the Milwaukee Public School system. It will give hard-to-staff schools in MPS a new measure of hope. Our intention is to help TFA corps members become master teachers and future school leaders who will enrich the education of many of Milwaukee's neediest school children.

Finally, you may recall that a few weeks ago I listed 50 individuals who had changed the course of human history and suggested that you could, too. Well, TFA's founder, **Wendy Kopp**, proposed the organization as her undergraduate thesis at Princeton. She came to believe in the idea so much that she persevered until raising \$2.5 million to launch the initiative. Now get this. Since its inception in 1990, Teach For America has grown into a \$120,000,000+ non-profit organization that serves 29 US regions and supports 6000 corps members per year who, in turn, impact 400,000 students. Is it any wonder that she was recently named one of America's Most Influential People? **Now that's what I call "Being The Difference in the World."**

Sincerely,



Dr. Bill Henk, Dean
College of Education

For more information about Teach for America, go to:
<http://www.teachforamerica.org/mission/index.htm>