

100 Years of Innovation in Education: Teachers College

By University Communications

This year, the university celebrates the centennial of the 1908 founding of Teachers College, now the College of Education and Human Sciences. With an enrollment of 2,700 undergraduate students, 1,100 graduate students and 154 faculty members, the college is ranked among the nation's best.

Approval of a Teachers College at the University of Nebraska in 1908 helped professionalize the ranks of teachers in Nebraska. Since then, more than 30,000 educators have earned degrees from the college. Teachers College alumni reside in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, and in 73 countries outside the United States. As many as half of its graduates remain in Nebraska.

The move to establish the college was not without controversy. A faction within the university wished to emphasize subject matter education within the College of Arts and Sciences. And some in the Legislature believed the role of teacher preparation was the sole province of the state's normal college in Peru. But teacher education existed at NU long before the college was established. When the University of Nebraska opened its doors in 1871, two years after it was chartered, most of its students were in the Latin School – a college preparatory academy. Why? Because the state lacked good schools and good teachers. Citizens demanded professional teachers for their children; the University of Nebraska responded. The first courses in professional education were offered in the 1890s—and in 1908, the University of Nebraska established a professional Teachers College.

In the 1870s, just as now, the university's entrance requirements shaped the substance of secondary education in Nebraska. The university essentially accredited the state's high schools; and its faculty were important leaders in efforts to upgrade public education throughout the state. However, poorly prepared teachers were common and by 1892, the university began offering summer programs to teachers, with a Department of Pedagogy established in 1895. By 1897, NU graduates who had taken the pedagogy courses were granted provisional three-year teaching certificates, which became permanent after the completion of three years of classroom teaching. In 1901, Pedagogy became the Department of Education.

A law effective Sept. 1, 1907, required all high school teachers be graduates of a normal school, college or university and hold professional certifications.

On Feb. 14, 1908, the regents elevated the Department of Education into a college whose aim was to work with "the history, theory and practice of teaching generally, to improve the quality of secondary teaching in particular and to provide thoroughly prepared teachers for these schools." A laboratory school was established in the new Temple Building. In 1920, the Teachers College building was dedicated.

The college's DNA was forged by its long-standing dean, Frank Henzlik, who joined the faculty in 1924 and became the college's third dean in 1931. Henzlik stated: "If the intellectual level of Nebraska citizens is to be raised, this development will depend



The Teachers College was founded in 1908.

largely on placing in our communities teachers of culture, character and ability." Under his watch, Teachers College increased its enrollment of graduate students and worked with NU Extension to distribute materials and teach teachers throughout Nebraska to raise the professional competence of in-service teachers. By 1948, more than 40 percent of elementary and secondary teachers in Nebraska and 50 percent of school administrators had part or all of their professional training in NU Teachers College.

Since the 1960s, Teachers College faculty have assumed the dual role of educating and preparing teachers and administrators, as well as conducting research leading to the improvement of teacher education and in-service practices. This professional growth has served the state by providing well-educated and well-prepared graduates who are able to implement in their classrooms the latest methods to enhance student learning.

In 2003, Teachers College and the College of Human Resources and Family Sciences joined forces to become the College of Education and Human Sciences. The new college seeks to enhance the lives of individuals, families, schools and communities and to strengthen the relationships among them. The college is one of just a handful nationally that combines the fields of teacher education; educational psychology; communication disorders; counseling; school and community leadership; special education; individual and family development; consumer sciences; nutrition and health; and textiles, clothing and design into a single entity focused on improving people's lives.

The College of Education and Human Sciences is a national leader in educating teachers for the future. Its students learn how to best reach children in the classroom by understanding the changing characteristics of school populations. Each of its soon-to-be teachers graduates with the skills to work with English-language learners, with deep understanding of the needs of multicultural populations and with experiences in special education programming. Increasing numbers of students have international experiences. The college meets the needs of children by keeping its focus relevant and ahead of the curve.

The most successful teachers are thoroughly educated, with discipline knowledge and the skills to impart that knowledge to children. Funded projects like Math in the Middle and the Nebraska Math partnership focus on helping current teachers deepen their understanding of mathematics so they can improve student learning at the middle and elementary levels. Similarly, Inspiring Inquiry enabled rural middle school teachers to build science curricula that inspired children to love science. Faculty in the college's departments of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education as well as Educational Psychology and Special Education and Communication Disorders are principal investigators on these and other projects.



The present home of the College of Education and Human Sciences, formerly known as Teachers College.