Duncan’s Clout May Be Sorely Tested as Incentives Dwindle

By Michele McNeil

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan faces an increasingly rocky education policy landscape and waiving support for his aggressive K-12 agenda—at a time when his stack of bargaining chips is dwindling. Compared to his assets in President Barack Obama’s first term, Mr. Duncan has few sweeteners left to use as leverage. That’s likely to leave him even more dependent on sanctions and persuasion in the administration’s final three years.

On the incentive side, he’s spent nearly $100 billion in economic-stimulus money approved by Congress in 2009 and used his own authority to hand out No Child Left Behind Act waivers to nearly every state. But Congress seems more dysfunctional than ever, and less and less likely to give the Obama administration what it wants. After the 2014 midterm elections, when the administration will enter its twilight, Mr. Duncan’s clout will diminish even more.

Yet this is a crucial time for education policy. Most states are on the verge of fully implementing the Common Core State Standards and are bracing for the tests aligned with them. New teacher evaluations tied to student academic growth are being rolled out across the country. And the No Child Left Behind waivers—school rating systems approved by the U.S. Department of Education with student-achievement goals and inter-

Online Teacher Prep Proliferates, But For-Profits Dominate Market

By Stephen Sawchuk

Los Angeles

One by one, the faces pop up on the computer screen. Some of the aspiring teachers hold coffee cups; others have their hair in ponytails or pushed back into caps.

It’s 6 a.m., California time. Several of the virtual attendees are on a less punishing East Coast schedul. One is tuning in from Taiwan, where it’s already nighttime. But nobody’s in Eds, because this is a classroom and there are rules about comportment.

The teacher-candidates are taking part in the online Master of Arts in Teaching program offered by the University of Southern Cali-

Spotlight Turns on Memphis’ Remake

Array of Strategies Aims to Transform Tennessee’s Largest District

By Jaclyn Zubrzycki
Memphis, Tenn.

With a growing charter school sector, a new state-run district with plans to expand, and a reconfig-
ured central office, Memphis is poised to become the next national center for New Orleans-style school governance.

Even as a commission spent the past two years planning for the largest school district merger in the nation’s history—the former Memphis city dis-
tric and an adjacent suburban system became the unified 140,000-student, 222-school Shelby County district on July 1—the landscape of governance within the legacy city school system was changing rapidly to favor parental choice and more autonom-
ous schools.

The changes underway here include:
• A rapidly expanding array of charter schools.
• Home to just three charter schools 10 years ago, Memphis now has 41 charters, and more are on the way, including schools that will be part of some of the nation’s best-known charter networks.

Shelby County schools Superintendent Dorsey Hopson II reads a children’s book to preschoolers at the Lowrance Elementary School in Memphis, Tenn. Mr. Hopson says all of the district’s schools can benefit from more autonomy.

The 41 million-and-counting set-
tlement being paid to educators in New York City public schools could have big implications for school districts across the country struggling to provide adequate technology and Internet band-

A $41 million-and-counting set-
tlement being paid to educators in New York City public schools could have big implications for school districts across the country struggling to provide adequate technology and Internet band-

Fiscal Storm

Schools and districts weathered the first days of the federal government’s shutdown without much disruption, although some educators are anxious about the long-term implications of Washington’s budget stalemate.
relationships with students, how do you connect with students?” said Corinne R. Hyde, an assistant professor of teacher education at M.T. program at the Rochester School, where the online program was launched in 2009.

"It would seem to be very impersonal, but the [virtual interaction] ... makes it really possible to build those connections," she said. "Ofentimes, I feel like I know my students a lot better, because I'm seeing into their homes."

Meredith Curley, the dean of the University of Phoenix, sees greater acceptance of an online route to earning a teaching credential. "Having more providers in the market really speaks to the fact that there is a demand," said Ms. Curley, whose for-profit university is the nation's largest producer of education degrees.

A Booming Field

Online teacher preparation has typically served practicing teachers seeking recertification or master's degrees to help them move up the salary scale. Only since the early 2000s has initial preparation online begun to make a mark.

The provider marketplace remains dominated by for-profit institutions—some operating wholly online—but the competition has been impossible for brick-and-mortar institutions to ignore. Of the 674 institutions responding to queries about online teacher preparation in a data-collection effort conducted by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, or AACTE, 36 offered at least one wholly online undergraduate education program as of the 2008-09 academic year, and 140 offered at least one online-only master's program for initial certification.

A whopping 74 percent of the institutions surveyed offered some courses online.

Among the reasons for the high level of interest is a desire to tap career-changers and other individuals whose circumstances limit their ability to spend hours on campus.

That's the case with the University of the Pacific, which has signed a partnership with Teach-Now, a new online teacher-certification startup, to offer a master's degree and initial-certification program.

"Most candidates cannot, with their family and adult responsibilities, take several years to pursue a teaching credential. We had to make it intensive and meet them where they are," said Michael Elum, the assistant dean of the Stockton, Calif.-based university's education school. "They need intense, high-quality, and affordable preparation."

The expense of online teacher-preparation programs varies widely. Teach-Now's certification costs begin at $8,000, while the University of Phoenix's tuition and fees range from $15,000 to $30,000 for a master's degree in elementary education. Uc charges tuition identical to that for candidates in on-campus classes, which works out to about $49,000 for the M.T. program.

Much online preparation continues to take place in an "asynchronous" format, a technical term meaning that learning takes place with candidates working in their own time, typically by participating through virtual message boards and completing written assignments and quizzes online.

Flexible Hours

There are obvious benefits to such flexible hours, especially for working professionals. At the same time, faculty members can quickly gauge candidate's participation, said Ms. Curley of the University of Phoenix.

"At this point, the asynchronous [interaction] seems to be a plus for us, and utilization of online platforms to share tools and resources is the focus of our innovation," she said. For instance, the university is making toolkits with resources on the Common Core State Standards available to candidates and faculty on its online portal.

Increasingly, though, the providers' delivery formats are evolving as well. Uc has chosen a different path, devising a novel way to deliver online preparation in real-time. Teacher-candidates on a Web platform, which is managed by 2U, a Landover, Md.-based technology firm, can all see one another. A conference-call line keeps everyone connected. The platform allows students to message each other, contribute to oral or written discussions, and raise their hands—electronically speaking—to seek help.

Eric Bernstein, an assistant professor of clinical education, can separate students quickly into smaller groups for breakout discussions and then bring them back together with a minimum of lost time—something that wouldn't be possible in a large lecture hall.

That's only the beginning, though. There's "black party," where small groups of students are rotated quickly, and silent discussion, where students respond to readings and discussions.

Ed. Researcher Moves Into Certification Business

For decades, C. Emily Feistritzer has been one of the nation's foremost analysts of alternative certification programs for training teachers. Now she's taken what might be called the final plunge: crafting one of her own.

"Having spent 30 years reporting on what everyone was doing in the teacher-preparation and credential space, I just concluded that nobody was really focusing on tomorrow's learning world," Ms. Feistritzer said. "There is too much controversy, too much lack of continuity, too much duplication of effort. If you could step outside of it and create an ideal program, what would it look like?"

Her answer, Teach-Now, recently opened its doors as a fully online teacher-certification program. It is currently approved in the District of Columbia, with negotiations ongoing to bring it to states around the country.

Funded partially through a $250,000 grant from the New Schools Venture Fund, an Oakland, Calif.-based group that invests in education technology and management organizations, Teach-Now dispenses with traditional unit-based courses. Instead, candidates complete eight units ranging from assessment to student learning in a digital era, plus engage in ongoing fieldwork and student teaching.

Using e-Portfolios

The fully interactive, custom-built platform is based on two principles in the teacher education literature, Ms. Feistritzer said: Teachers in training benefit from working with each other, and they benefit from lots of hands-on practice.

So the platform uses the "flip" model popularized by the Khan Academy, an online education resource, in which readings and new techniques are introduced at home, while class time is spent practicing and applying them.

An "e-portfolio" tracks each Teach-Now candidate's scores on the activities that make up each of eight units of study to give candidates real-time feedback. Instructors must have taught for at least three years and received leader-ship roles or recognition for their work. Each supervises a cohort of no more than 12 candidates.

Ms. Feistritzer has attracted well-known figures in the teacher-preparation world to the initiative. Among her hires is Donna Gollnick, a 25-year veteran of one of the national accreditation bodies for education colleges.

"I think the better online programs are really using the technology more effectively," Ms. Gollnick said. "Students do a lot of the work they would have formerly done in the classrooms on their own, and the class becomes more of a coaching method of helping them understand what they've read, seen in a video, or observed in a school."

Ms. Gollnick will help smooth state approval of the program and partnerships with universities interested in integrating it. Already, the Stockton, Calif.-based University of the Pacific has inked a deal to use Teach-Now as part of a new master's degree program aimed at career-changers.

The program is not intended to be a competitor for other alternative routes, according to Ms. Feistritzer.

"I created it to be used by providers in the teacher-education space," she said. Teach-Now's inaugural class began in March and will complete the program in December.

AWARDING DEGREES

Most of the top 10 providers of education degrees offer at least one degree online, leading to initial teacher certification.

2011-12 Education Degree Production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total Degrees</th>
<th>Bachelor's degree</th>
<th>Master's degree</th>
<th>Type of institution</th>
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<tr>
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<td>AZ</td>
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<td>711</td>
<td>3,887</td>
<td>For-profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4,573</td>
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<td>Ashford University</td>
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<td>1,380</td>
<td>1,474</td>
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<td>Nova Southeastern University</td>
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<td>309</td>
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<td>Public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Total degrees include associate and doctoral degrees. Some master's degrees do not contain a certification component.
2 Does not offer an online teacher-preparation program.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics

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STEVEN SAMSOK

The TEACHER BEAT blog tracks news and trends on this issue. www.edweek.org/go/teacherbeat

16 | EDUCATION WEEK | October 9, 2013 | www.edweek.org
Bank Street Aims to Retain 'Essence' in Virtual Program

It's one of the ongoing challenges of preparing teachers and administrators online: Can on-the-job practice that is supervised remotely be effective—especially when it's the heart and soul of programs?

This fall, the Bank Street College of Education, a small, private New York City-based institution best known for hands-on approaches to preparing teachers and leaders, will begin to see results in that area. It began a study to examine how to translate the supervised fieldwork component of its math leadership program, now offered in person over three summers, into an online setting.

Bank Street chose to offer, via the blackboard, the small, lightly knit cohorts of aspiring educators who meet periodically, plus the deep involvement of a faculty adviser. Advisers frequently visit each candidate at his or her school, interacting with him or her in a specific way.

"How do you create that relational learning online?" said Robin Hammel, the interim director of the math-leadership program. "We want to attract people from all over and make the program accessible to those who can't come to New York, but we don't want to lose the essence of what defines Bank Street.

From next January to May, a Bank Street faculty instructor will work with six New York City public school teacher-volunteers, who will participate in five real-time, online sessions together. Participating teachers will also receive two individual coaching sessions in which they'll receive planning conferences and debriefs on their teaching from the faculty member.

Enhancing Fieldwork

Meanwhile, a work group, staffed by experts in both math pedagogy and learning technology will advise the college and examine technologies that could enhance the fieldwork experience. Those might include earpieces that allow a mentor to communicate directly with each candidate, Ms. Hammel said. But the first priority is making sure that the institution's "learner centered" approach is preserved, she said.

The study is being carried out with support from a $50,000 grant from 100K in 10, a private foundation of such organizations that are seeking to train 100,000 effective, math, technology, engineering, and science teachers over a decade.

The knowledge gleaned from the study will inform the online iteration of the math-leadership program and a second degree path, both of which are scheduled to debut in the fall of 2014. —STEPHEN SMUCKER

USC Brings Its Brand To Online Offering For Teacher Prep.

Los Angeles

Of new entrants to the online teacher-preparation market, perhaps the most visible is the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education. Since 2009, more than 3,000 prospective teachers have enrolled.

To an extent, its success is the product of a series of fortuitous one. One was the arrival, in 2000, of Rossier Dean Karen Symms Gallagher, who wanted to move USC's small somewhat marginalized undergraduate teacher education program to the graduate level and expand it. USC's stated mission for teacher preparation is to improve urban education nationally and globally; and at just 50 teachers a year, "we were clearly not even meeting local needs," Ms. Gallagher said.

Then, in 1980, Robert Katsman, the founder of a technology company that came to be known as 2U. He pressed her to consider an online iteration of the newly formed Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program.

Ultimately, a partnership emerged. Mr. Katsman agreed to invest in the building of a customized, online platform for Rossier and to endow a faculty position, while Rossier would continue to select high-quality candidates. Faculty advising the project insisted on a platform that would be fully interactive and that could record online interactions for future research.

Enrollments Rising Steadily

The ambitious endeavor was nevertheless a gamble for a research institution.

"What we really brought to the partnership was our brand, and USC's behind it," Ms. Gallagher said. "We are investing our reputation.

Enrollments have risen steadily. In fact, they have helped to shield Rossier from the steep decline in enrollments in teacher programs in California and nationwide that has also affected other traditional structures: Full-time faculty who teach in the MAT program and aren't located in Southern California work under a contract almost entirely on their teaching duties.

It also has injected transparency into whether what's taught lines up with the programs goals. "Everyone can share with each other how they're helping students learn," said Melora Sundt, the vice dean of academic programs at Rossier. "MSI faculty are much more comfortable for all. Some view the program's rapid expansion as overly corporate.

"People will say, 'It's about the money.' I always say, well, it better be—we're a private institution. Ms. Sundt said. "It is about our mission, but it feels yucky to some faculty members that you also have to consider the financial model for the program."

On the other hand, participating faculty say teaching online has led them to experiment.

"Oftentimes as professors it's hard to re-engage with the current market," Mr. Katsman ""I'm not the earpiece," said Cerimne E. Hyde, an assistant professor of clinical education. "If you get up in front of these students and lecture them, they're not going to be on Facebook in 15 minutes. You're forced to really be on their toes, grab their attention, and hold it."