



December 1, 2001

Harriet G. Taylor
ISTE NETS Distinguished Achievement Award Coordinator
ELRC Peabody Hall
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Dear Dr. Taylor,

On behalf of the College of Natural Sciences at The University of Texas at Austin I am extremely pleased to nominate the UTeach program for the ISTE NETS Distinguished Achievement Award. I have been actively involved in every stage of development for the UTeach program, and have a strong commitment to its success. Our plans for the establishment of a high quality teacher preparation program in the College of Natural Sciences began more than four years ago. During the summer of 1997, a small team of excellent teachers met to plan a teaching certification program grounded in best practices in teacher education. I asked them to ensure that students could obtain a degree and teaching certification in four years, so that becoming certified to teach would not impose undue financial burden. Because the program is restricted to 18 professional development hours by state law, careful consideration was given to the content, field experiences, and technology competencies of each course in the certification sequence. As each course was added to the sequence, we revisited the other courses to be sure that our curriculum continued to address state and national standards.

To facilitate technology integration into UTeach courses, our College has purchased hardware and software for UTeach classrooms, we have purchased laptops and peripherals for student use in the field, and we are currently renovating space for a UTeach student workroom. This workroom will have multimedia editing capabilities, a training area with Internet ports for laptop access, and printing and projection systems. To ensure that field experiences match our expectations for technology integration, we have provided e-mail accounts for cooperating teachers and obtained funding for a portable networked cart with 30 laptops and probes for use at one of our field sites. This grant also provides 10 laptops for the science and math teachers and 4 laptops for preservice teacher use as well as training for our master and cooperating teachers.

Our commitment to preparing excellent mathematics and science teachers also extends into their Natural Sciences content courses. Future mathematics and science teachers must experience effective teaching that emphasizes the National Education Technology Standards in their undergraduate math and science classes if they are to implement these at the secondary level. We have renovated lecture halls with multimedia capabilities and class talk systems. We have showcased effective use of instructional technology through TA training sessions, faculty luncheon demonstrations, and an annual teaching strategy conference. We are currently using UTeach students as a pilot group for new course courses that emphasize effective use of technology. The first of these courses, an inquiry molecular biology lab, will be taught next spring.

The College of Natural Sciences commitment to UTeach is best indicated by the considerable resources that are being expended to make it a success. The College has provided office and classroom space for personnel involved with UTeach, and full-time administrative support. The UTeach co-director and assistant director have been provided with teaching relief to permit them to oversee the growth of UTeach. The College has employed five full-time Master Teachers, a full time student advisor, and a program evaluator. Tuition refunds are made to students for their first two UTeach courses, Step I and Step II. Beginning with a multi-million dollar donation, we have established an endowment for UTeach to ensure its future funding. Currently, our College is working with donors to provide induction support for our alumni.

I am aware that your award calls for a single contact but our program is truly a collaboration between the Colleges of Education and Natural Sciences. Therefore I would ask to designate one of our Natural Sciences master teachers, Dr. Gail Carmack, as a key contact for the featured site. She will work with Dr. Tony Petrosino from the College of Education to respond to informational requests and work with your staff on an on-line feature about UTeach.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to submit this application, and hope that you will consider the merits of our program.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Rankin
Dean
College of Natural Sciences