

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



U.S. DEPT. OF ED AWARDS REACH UNIVERSITY & PARTNERS \$10M TO RECRUIT, TRAIN LOUISIANA COMMUNITY COLLEGE GRADS TO BECOME LICENSED TEACHERS

In partnership with Delgado Community College, NIET & Jefferson Parish Schools, funding aims to address continued specialized teacher shortage challenges in the state’s largest K-12 parish.

(HARVEY, Louisiana) – September 18, 2024 – Reach University, in partnership with Delgado Community College, the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), and Jefferson Parish Schools, is the recipient of a projected [\\$9.9 million U.S. Department of Education](#) (ED) grant to support the degree completion, certification, and placement of teachers of color in Jefferson Parish Schools, the state’s largest and most diverse K-12 parish.

Issued as part of the [Department’s Teacher Quality Partnership \(TQP\) grant program](#), the funding establishes the Louisiana Educator Apprenticeship Partnership (LEAP) program, an associate-to-bachelor’s degree, apprenticeship-based teaching pathway. LEAP will train no less than 350 Delgado grads from 25 degree programs throughout the next five years. The program expands Reach and Delgado’s [A.A. to B.A. Transfer Pathway](#) articulation agreement, which transfers credits from nearly all Delgado majors into Reach’s job-embedded, paid bachelor’s degree program.

The partnership’s funding is the largest allocation among the 2024 ED TQP grant recipients. To date, Reach has been awarded [\\$16.8 million](#) in ED funding to expand its job-embedded teacher training in Louisiana and [\\$25.5 million](#) to train teachers in high-need communities throughout the Southeast.

“In less than four years, Reach has grown to serve 1,400 current and aspiring teachers in over 90% of Louisiana’s K-12 parishes,” said Joe E. Ross, president and CEO of Reach University. “Reach’s partnerships are a meaningful engine for building a qualified teacher pipeline that [exceeds](#) the state’s vacancies. Similar to past ED funding, there is no ramp-up time in putting these funds to use. Together with Delgado, NIET, and Jefferson Parish, we’ll continue to work to fully address the representative and specialized teacher needs in Jefferson Parish and peer schools through a model purpose-built for adult degree seekers, K-12 employers, and the broader community.”

Partnerships to Address Specialized Teacher Shortages

Program candidates will work in Jefferson Parish Schools or a peer Reach University K-12 parish, holding a critical paraprofessional role such as classroom aide, bus driver, or other entry-level position, as they complete Reach’s paid Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree program. Candidates will specialize in high-need subject areas, such as math, computer science, and the science of reading, addressing key vacancies in the parish. After completing the program and securing licensure, candidates will transition into a qualified teaching role in Jefferson Parish

Schools, creating a sustainable and representative local pipeline of classroom-ready teachers.

“In partnership with Reach and Delgado, we’ve built multiple effective pathways for residents of our community to become qualified teachers,” said Dr. James Gray, superintendent of Jefferson Parish Schools. “But the true strength of this initiative comes from educational institutions uniting to create a barrier-free and no-cost path to a bachelor’s degree and teaching certification. As these candidates work in our schools, earning their paid degrees, they also gain the specialized skills needed to lead classrooms. This program is a win for everyone — our schools, our students, and our community.”

The program places three long-standing goals into focus: increasing local degree attainment, training specialized and classroom-ready educators, and ensuring every classroom is led by a representative teacher, building upon individual efforts by Reach University, Delgado Community College, and NIET.

“Delgado has long sought opportunity-focused partnerships to ensure our graduates have access to the right resources to achieve their college and career goals,” said Dr. Larissa Littleton-Steib, chancellor of Delgado Community College. “Together with Reach, we’ve established a first-of-its-kind articulation agreement that offers nearly every Delgado grad an affordable pathway to a bachelor’s degree and career in education. ED funding accelerates the impact of this articulation pathway, offering an even greater number of graduates the chance to fill critical roles in our local schools and become a specialized teacher to serve the young minds of today and tomorrow.”

Impact in Jefferson Parish Schools and Beyond

As of this fall, Jefferson Parish has 67 paraprofessionals enrolled in Reach University’s apprenticeship degree training program, with a growing number attributed to Reach and Delgado’s A.A. to B.A. Transfer Pathway.

LEAP aims to increase this number from 67 to at least 350 over the next five years, accelerating the pace of impact and creating a precedent of possibility in postsecondary and professional opportunities for overlooked talent populations.

Beyond degree attainment and the training of aspiring teachers, the program will also focus on teacher retention and success. ED funding enables LEAP to implement a teacher induction program that provides mentorship, professional development, and resources as teachers transition into the classroom, ensuring the satisfaction and effectiveness of new teachers.

The partnership plans to replicate LEAP in four additional high-need K-12 parishes experiencing acute specialized teacher shortages, with at least two parishes based in rural communities. Reach University’s [National Center for the Apprenticeship Degree](#) (NCAD) will also support in-state colleges and universities in disseminating LEAP’s apprenticeship degree model, offering resources and guidance to help educational institutions adopt a similar pathway.

“Ensuring all students have access to a highly effective and well-prepared teacher is central to NIET’s mission of building educator excellence,” said Dr. Joshua Barnett, Chief Executive Officer for the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. “We are excited for this partnership with Reach University, Delgado Community College, and Jefferson Parish to address staffing challenges utilizing proven best practices that will support giving all students the opportunity for success.”

As LEAP builds upon Reach’s current degree and teacher credential programs, eligible Delgado Community College grads are encouraged to apply now for the Spring 2025 academic year and beyond. Applications for Spring 2025 will be accepted through October 31, 2024. Learn more about the [A.A. to B.A. Transfer Pathway](#) program and Reach’s [admissions process](#). For K-12 parish partnership inquiries, please visit <https://reach.edu/partnerships>.

ABOUT REACH UNIVERSITY

[Reach University](#) is the nation's only nonprofit accredited university fully dedicated to advancing the Apprenticeship Degree — an affordable path for working adults to gain a university education and degree. Reach is actively solving America's teacher shortage by creating fully-embedded pathways for high-potential individuals to earn degrees, credentials, and jobs as teachers within their own communities. By focusing on low-income, urban, and rural regions, offering online tutorials and classes, and rendering academic credit for on-the-job experience, Reach University is eliminating barriers to entry in high-need professions and building untapped pipelines of locally representative talent. Reach University currently operates in Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, and Tennessee.

ABOUT DELGADO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Founded in 1921, Delgado Community College is a diverse, dynamic, open-admissions community college providing high-quality education through innovation and excellence in teaching and learning. The College offers a variety of academic and workforce programs and is committed to nurturing and sustaining an inclusive culture to support student success. Learn more at www.dcc.edu.

ABOUT NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

For the past 25 years, the [National Institute for Excellence in Teaching](#) (NIET) has partnered with schools, districts, states, and universities to build educator excellence and give all students the opportunity for success. NIET's initiatives, including the TAP System, teacher and leader development, school improvement, rubric and observation systems, and educator preparation, have supported 11,000 schools, impacting more than 350,000 educators and 3.5 million students across the U.S.

ABOUT JEFFERSON PARISH SCHOOLS

[Jefferson Parish Schools](#) is the largest and most diverse public school system in Louisiana and the 98th largest in the nation. Our system of 74 schools serves approximately 47,000 students on both banks of the Mississippi River. With approximately 6,000 employees, JP Schools is one

of the largest employers in Jefferson Parish. Our district exists to provide the education our students deserve to succeed in life and make our world a better place.

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