Far-reaching reform efforts that mandate the hiring of more qualified teachers are forcing institutions of higher education to take a hard look at teacher preparation. In particular, there is a growing problem of the least prepared teachers concentrated in schools with the greatest learning needs and challenges (Hunt, 2003). At the same time, teacher shortages, particularly in urban areas, and in math and science, are reaching crises levels – estimates place the demand for new teachers in the United States at approximately 2.5 million by 2008. (Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth, 2001). According to the Urban Teacher Collaborative supported by the Carnegie Corporation and the Ford Foundation, 98% of urban school systems have an immediate need for science teachers (Chicago Sun Times, Jan. 17, 2002). This enormous demand for new teachers has created a need to extend teacher certification and post-baccalaureate degree programs to a larger audience. Placing a program online, an effective means to reach such an audience in many fields, is a more complicated process for teacher preparation given the need for practical experiences to accompany coursework, and state-by-state differences in teacher certification requirements. Marquette University has met these challenges, developing an online teacher certification program in conjunction with Loyola University of Chicago and Saint Joseph’s University in Pittsburgh.

This best practices presentation provides three important areas of guidance. First, it will detail the elements of effective online teacher certification, developed based on the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) guidelines for standards-based, performance-based competencies for teacher licensure candidates and practicing teachers (INTASC, 1992). Second, it will specify the process by which three universities shared technology and resources to develop this multistate teacher certification program. Finally, it will outline the process by which this program provided students both online and practical experiences to meet certification requirements, including specifying the critical tasks and outcomes used for assessing the program’s effectiveness, providing a framework for others in fields in which practical experiences must accompany coursework.
References

