

THE FACULTY

Colleges Widen Alternate Routes to Teacher Certification

'Career switchers' flock to programs that offer practical experience in classrooms

BY JULIANNE BASINGER

NORFOLK, VA.

DAVE LEWELLYN can still a roomful of 12-year-olds with a glance.

It's that look your mother used to give you, the one that let you know she meant business. Military officers learn to perfect it. And here in the 7th-grade biology class at Norfolk Collegiate School, where Navy Commander Lewellyn has become Mr. Lewellyn the teacher, the look serves him well when a dark-haired boy full of more energy than he knows what to do with starts shoving the back of the kid sitting in front of him—just for fun.

Mr. Lewellyn has come to the school as a student teacher in Old Dominion University's Military Career Transition Program. In the dozen years since this public university next-door to a large Navy base created the program as an alternative to its traditional teacher-certification program, about 1,250 military officers and senior enlisted personnel have graduated to become schoolteachers in 47 states.

Alternative routes to teacher certification, like the one Mr. Lewellyn completed last month, are now training more teachers than ever. Such programs began proliferating in the 1980s, as states searched for better ways both to bring people without education degrees into teaching, and to meet teacher shortages by providing training toward certification rather than merely issuing emergency permits.

Most of the early alternative programs were run by school districts. But in recent years, education scholars say, more colleges have stepped in to help or have started their own programs. "The vast majority of alternative programs are in colleges and universities, done cooperatively with schools," says Penelope M. Earley, a senior director at the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

MOVING ON AFTER A MILITARY CAREER

About 250 institutions now offer alternative routes to teacher certification for people who have had careers or baccalaureate degrees in subjects other than education, she says. And career switchers are the fastest-growing group in teacher training, according to a survey of teacher-preparation programs published last fall by the Center for Education Information, a nonprofit group based in Washington.

For Old Dominion's Mr. Lewellyn, teaching will be a second career. The classroom at Norfolk Collegiate, a private school for all grades, might seem worlds away from the cruisers and destroyers that he sailed on during 20 years as a surface-warfare officer. He says, however, that when he graduated as a biology major from the University of South Carolina, his aim was to teach after he served the four years he owed the Navy for putting him through



PHOTOGRAPHS FOR THE CHRONICLE BY TOM COG

Dave Lewellyn, a Navy officer and prospective teacher: Without the training at Old Dominion U.'s program, "I probably would not have taught a class but rather would have given a briefing."

college in the Reserve Officers Training Corps. "I've been interested in teaching my whole life," he says.

But he got caught up in the Navy's travel and excitement, he says. He relished his role as the young man in dress whites and the one who led other young men through the machine of combat or the preparation for it. "I loved the adventure," he says.

Now, 20 years later, he's preparing to retire from military life. So he's leading the 7th-graders through the basics of evolution, in a classroom where real philodendrons and fake tropical fish hang from the ceiling.

The teachers produced in Old Dominion's alternative program have won praise from school principals for their strong knowledge of their academic specialties and for the maturity, organization, and experience in group management that they bring to the job. The program's leaders say its success can be credited to its being designed to build on the knowledge and skills that the military people already have, and to provide the pedagogical and child-development knowledge they will need as teachers.

Nearly 30 percent of the people in all teacher-preparation programs in 1999 began their study after they already had received at least a bachelor's degree, the Center for Education Information reported last fall.

More than half of those enrolled in post-baccalaureate programs have come into teaching from jobs outside the field of education, as have about 11 percent of the



Robert H. MacDonald, director of Old Dominion's program: "In some ways," military people "have been training for 20 years to become teachers."

students in undergraduate teaching programs. "The most dramatic change in the past 15 years has been a shift toward people beginning their preparation to teach later in life and later in their academic careers," says C. Emily Feistritz, the center's president. "It's the biggest change going on in the teaching profession, and it's one of the trends in higher education that really is market-driven."

DEMAND IS HIGH

The demand for schoolteachers is high in many areas across the nation and is expected to increase. The U.S. Department of Education has forecast that the nation will need to hire at least two million new teachers during the next decade.

Colleges graduate more than enough

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people from teacher-training programs to meet the demand, Ms. Feistritz and other education scholars note. The problem, they say, lies in muddled hiring processes in school districts, and the fact that about 40 percent of graduates of teacher-education programs don't become teachers. Graduates of traditional teacher-education programs are overwhelmingly young, white women who generally don't want to teach far from home, or in inner cities and rural areas, where the demand for teachers is greatest, Ms. Feistritz says.

Moreover, about a third of teacher-education graduates who do seek jobs leave the profession after the first three years. But nearly all of the older students who come through alternative programs in order to begin a second career do become teachers, and most of them stay in the profession, she says.

In the 12 years since the Old Dominion program began, more than 95 percent of the graduates have become teachers, and about 90 percent have stayed in the profession, says its director, Robert H. MacDonald. Most are military people who are nearing retirement, but are young enough to want a second career.

Like other college-based alternative routes geared toward the needs of career switchers, Old Dominion's program offers courses off campus and during evenings and weekends to accommodate students still working in the military, allowing them to move into teaching without having to take time off and lose income.

People in the military spend most of their careers either giving or receiving training, says Mr. MacDonald, an education professor at Old Dominion. "In some ways, many service members have been training for 20 years to become teachers," he says.

Many also have a strong knowledge of mathematics, science, geography, political science, and psychology. About 90 percent of the students entering the program have already earned a bachelor's degree, and 45 percent have master's degrees as well.

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT AND COUNSELING

Students can complete the program—in which most earn a master's degree—in about 18 months. The program, which now has about 800 students, provides individual support and counseling to students from their initial enrollment to their job placement in schools. Advisers begin by reviewing each student's academic background and service training to recommend an appropriate course of study. The resulting certificate to teach is reciprocal in many states.

All of the courses are taught by veteran schoolteachers, and the program employs about 50 teachers as adjunct instructors each semester. Ten full-time faculty members at Old Dominion advise on curricular issues and help to select the adjuncts.

The heavy use of adjuncts has caused grumbling among some education faculty members at Old Dominion. "They think someone's taking their rice bowl," Mr. MacDonald says. "But to do this work, I need the assistance of a master teacher

Initially, the program used more full-time faculty members, along with the teachers, but that changed in recent years as it has grown rapidly. Besides, Mr. MacDonald says, few faculty members wanted to teach the evening and weekend courses, and the schoolteachers proved model instructors.

PRACTICAL TRAINING

The schoolteachers have had a large role in designing the curricula. The typical course of study includes a review of academic subjects, as well as courses on human growth and development and on teaching styles to meet the individual needs of schoolchildren, including those in special-education classes. The military students learn classroom management and how to plan lessons and assess results. And they learn how schools are structured and run.

Because the program emphasizes practical training, it relies on collaborative relationships with schools. "The military types want a practical approach. They want you to tell them like it is," says Martha Drummond-Dale, an instructor in the program who is an assistant principal at Great Neck Middle School, in Virginia Beach, Va. "They have lived some life and seen some death, and most of them are parents."

The practical approach is a hallmark of alternative teacher-training programs—and its success in the best of those programs has helped spur traditional teacher-education programs to change their approach in recent years, education scholars say.

"Alternative programs have validated that field-based approaches to teacher training really are the best," says Ms. Feistritz, of the Center for Education Information. She and Ms. Earley, of the teacher-education association, say that in some cases, it has become difficult to distinguish alternative programs from traditional ones.

Still, Ms. Feistritz and other researchers note that alternative programs, like traditional ones, vary in quality. Linda Darling-Hammond, an education professor at Stanford University and head of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, an influential research group, says the best alternative programs meld pedagogical course work with practical training and work with mentor-teachers in schools.

GUIDANCE FROM VETERAN TEACHERS

Some alternative programs offer only a few weeks of summer training before giving participants full responsibility for teaching schoolchildren. But studies have shown that those teachers often feel underprepared, and many of them end up leaving the profession, Ms. Darling-Hammond says.

Such programs seem to presume that the new teacher will receive some kind of supervision from veteran teachers or school principals, but that often doesn't happen, she adds.

Old Dominion's military students must complete a year of course work before do-

Alternative Tracks in Teacher Education

About 250 colleges and universities offer alternative training programs for students who already have a bachelor's degree in an academic subject other than education and who want to earn a teaching license. Many of those programs are in California and Texas, states that have faced some of the largest shortages of teachers in the nation.

Some examples:

- **THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM** last fall enrolled the first 310 students in CalStatETEACH, an Internet-based academic program that allows elementary-school teachers who are working with "emergency" credentials to obtain full certification in 18 months. They stay on the job as they work toward full certification. The students are placed in groups of about 20 and can communicate with each other online. They also work with veteran schoolteachers and meet several times with faculty members from one of the six campuses participating in the program: Fresno, Fullerton, Hayward, Los Angeles, Monterey Bay, and Pomona.
- **COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY'S** Project Promise trains students who already have bachelor's degrees and careers in other fields and want to be teachers. The program selects 20 students annually from a pool of about 200 applicants. The students must commit to three semesters of full-time preparation, including pedagogical course work at the university and practical experience in each of five settings—urban, rural, middle school, high school, and service learning. About 92 percent of the graduates have taken full-time teaching jobs in the dozen years since the project began.
- **GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY'S** Crystal City Secondary Teacher Education Program enrolls about 80 students annually who want to make a career change to secondary-school teaching. The program began about a decade ago to help military people with science and mathematics degrees become teachers. Military people now make up only about a quarter of the students. The program, which takes about two years to complete, is designed for students who work full time, offering evening courses in pedagogy. Students are also required to complete at least 60 hours of observation in schools before beginning 15 weeks of full-time student teaching. Nearly 100 percent of the graduates have taken full-time teaching jobs.
- **THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN AT MILWAUKEE** has worked for the past decade with the city's public schools and teachers' union to offer the Metropolitan Milwaukee Teacher Education Program. The aim is to recruit and train minority professionals to teach in urban elementary and middle schools; 71 percent of the graduates are African American. The program begins with seven weeks of summer training, during which instructors observe the students for their aptitude as teachers. About 5 percent are dropped from the program at that point. The rest become full-time teachers for an academic year, starting in the fall. They are paid the same salary as other beginning teachers and are assigned to work with veteran teachers, who regularly visit their classrooms and provide coaching. Graduates are guaranteed a contract by the Milwaukee Public Schools.

SOURCE: CHRONICLE REPORTING

they have full responsibility for a classroom. But the program gives them school experience from the start.

In their first semester, they take a practicum in which they spend time observing and working in schools. About 20 percent of the military people drop out of the program during that time, Mr. MacDonald says. "They find out that teaching is all about working with kids, and some of them decide this just isn't what they want to do."

They also take an introductory course in classroom management, aimed at helping them evaluate themselves and make the transition—in job and in identity—from the military to teaching, says Ms. Drummond-Dale.

"They all start out referring to each other as the lieutenant or the general, and I tell them, a sixth-grader will not give a damn whether you're a lieutenant or a general," she says. "But it's an easier transition to

Most of the graduates of the program, like Mr. Lewellyn at Norfolk Collegiate School, become secondary-school teachers in math and science. He credits the program with not only preparing him to teach, but also helping him to think through how to translate his experience as a Navy officer to his work in the classroom.

"If I had not gone through the program, I probably would not have taught a class but rather would have given a briefing," he says.

Still, Mr. Lewellyn says that some of the 17- and 18-year-olds under his command in the Navy were not far removed in maturity from the 12-year-old students in middle school.

And his military years have given him the confidence and perspective of experience. "I was on a ship blown up by a mine in 1988 in the Persian Gulf," he says. "I think I can handle anything that happens in