University Center for Teacher Education (UCTE) Professor Elaine Chin and Orfalea College of Business (Management Information Systems) Professor Barry Floyd have been awarded a research grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The $1,022,000 grant by USDE's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) will fund a three-year study (2001-04) of alternative teacher credential programs in California.

Forty-six states have adopted alternative programs as one way of meeting the teacher shortage. Students in these programs work as full-time teachers in internships while learning how to teach from university and school district personnel and faculty. However, the effectiveness of alternative credential programs in resolving the teacher shortage remains a question.

Chin and Floyd will gather and analyze data from 600 teacher candidates drawn from a subset of the 77 California state-sponsored programs. From this data, they will test their theoretical model to predict the graduation and subsequent retention rates of students participating in these alternative education programs. The findings of their study will help inform decision-makers about the design and implementation of these programs in the United States.

OERI grants are extremely competitive. Chin and Floyd’s proposal was among only 20 funded from a field of more than 300 applications nationwide this year. Joining Chin and Floyd as consultants to the project will be Professor John Young of Rutgers University and Mike McKibbin, Ph.D., of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

Chin has undergraduate and graduate degrees in English and education from the University of Chicago and her Ph.D. in education from Stanford University. Her fields of expertise are literacy education, curriculum and teaching methods, assessment, and research. Previously, she earned a promising researcher of the year award from the National Council of Teachers of English and was named a Carnegie Scholar for 2000-01. She joined the UCTE faculty in 1996.

Floyd has undergraduate and graduate degrees in mathematics and systems science from Michigan State University, and his MBA and Ph.D. in business information systems from the University of Michigan. With his extensive expertise in management systems, he has previously consulted on a number of industry and school district projects, including the development of an integrated information system for the San Luis Coastal Unified School District that stores student demographic, enrollment, program participation, and test performance data. He joined the management faculty in the Orfalea College of Business in 1990.
t is a little-known fact that Cal Poly was first envisioned as a teachers college. Myron Angel (the "Father of Cal Poly") proposed the establishment of a "normal college" in San Luis Obispo in 1894. He had visited his hometown, Oneonta, N.Y., and been impressed by the culture and enlightenment he found there. Convinced that these characteristics emanated from the local teachers college, Angel returned to San Luis Obispo dedicated to founding such an institution here.

Angel enlisted the support of State Sen. Sylvester C. Smith of Bakersfield, who agreed to shepherd the idea through the legislature. Smith discovered in 1897 that there was strong resistance to the idea of putting a teachers college in such an isolated spot. He suggested to Angel that they establish a polytechnic school instead, and the new institution was signed into law on March 8, 1901.

Teacher education became a formal part of Cal Poly's curriculum in 1933. President Julian A. McPhee selected Cal Poly as the coordinating center of the Bureau of Agriculture, which was the division of the State Department of Education responsible for all agricultural education in high schools statewide. A training program for vocational agriculture teacher cadets had been ongoing at Cal Poly since 1931, but it was the placement of the bureau here that centered all state agricultural education at the California Polytechnic School.

By the early 1980s, Cal Poly's Education Department and education faculty in the colleges (then schools) of Agriculture, Liberal Arts, and Science and Mathematics offered elementary and secondary teaching programs in all the major fields, plus professional education programs in school administration, counseling, and special education. In 1990 the Education Department and teacher education faculty were reorganized into the University Center for Teacher Education, reflective of Cal Poly's "learn-by-doing" philosophy and its universitywide commitment to teacher education.