Rural nursing homes lagging behind in information technology

Generated from News Bureau press release: Rural Nursing Homes are Falling Behind in Health Information Technology

COLUMBIA, Mo., Dec. 13 (UPI) -- In the first national assessment of nursing homes since 2004, researchers have found a significant difference in health information technology use between nursing homes in urban and rural communities which may have an impact on patient care.

The study by the University of Missouri found that nursing homes located in metropolitan areas had greater IT laboratory capabilities for resident registration and admission along with having a better ability to conduct and verify medical tests than their rural counterparts.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that more than 1 million older Americans depend on the 16,000 nursing homes in the United States for health care.

"Previous studies demonstrate that IT sophistication can improve health outcomes for patients, such as reducing hospitalizations," Greg Alexander, professor at the Sinclair School of Nursing, said in a press release. "The benefits of IT sophistication do not differ based on geography; however, in this national assessment, we found a significant gap in IT sophistication between rural and urban areas."

This gap in health IT could have implications for patient care because rural nursing homes would have less capacity to share information with hospitals to allow for high-quality transitions in care, according to researchers.

"As competition for experienced health care IT professionals increases in urban areas, rural health care organizations are finding it difficult to compete for needed talent," Alexander said in a press release. "Policy makers need to be aware of the unique challenges facing rural health organizations and provide the necessary incentives to help rural nursing homes improve their IT sophistication. Improvement of IT sophistication will lead to better patient outcomes and a better quality of life for nursing home residents."

Alexander plans to study health informatics in nursing homes and IT sophistication and quality measures at Macquarie University in Australia thanks to the Fulbright U.S. Scholar program grant he recently received.
"The state of nursing home information technology sophistication in rural and non-rural U.S. markets," was published in the Journal of Rural Health.

Rural nursing homes face technology and staffing challenges

Generated from News Bureau press release: Rural Nursing Homes are Falling Behind in Health Information Technology

Watch the story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=b791139d-0096-4942-b870-2c86ad595649

COLUMBIA - A new study from the University of Missouri says rural nursing homes are falling behind when it comes to information technology and attracting and retaining top medical talent.

The study, the first of its kind since 2004, said both of these factors are critical in providing high-quality transitions in care.

Tony Stuart, administrator of The Stuart Home in Centralia, said his nursing home faces challenges constantly in keeping up with its urban counterparts when it comes to technology. However, he said technology can't make up for the individualized care his home tries to provide.

"Technology can't help a compassionate heart, a caring hand and no computer is going to do that at the bedside," Stuart said.

Previous studies did not suggest there was a gap in care that was based on where you live. However, Greg Alexander with the Sinclair School of Nursing said this new study proves that is not the case.

"[Previous studies suggested] the benefits of IT sophistication do not differ based on geography; however, in this national assessment, we found a significant gap in IT sophistication between rural and urban areas," Alexander said.
Alexander also said one of the biggest factors impacting rural nursing-home care is the inability to get and keep top medical talent.

"As competition for experienced health care IT professionals increases in urban areas, rural health-care organizations are finding it difficult to compete for needed talent," Alexander said.

Alexander said rural nursing homes need to provide incentives to their staff in order to keep some of their best workers on board.

Stuart said his nurses often use a job at his facility as a "stepping stone" for their career and that he struggles keeping the best ones on his staff.

"We would like to be able to clone nurses, especially those good ones and keep them forever. They move on and they want bigger challenges or to do different things and sometimes they want more money and there's other opportunities for them," Stuart said.

Stuart said while he faces issues when it comes to technology and retaining his staff, he tries to create a family-centered atmosphere at his facility, which he said goes further than any piece of equipment.

(AAU Science News Website; More than 1.1 million unique visitors per month)

Radioactive tracer shows corn roots fight pest

Generated from News Bureau press release: Fighting World Hunger: Researchers Use Nuclear Methods to Study Pest Resistance in Corn Plants

Scientists have used radioisotopes to uncover the mechanisms corn plants use to combat a major pest, the western corn rootworm.
“The western corn rootworm is a voracious pest,” says Richard Ferrieri, a research professor in the University of Missouri Interdisciplinary Plant Group, and an investigator at the University of Missouri Research Reactor.

“Rootworm larvae hatch in the soil during late spring and immediately begin feeding on the crop’s root system. Mild damage to the root system can hinder water and nutrient uptake, threatening plant fitness, while more severe damage can result in the plant falling over.”

Breeding corn that can fight these pests is a promising alternative. Ferrieri and colleagues used radioisotopes to trace essential nutrients and hormones as they moved through live corn plants. In a series of tests, the team injected radioisotope tracers in healthy and rootworm-infested corn plants.

“For some time, we’ve known that auxin, a powerful plant hormone, is involved in stimulating new root growth,” Ferrieri says. “Our target was to follow auxin’s biosynthesis and movement in both healthy and stressed plants and determine how it contributes to this process.”

By tagging auxin with a radioactive tracer, the researchers were able to use a medical diagnostic imaging tool call positron emission tomography, or PET imaging, to “watch” the movement of auxin in living plant roots in real time.

Similarly, they attached a radioactive tracer to an amino acid called glutamine that is important in controlling auxin chemistry, and observed the pathways the corn plants used to transport glutamine and how it influenced auxin biosynthesis.

The researchers found that auxin is tightly regulated at the root tissue level where rootworms are feeding. The study also revealed that auxin biosynthesis is vital to root regrowth and involves highly specific biochemical pathways that are influenced by the rootworm and triggered by glutamine metabolism.

“This work has revealed several new insights about root regrowth in crops that can fend off a rootworm attack,” Ferrieri says. “Our observations suggest that improving glutamine utilization could be a good place to start for crop breeding programs or for engineering rootworm-resistant corn for a growing global population.”

According to estimates, the current global population is more than 7.4 billion people and is growing at a rate of 88 million people per year. Developing corn varieties that are resistant to pests is vital to sustain the estimated 9 billion global population by 2050.

The study appears in the journal Plant Physiology.
MU researchers find method of pest resistance for corn crops

Generated from News Bureau press release: Fighting World Hunger: Researchers Use Nuclear Methods to Study Pest Resistance in Corn Plants


COLUMBIA - Researchers at the University of Missouri have found the reason some corn plants are tolerant of a major pest in the United States.

The western corn rootworm is a pest that has disrupted corn fields in the U.S. for longer than a century.

"The western corn rootworm is the most important insect pest in the United States, it effects the yield of corn especially when under drought conditions," said Bruce Hibbard, a research entomologist with the USDA Agriculture Research Service.

The rootworms hatch in the soil and then start to chew on the roots of corn plants.

Agriculture companies have tried a variety of methods to rid corn crops of the rootworms, but the insects have built up a resistance against these methods.

MU Research Professor Richard Ferrieri said his team has now figured out how corn can survive an attack from the pest.

"We now understand the basic mechanisms for corn plants to tolerate an attack by the western corn rootworm and develop new roots," he said.

In 2011, Ferrieri’s partners with the USDA at the University of Missouri found some corn plants that could tolerate an attack from the rootworms.

Using nuclear technology, Ferrieri and his team looked at the plants and found that they were producing more auxin, a powerful plant hormone.
The hormone helps stimulate new root growth in plants, which made up for the roots being damaged by the western corn rootworm.

To see where the auxin was being made and where it was moving, researchers used positron emission tomography, often used in hospitals for cancer diagnostic studies in humans.

"I've taken that same technology and moved it into the laboratory setting, and have applied it to studying plants," Ferrieri said.

Now, Ferrieri said it is time to move forward with breeding programs.

"This work has revealed several new insights about root regrowth in crops that can fend off a rootworm attack," Ferrieri said in a news release. “Our observations suggest that improving glutamine utilization could be a good place to start for crop breeding programs or for engineering rootworm-resistant corn for a growing global population.”

Hibbard said the western corn rootworm is not a big problem for Missouri farms where there's more continuous soybeans or where corn is rotated with soybeans every year.

However, he warns farmers of the northern corn rootworm that he said appears to be adapting to crop rotations.

"This is something that farmers will need to be looking for even in rotated corn next year," he said.

**MISSOURIAN**

**Amid scrutiny, MU and research institutions rely on animal testing**

ELIZABETH LOUTFI, 1 hr ago

COLUMBIA — From Abyssinian cats to zebrafish, animals have helped MU amass over a century of scientific research and discovery.

Animals have been used in research for centuries to study diseases and develop treatments for both animals and humans. Seventy-five of the 98 Nobel Prizes awarded for physiology or medicine were for research that depended, in part, on animals.
Despite its benefits, nearly half of Americans still said they opposed animal research in a Pew Research Center poll in 2014.

As of mid-November, there were 448 ongoing animal research projects at MU. Each of these projects involve dozens of cats or dogs, and hundreds of mice, rats or other small animals, said Jeff Henegar, director of MU’s Animal Care Quality Assurance Office.

A pilot study by the College of Veterinary Medicine published earlier this year raised questions for one animal rights group about the way four MU researchers treated seven young beagles during an experiment. The researchers injured the dogs' left eyes to see how effective a controversial acid treatment was in healing damaged corneas. After discovering the treatment was ineffective, the researchers humanely euthanized all seven beagles, according to previous Missourian reporting.

That disclosure prompted a response on social media in Columbia and beyond about the practice of euthanizing some lab animals. The beagle story seemed to elicit surprise, too, about the kind of animal research that takes place at MU.

"Animal models are the basis of how we move fundamental research into something that's much more therapeutic or applied in the real world," said Mark McIntosh, interim vice chancellor for research, graduate studies and economic development at MU.

"Researchers set out to answer very specific questions," said Tom Holder, director of the U.K.-based nonprofit Speaking of Research, an animal research advocacy network. "Many of these will require measuring varying chemical levels within different organs of the animal they're studying. This would require tissue samples to be taken after the animal has been humanely euthanized."

The four researchers who conducted the study, which was criticized by the Beagle Freedom Project, declined to be interviewed for this article.

**A controversial tool**
Euthanasia is permitted after animal testing only to relieve suffering, prevent disease or for tissue storage. Although the beagles' eyes had fully healed at the conclusion of MU’s study, the researchers still euthanized them because their corneas could be used for future research.

Henegar, McIntosh and Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research Michele Kennett could not comment on the study involving the beagles due to a pending lawsuit against the university by the Beagle Freedom Project. The petition alleges MU violated the Missouri Sunshine Law by denying fee waivers and demanding more than $82,000 to hand over records on animals used by the MU School of Medicine.

The nonprofit group submitted at least 27 requests for public records for 179 different animal test subjects, and claims MU could face up to $900,000 in fines, plus attorney fees and costs. But the Beagle Freedom Project will settle with MU for just $1 if the university agrees to working with the group, according to a statement on its website.

This would entail MU working to develop an adoption program for its laboratory animals. The group is also offering to pay to install a live-stream webcam in the lab animals' living area.

Henegar said that when studies are concluded, MU finds adoptive families for animals that meet certain criteria — like health and temperament — and whose tissue isn't needed for further study.

In the last 10 years, 394 dogs, 293 cats and dozens of gerbils, mice, rats and other small animals have been adopted from MU labs and research centers, MU spokesman Christian Basi said. He did not have data for the number of animals in studies on campus or the number of animals that are euthanized.

**Animal research guidelines**

Congress passed the Animal Welfare Act in 1966 — the first and only federal law on the books enforcing proper care and use of animals used in experiments, teaching and research.
The law does not apply to animals used in agricultural research, or mice, rats, fish, reptiles and amphibians. But all cats, dogs, chimpanzees, monkeys, guinea pigs, hamsters, rabbits and other warm-blooded animals used for research are housed, fed and cared for under the conditions laid out in the Act.

Researchers hoping to receive a federal grant for an animal study must comply with the Act's guidelines and the National Institutes of Health's federal Public Health Service Policy on the Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. Under both sets of federal guidelines, all research institutions are required to have an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee.

The animal care committee reviews all research proposals for species selection and number of animal subjects, the demand for the suggested research, the animals' treatment, as well as the conditions in which the study would be performed. The study must be approved by the committee to receive federal funding.

The Act requires that all animal care committees have a chairperson, a veterinarian and a community member who is unaffiliated with the research institution. The National Institute of Health policy requires animal care committees to include a scientist, a community member, a veterinarian and a non-scientist.

These members are all appointed by an institutional official. At MU, Kennett assumes this role.

"Community members are a really valuable part of the committee in terms of making sure that we all stay grounded," she said.

Fourteen people sit on MU's committee, Henegar said, including two non-scientists, two community members, a veterinarian and scientists with expertise in varying fields.

In Henegar's three and a half years as director, he said the committee has never rejected a study. However, approving a study can take a while, he added, because they are rarely accepted the way they are first written.
A harmful stigma

Holder said most people support animal research for medical or scientific purposes, provided it's strictly regulated. Nevertheless, opponents have taken extreme measures — even committing acts of violence against researchers — to protest animal studies.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, American and British animal rights groups broke into and bombed labs, and harassed and assaulted researchers, according to the National Association for Biomedical Research.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation found two groups, the Earth Liberation Front and the Animal Liberation Front, responsible for more than $110 million in property damage and for the "vast majority" of terrorist acts committed in the U.S.

"When I first started in animal research, I was terrified to tell people what I did," said Jazzminn Hembree, an Ohio member of Speaking of Research. "I would just say, 'I work with animals,' or something like that."

Hembree has worked in labs for almost 13 years on various projects but is now a registered laboratory animal technologist for a university in Ohio, where she oversees the animals used in studies.

She said she's been with Speaking of Research for just over a year and has become acquainted with researchers who have dealt firsthand with backlash or animal rights extremism.

"I think it's really common for researchers to have this fear," she said. "I have a family, and the last thing I want is for someone to come target me or my family."

A push for transparency

On Nov. 15, a national report released by the White Coat Waste Project on dogs used in federal laboratories revealed that in 2015, more than 1,100 dogs were used in experiments by five
federal agencies. The report excludes the additional 60,000 dogs used in experiments at universities and other laboratories, which are also paid for by taxpayers.

The White Coat Waste Project opposes animal testing funded by taxpayer dollars and demands more transparency from government agencies about their animal research. Its report details some of the experiments conducted on dogs in federal laboratories, such as inducing them to have heart attacks or drilling into their skulls.

"In many cases, it appears agencies intentionally omit or obscure information to prevent scrutiny," according to the report.

Holder, who also works for another U.K.-based group called Understanding Animal Research, said scientists should start speaking more openly about animal studies because it will reduce the animosity people have about animal research. He said he's seen that change very clearly in the U.K.

In May 2014, the Concordat on Openness in Animal Research was launched in the U.K. So far, 109 British research institutions have signed the agreement, stating they are committed to improving transparency about their animal use.

Holder said this put the U.K. "ahead of the curve" in openly discussing animal research.

"But we're seeing U.S. universities providing more and better-quality information, and I think that needs to be applauded," Holder said. "Animals play a small, but important part in medical and veterinary research. Without their careful use, we wouldn't have many of the medicines that we take for granted."
College food pantries fight rising food insecurity

COLUMBIA – This holiday season, many people will find it appropriate to donate to charities like food banks, but there’s one group that some people tend to leave out.

A report by several college organizations shows that food insecurity of college students is increasing. According to the report, 48 percent of students reported food insecurity in the previous 30 days.

According to the Missouri Foundation for Health, food insecurity rates have risen in Missouri for the last 10 years. Missouri is the sixth least food secure state in the country and has the second highest hunger rate after Arkansas.

With food insecurity on the rise, the number of college food pantries is also increasing. The College and University Food Bank Alliance, a national organization that aims to support campus food banks, reported Friday that it reached 400 members last week and it now has 411.

Tiger Pantry, the University of Missouri’s student-run food bank, was founded in 2012 to assist students, faculty and staff experiencing food insecurity. Marketing coordinator Caela Ancona said some people don’t even know if they can use the pantry’s services.

“A lot of the times, people don’t necessarily understand what food insecurity is,” she said. “You could be food insecure and you might not even know it.”

She said Tiger Pantry was started with Missouri’s hunger rate in mind and it strives to be a resource for anyone who can’t access food for any reason.

Most of Tiger Pantry’s food comes from food donations, and during the holiday season, the pantry focuses on food drives all across campus to obtain food.

It’s also an agent of the Food Bank for Central and Northeast Missouri, meaning it can share food if the pantry is running low, and it receives some money from donors.
MU Warns Students about Email Scam


MU, Stephens College, Columbia College students to receive degrees this weekend

MEGHAN LALLY, 14 hrs ago

Generated from News Bureau Press Release: [More Than 2,500 Degrees to Be Granted at MU Commencement Ceremonies](http://mms.tveys.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=9f6c652-9413-4b08-af36-326d2c8825a2)

COLUMBIA — Lawyer and philanthropist W.H. “Bert” Bates and civil rights advocates Frankie Muse Freeman and Robert Parris Moses will receive honorary degrees during the Honors Convocation at 8:30 a.m. Saturday at Jesse Auditorium. MU will award 2,563 degrees this weekend during fall commencement ceremonies.

Bates, known for a long record of civic, philanthropic and legal service, graduated from MU in 1949 and earned his law degree at the University of Michigan Law School. Along with practicing law at Lathrop & Gage LLP in Kansas City, Bates served on the University of Missouri System Board of Curators for six years and was elected president of the board in 1983. Bates also served on the governing bodies of 25 entities, two banks, 15 charitable organizations, seven professional organizations and three government offices. He was named one of 24 "Living
Legends" of Kansas City by Ingram’s Magazine, and has been honored with 14 awards for his contributions, including four from bar associations and five from MU.

Freeman was the first woman to practice law in Missouri and has been an advocate for civil and human rights and racial justice. Freeman joined the civil rights movement in 1954 and held a variety of leadership roles, including lead counsel in the 1954 landmark NAACP suit against the St. Louis Housing Authority. The suit ended legal racial discrimination in St Louis public housing.

Freeman served as a member of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights for 16 years after being nominated by President Lyndon Johnson in 1964. She also served as the first Inspector General of the Community Services Administration during the Carter administration.

In recognition of Freeman’s efforts, she received various awards and honors, including induction into the National Bar Association’s Hall of Fame, the International Civil Rights Walk of Fame and the St. Louis Walk of Fame. In 2011 Freeman received the NAACP’s highest honor, the Spingarn Award.

Also known for his dedication to civil rights, Moses is known for his influence within the Civil Rights Movement and his effort to bring education to low-income students.

Moses founded the Algebra Project in 1982 to help low-income students achieve mathematical literacy. He was also involved in various civil rights organizations, including the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Council, the Council of Federated Organizations and the Freedom Summer project.

Moses has received several awards for his involvement as a civil rights leader, including a 1997 Essence Award, a 1997 Peace Award from the War Resisters League and a 1999 Heinz Award.

Here’s a breakdown of which degrees will be awarded at MU this weekend:

• 2,563 total degrees.
• This includes 1,911 bachelor’s degrees, 488 master’s degrees, 151 doctoral degrees, 3 professional degrees and 10 education specialists’ degrees.

• Officials will also recognize 346 students graduating with honors.

Stephens College will hold its commencement Friday in the Kimball Ballroom of Lela Raney Wood Hall on the Stephens College campus and Columbia College will hold its commencement ceremonies Saturday in the Southwell Complex Gymnasium on the Columbia College campus.

For Advice on Teacher Preparation, States Turn to the Experts: Teachers Themselves

Columbia, Mo. —Elly Eckhoff listened intently as a group of veteran teachers listed what they think rookie teachers need before entering the classroom: more time student teaching and more training in how to communicate with colleagues, parents and students themselves.

And then she spoke.

“They need to know about mental illness, poverty training and assistance,” she said. “They need to know what poverty does to kids’ brains—the state of being in fight or flight.”

Thirty-plus teachers and teacher educators gathered in the conference room nodded emphatically as Eckhoff told of seeing more and more students coming to school not just deficient in academic skills, but carrying a lot of emotional baggage.

Eckhoff knows what it’s like to feel unprepared for the trauma children can bring with them to school. One of her former 1st-graders attempted suicide, Eckhoff explained later. She was past those make-or-break first five years for a new teacher, and thought she had “a decent bag of tricks” for engaging students under emotional duress, “but it just seemed like nothing was working.”

Would better training have helped her?

Some states are turning to a new set of experts as they attempt to overhaul how educators are trained: teachers themselves. Eckhoff was among a group of veteran Missouri teachers who joined representatives of university teacher preparation programs and staff from the Missouri
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for a four-hour forum this fall as part of a state effort to change how teachers are prepared for the classroom and supported once they get there.

Eckhoff said her teacher preparation taught her “to reflect” when a student was struggling, to ask herself, “What can I do to help the student be more successful academically, emotionally, or behaviorally?” But years of experience also taught her it takes a team that includes teachers, school administrators, counselors, and outside services to address the needs of hurting children who act out or bottle up their feelings.

“They’re holding everything inside,” Eckhoff said. “There’s a lot more outbursts with kids, and then sometimes it’s also the self harm, such as trying to cut themselves or even attempting suicide.”

Before they ever step foot in the classroom, she said, “what today’s teachers need is full courses devoted to these issues.”

The meeting was one stop in a weeks-long listening tour of those who mentor new teachers to help the state education department figure out how to improve training for preservice teachers. Veteran or master teachers like Eckhoff, who often have been rated highly under the new teacher evaluation standards and agreed to share their classrooms with aspiring teachers, are advising the department on issues from the soft skills teacher candidates need to how to keep professional development useful and relevant once they’re on the job.

Kim Nuetzmann, coordinator of student teaching experiences at the University of Missouri, said Missouri “wanted to hear the voice” of the veteran teachers first because they’re the ones in the classroom day-to-day with candidates. “We wanted to see what they’re seeing in the students,” she said, noting the teachers’ input will be valuable as they “move forward and continue to design coursework” for their preparation program. The University of Missouri forum was the seventh of nine.

Missouri joins Louisiana, Massachusetts, Delaware, Tennessee, and Georgia on the growing list of states using teachers to help them rethink teacher preparation. Changes in federal policy, in particular, the Obama administration’s Race to the Top program and subsequent waivers to the No Child Left Behind law, prompted states to “get serious” about teacher preparation, according to Mary-Dean Barringer, who is with the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Hannah Dietsch, assistant superintendent for talent for the Louisiana Board of Education, said Louisiana has relied heavily on teachers in its own reforms. “[Our state’s best teachers] are some of the most important and helpful voices in shaping policy direction because they are living the experience of effective teaching and, therefore, able to help policymakers develop a path forward for excellent teaching for a greater percentage of teachers,” she said. “In Louisiana, we’re building and strengthening the role of those veteran expert educators.”

In October, for instance, Louisiana announced that students entering teacher preparation in the 2018-19 academic year will be required to complete a full-year classroom residency with an
experienced mentor teacher. It was the No. 1 recommendation of new and veteran teachers, as well as district leaders and teacher preparation advisers in focus groups and a survey of more than 6,000 educators that Louisiana undertook in 2014, according to Dietsch.

The embrace of teacher perspectives in how to transform teacher preparation comes at a key moment of change: The current crop of preservice teachers is the tail end of the millennial generation. They’re also the first cohort of prospective teachers to be educated entirely under 21st century education reforms, including No Child Left Behind and the Common Core State Standards.

In some ways, this experience puts them ahead of their older colleagues. According to the Missouri educators, new teacher candidates “know their content.” They listed among their younger colleagues’ strengths: lesson planning, the ability to adjust their teaching to the needs of students, and preparedness to address the academic needs of struggling students.

Yet in other ways, this new generation of teachers is falling short, teacher experts warned. They may be the iPhone generation, but millennials aren’t inherently good at using smartphones and other technology as teaching tools. They might take one class about teaching with technology while in training, said one participant, “but, by the time they get to student teaching, it’s obsolete.”

But most important, what many new teachers lack are the soft skills and understanding they’ll need to deal with both the big crises and everyday struggles that can get in the way of children’s learning. At the Missouri forum, other veteran teachers echoed Elly Eckhoff’s call for teacher preparation programs to provide more social-emotional training.

They said preservice teachers struggle with setting limits with younger children, including knowing how to interact with them outside the formal classroom at recess. They need to improve their communication and interpersonal skills, from making eye contact to communicating positive and negative news to parents about their child and “initiating positive relationships.” And candidates also struggle with how to navigate their relationships with colleagues; they don’t always understand school culture or a teacher’s other responsibilities, such as hallway and lunchroom duty, veteran teachers said.

Not everyone agrees that states looking for answers about how to improve teacher preparation should turn to teachers themselves, however.

“I get a little nervous if states are asking for input on what teacher prep programs should teach,” said Dottie Smith, a vice president with The New Teacher Project. “I think that misses the point.” Smith said states should focus on the indicators that show a new teacher is having a strong start.

“There’s enough in current systems to say we expect brand-new teachers to be able to master student engagement at a developing level, and they need to lesson plan at a developing level … not proficient, not exemplary,” she said. “That’s not everything,” she added. But “it’s a starting
point. If [a beginning teacher] masters those things, you have a solid start and you’re on a trajectory for continued growth in the right way.”

Margo Pensavalle, professor of clinical education at the University of Southern California’s Rossier School of Education, where teacher candidates undergo a five-year preparation, said the very generational differences that concern veterans suggest the older teachers might not be the best people to gauge new teachers’ preparedness.

“Millennials are a different teacher than a lot of the master teachers that are out there,” she said, noting their training sometimes puts them at odds with their veteran counterparts.

Pensavalle explained that a recent survey sent out by the state’s Commission on Teacher Credentialing to master teachers, asking how their teacher preparation programs are doing, brought back “significant suggestions” for things the programs could do better, including teaching classroom management.

“We do classroom management really differently than how it’s carried out in the schools,” Pensavalle said. Instead of the traditional behavioral approach of telling students to stop whatever they’re doing, preservice teachers are taught “a restorative justice kind of approach,” she explained.

“We talk about first looking at your environment, your curriculum and your pedagogy, and make the best choices for your students. Because if you can engage your students, you’re going to have less classroom management problems,” Pensavalle said.

“You can’t compare [the two approaches] because they’re apples to oranges,” she added, but “it’s an area where our master teachers don’t think we do a great job only because we do it differently.”

But others are celebrating that teacher preparation systems are finally looking to teachers, many of whom are alumni of the programs in need of improvement, for advice.

“What’s to argue?” responded Kate Walsh, president of the National Council on Teacher Quality, when asked about states giving teachers a voice in teacher preparation. She argues veteran teachers should have an even more expansive role. “The model of having a university supervisor come in and decide who should pass teaching is a flawed model,” Walsh said. “We should make sure that the cooperating teacher is trained and prepared to do a really high-quality job evaluating and mentoring a student teacher.”

Louisiana’s Dietsch advises Missouri and other states considering engaging veteran teachers in preparation reform: “Think really hard about the role that those excellent teachers will play in your teacher preparation system,” she said. “It’s not just about informing a policy direction, it’s about giving those teachers a real role in preparing the next generation of teachers coming up.”

It might be awhile before Missouri’s 55 teacher education providers that churn out more than 4,500 new teachers yearly see significant changes in how they do teacher preparation. Input from
the forums will be analyzed and shared with the state’s advisory board for teacher education and others before participants regroup in the spring “to engage in learning and continue the dialogue,” according to Gale Hairston, director of educator preparation for the Missouri education department, who noted similar work is going on with building principals.

However, change is coming. Hairston said the message to teacher preparation programs is: “This world is changing and it’s going to continue to. Your candidates have to be prepared to teach in the future. Not the classroom you taught in five years ago, or 10 years ago, or never taught in.