Quick Guide:
Transformation Initiative (TI) Pathway
(Pilot Period through Fall 2015)

What is the context of the Transformation Initiative (TI) self-study and review pathway?
The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) requires that educator preparation providers (EPPs) seeking accreditation complete a self-study and host a site visit through which the accreditor determines whether or not the provider meets CAEP standards related to evidence of candidate performance, use of data in program self-improvement, and EPP capacity and commitment for quality. In completing its standards-focused self-study, a provider selects one of three pathways, of which the Transformation Initiative pathway is one. Regardless of the pathway selected, the provider must present evidence that it meets all CAEP standards.

Why create a new pathway in accreditation?
With increasing criticism about the weakness of the research base for teacher preparation, the Transformation Initiative (TI) is a Research and Development (R&D) approach to accreditation. EPPs or systems (states, school-IHE collaboratives, etc.) adopting the TI pathway engage in rigorous research investigation of a chosen aspect of educator preparation to inform the profession and/or offer research-proven models for replication of promising practices. The Continuous Improvement pathway in accreditation allows an institution to focus on its own improvement process. The Transformation Initiative provides an EPP with the opportunity to focus on the improvement of the profession using research on its own successful practices.

What is the focus of a Transformation Initiative?
The Transformation Initiative (TI) supports innovation and transformation of educator preparation through a research and development approach to accreditation. The TI pathway is designed to encourage research-based initiatives on educator preparation and the dissemination of results to the profession.

A Transformation Initiative addresses major issues and challenges in educator preparation. Examples of potential initiatives include, but are not limited to, investigating the following:

- Different models or approaches to clinical practice
- The impact or process of restructuring or reorganization efforts intended to move educator preparation into school settings
- Providing evidence of the value-added role of accreditation in improving educator preparation to increase P-12 student learning
- Reduction of barriers in educator preparation to ensure that candidates have the knowledge and skills to help all P-12 students learn
- Recruitment and admissions policies and practices that attract and retain a diverse, highly talented candidate pool, especially for shortage areas
- Development of systems for tracking candidate follow-up performance data
- The use of data systems to improve educator preparation
- Validity and reliability studies of assessment tools
• Development and implementation of training efforts to ensure inter-rater reliability
• Development and implementation of mentor training programs for clinical educators to improve practices related to support of pre-service candidates
• Candidates’ ability to use formative assessment to design instruction and improve student learning
• Practices and policies involved in developing high quality partnerships with P-12 schools and school districts to address:
  o the transformation of student learning and the conditions that support learning, such as school organization, learning environments, community and family engagement, and other district/school/and student-specific programs
  o the assessment and improvement of student learning and readiness for post-secondary education
  o the retention of educators in schools, including induction, mentoring, ongoing professional development, support for National Board Certification and other strategies

What is the scope of a Transformation Initiative (TI)?
The TI would generally include as broad a representation and involvement of the EPP’s faculty/Instructors and stakeholders as is appropriate. A TI would not usually focus on a single program unless it enrolled most of the EPP’s candidates. Although a TI need not exclusively address one or more standards, the focus of the initiative would be expected to have a practical application that other educator preparation institutions could use to improve their own preparation programs. CAEP or professional teaching standards might be used as a reference point for the TI in developing the scope and application of its research findings.

Who is eligible for the Transformation Initiative?
To be eligible for the Transformation Initiative (TI), an EPP must be accredited without unmet standards and be able to show evidence in a Self-Study Report (SSR), outlined below, that it continues to meet standards. EPP’s seeking accreditation for the first time may be eligible for the Transformation Initiative under special circumstances. All EPP’s that are considering the Transformation Initiative should confer with CAEP staff before proceeding with the process.

What are the steps for engaging in a TI?
Any EPP or collaborative group of EPPs first confer with CAEP staff to determine eligibility, as described above, and submits an RFP that outlines the EPP’s focus, plan, and capacity for conducting a TI. The specific submission date for the TI proposal will be negotiated with CAEP staff but is generally submitted 24 to 36 months prior to the semester of the scheduled onsite visit.

The proposal should not exceed 25 pages in length and must include the following four sections:

I. Significance of the Project - The importance of the initiative for transformation of educator preparation and/or the transformation of P-12 student learning.

II. Quality of the Project Design - The implementation plan for attaining the goals and research objectives of the Transformation Initiative, including the desired result(s).
III. **Quality of the Research Design** - The research plan, including
   a) the research question(s),
   b) research methodology,
   c) participants (e.g., samples of candidates or P-12 students),
   d) collaborators and plan for collaboration,
   e) dissemination plan,
   f) timeline, and
   g) budget

IV. **Capacity to Conduct the Initiative** - A description of the EPP’s or collaborative group’s capacity to conduct the Transformation Initiative.

There will be a formative period of proposal development with the CAEP staff. When the EPP and CAEP staff agree that the proposal is complete, it will then be reviewed by the Committee on Transformation Initiatives (CTI).

**What is the role of the Committee on Transformation Initiatives (CTI)?**
The Committee on Transformation Initiatives (CTI) is comprised of individuals who meet periodically to review proposals for Transformation Initiatives. Each member has expertise in research and development as it relates to education reform. Ad hoc members with expertise in the focus of a TI may be invited as consultants to make recommendations to the CTI. The charge of the CTI is five-fold:

1) Review TI proposals and provide substantive feedback to institutions.
2) Provide recommendations to the CAEP President regarding policies, procedures, and priorities related to the implementation of transformative initiatives.
3) Deliberate and make recommendations to the CAEP President on appropriate policies and procedures for demonstrating that standards continue to be met.
4) Deliberate and make recommendations to the CAEP President regarding procedural modifications or process refinements to support accreditation of and partnerships related to transformative initiatives.
5) Review and provide feedback on TI status/annual reports as developments warrant.

The process for the work of the CTI is described below.

- CAEP staff sends the TI proposal to a 3 member panel of reviewers, selected for the relevancy of their expertise and education related to the focus of the TI. Reviewers complete a review form, rate the proposal on the four criteria listed above (Significance, Quality of Program Design, Quality of Research Design, and Capacity) and make a recommendation for approval of the TI, approval with revisions, or disapproval.
- The CTI discusses the reviews and may contact the institution via conference call to clarify issues during its deliberations about the proposal.

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1 The EPP is responsible for acquiring IRB approval for this study as appropriate.
• The CTI writes a substantive feedback report which will include their determination of approval, approval with revisions, or disapproval. The report may also include suggestions for strengthening the proposed TI if approved or approved with revisions.
• If approved or approved with revisions, the EPP should prepare a response to the CTI recommendations, if any.
• The CTI sends a copy of its report and the EPPs response to the CAEP Accreditation Council as an information item.

What are the possible CTI decisions?
The Committee on Transformation Initiatives will make one of the following three decisions about the TI proposal:
1. Approval of the proposal.
2. Conditional Approval of the proposal with the requirement that revisions be made. The revised TI proposal is submitted to the Committee for review at its next meeting.
3. Not Approved. The EPP reverts to a Continuous Improvement Pathway for its scheduled visit. TI proposal feedback will be provided to the EPP for consideration at their next accreditation cycle.

What is the role of a consultant in a TI?
An EPP may identify a formative consultant to provide guidance as the TI is implemented. Upon request and in consultation with the EPP, the CTI may also recommend an individual with expertise related to the TI. The formative consultant will not be asked to participate in the onsite visit, but s/he may recommend an on-site consultant to support the review of the site visit team. The EPP will be responsible for any expenses related to consultant services.

What is expected in a Self-Study Report (SSR) for a TI?
The TI SSR will be completed in AIMS using the Transformation Initiative template with prompts and maximum character limitations for each of the responses. Exhibits supporting the SSR will be uploaded in AIMS under the last prompt of the standards sections. It is critical that the exhibits are made available at the time of SSR submission and prior to the Offsite Review for use by the visit team.

The content of the TI SSR should:
(1) Report on its continuing ability to meet CAEP standards through narratives and exhibits,
(2) Address what the EPP is doing to correct any areas for improvement (AFIs) cited during a previous visit, and
(3) Provide a status report on the TI’s development and implementation.

The EPP will submit its programs for national review up to 3 years before the onsite visit. The TI RFP should be submitted between 24 and 26 months before the onsite visit. The TI SSR is submitted 8 months before the onsite visit.
What are the processes for review and accreditation visits with a TI?

There are four steps in the review process:

A. **Offsite Review**: A site visit team will be convened electronically to review the TI SSR and its supporting exhibits within 1-2 months after the TI SSR and exhibits are uploaded into AIMS. The process will include the following steps:

- CAEP staff identifies national site visit team members (3-5). If CAEP’s partnership agreement with the state requires joint visits, the state will be asked to appoint 1-2 members to the team so that the maximum number of national and state team members will be no more than five. The state consultant will be invited by CAEP to participate in the electronic meeting. A CAEP staff member will provide support to the team during the offsite meeting.
- An electronic meeting of 3-4 hours is held with all team members, the state consultant, and CAEP staff. All meeting participants access the TI SSR and the EPP’s exhibits in AIMS.
- The site visit team writes a Formative Feedback Report that includes:
  i. A statement about the sufficiency of the data and any missing key evidence related to continuing to meet standards,
  ii. A statement about the status of the TI proposal and/or its implementation,
  iii. An indication of whether previous areas for improvement (AFIs) have been adequately addressed,
  iv. A list of areas of concern related to standards, and
  v. A list of evidence that the onsite site visit team should validate during the visit.

B. **SSR addendum.** This is the document prepared by the EPP to respond to the Offsite Formative Feedback report. It contains a narrative and additional documents or exhibits to address areas of concern related to standards and the evidence to be validated by the site visit team.

C. **Previsit.** The onsite visit team chair, state team co-chair (if joint or concurrent visit with the state), and state consultant conduct a previsit, electronically or onsite, with the EPP head and CAEP coordinator, if one is appointed. The previsit provides the opportunity for the key participants involved in the onsite visit to meet to review the following:

a. TI SSR Addendum which responds to any areas of concern raised during the Offsite Formative Feedback Report;
b. Provide suggestions related to additional evidence to validate; and
c. Logistics for the visit including, the roles of individuals involved, interview schedule, workroom supply needs, meal plans, lodging and transportation arrangements, visits to schools, and other details.

After the previsit, the visit team chair will distribute the schedule and provide information on arrangements three to four weeks prior to the visit.
D. **Onsite Visit:** The onsite visit will generally last for 2 and ½ days, Sunday through Tuesday. Documentation available to the site visit team will include the TI Self-Study Report (TI SSR), the Offsite Formative Feedback Report, the TI SSR Addendum, new exhibits requested by the site visit team, updated exhibits, appropriate state reports, and information in CAEP’s Accreditation Information Management System (AIMS), including but not limited to SPA program reports, as applicable in the state.

**What occurs during the TI onsite accreditation visit?**
In the first ½ day of the onsite visit the site visit team will validate that standards continue to be met and will focus on resolving any areas of concern noted in the Offsite Formative Feedback Report. This validation will be primarily completed through:

- **Sampling:** Reviewing assessments to ensure their use for program improvement; accessing the EPP’s assessment system to validate how data are collected and disaggregated; and reviewing selected documentation such as candidate records, data from assessment system, faculty evaluations, and so on. An initial list of evidence to be validated by the site visit team will be included in the Offsite Formative Feedback Report.
- **Observations:** Tour facilities and visit external partners (such as P-12 schools) related to the TI.
- **Interviews:** Limited in number and determined during the pre-visit by site visit team chair in consultation with state co-chair, state consultant, and institutional representatives; flexible to context of EPP and the focus of the TI.

The site visit team will only review the evidence that validates the TI SSR, make recommendations concerning continuation or removal of AFIs, and provide feedback on the status and implementation of the TI. The visit team will make recommendations to the CAEP Accreditation Council regarding whether standards continue to be met at initial and advanced levels for the Council to make a determination of continuing accreditation. The visit team will also include a statement about the status of the TI implementation. However, a TI need not demonstrate a positive result to be considered successful as a research activity. Negative results can be just as informative and can lead to reflection about practices that are ineffective in educator preparation programs. Thus, a TI approach to accreditation includes an onsite visit that primarily focuses on the implementation of the TI proposal in much the same way that a grant-sponsored project might be reviewed and evaluated by a sponsor or funder.

**How is TI progress monitored?**
EPPs that have selected the TI pathway report their progress on implementation of the TI in CAEP annual report. The annual report will be reviewed by CAEP staff and feedback will be provided to the EPP, if warranted.

**Can an institution revert to a Continuous Improvement model?**
Yes, an institution can choose to revert to the Continuous Improvement (CI) pathway at any point prior to submitting the TI Self-Study Report by notifying CAEP staff. However, once the TI SSR has been submitted using the TI template, a decision to revert to Continuous Improvement must be made in consultation with CAEP staff and the visit team chair if one has already been assigned.
What happens when a TI is completed?
When the EPP or collaborative group completes its TI, a final report is submitted to CAEP. The final report will be reviewed by the Committee on Transformation Initiatives and the CAEP Accreditation Council at their next meetings. It is understood that TI research is a continuous and evolving process and may extend beyond the onsite visit at the end of the accreditation cycle. If this occurs, an onsite visit after completion of the TI may be recommended. EPPs or systems will have an opportunity for dissemination of TI findings through CAEP’s publications, website, and conferences as appropriate. The next accreditation visit is scheduled for a date either 5 or 7 years following the onsite visit (depending on state regulations), irrespective of the completion date of the TI.

Who do I contact if I have more questions?
The following CAEP staff are available to respond to any EPP engaging in or interested in the Transformation Initiative pathway.

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)
2010 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202-466-7496
Email: TI@caepnet.org

Staff Contacts:

Deborah B. Eldridge
Senior Vice President for Accreditation and Administration

Nate Thomas
Accreditation Associate for CI and TI Pathways