PILOT
Transformation Initiative (TI): FAQs
(Pilot Period through Fall 2015)

Why create a new option 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. Institutions or systems (states, school-IHE collaboratives, etc.) adopting the TI option will engage in rigorous research to investigate some aspects of educator preparation that will inform the profession and offer models for implementation of promising practices with the potential to transform educator preparation. Where the Continuous Improvement option in accreditation allows an institution to focus on its own improvement process, the Transformation Initiative allows an institution to focus on the improvement of the profession using research on its own 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 option is designed to encourage and support research-based initiatives on educator preparation and then disseminate the results for the benefit of 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 faculty or P-12 faculty 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:
    - 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
    - the assessment and improvement of student learning and readiness for post-secondary education
    - 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 unit's faculty and stakeholders as is appropriate. A TI would not usually focus on a single program unless it enrolled most of the unit'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. NCATE or professional teaching standards might be used as a reference point for the TI in developing the scope and application of its proposal.

Who is eligible for the Transformation Initiative?
To be eligible for the Transformation Initiative (TI), a unit must be accredited without unmet standards and be able to show evidence in an Institutional Report (outlined below) that it continues to meet standards. Institutions seeking accreditation for the first time *may be* eligible for the Transformation Initiative *under special circumstances*. All institutions that are considering the Transformation Initiative should confer with NCATE staff before proceeding with the process.

What are the steps for engaging in a TI?
Any institution or collaborative group of institutions first speaks with NCATE staff to determine eligibility, as described above, and then drafts a proposal that outlines the focus, plan, and capacity of the unit. The specific submission date for the TI proposal will be negotiated with NCATE staff. The proposal should not exceed 25 pages in length and must include the following four sections with an optional fifth section:

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) subjects (e.g., samples of candidates or P-12 students),[1]
d) collaborators and plan for collaboration,
e) dissemination plan,
f) timelines, and
g) budget

IV. Institutional Capacity to Conduct the Initiative A description of the unit's or collaborative group's capacity to conduct the Transformation Initiative.

A Request For Proposals (RFP-like) document contains further details. It is in draft form and is available as a separate document entitled TI RFP.

An optional part of the proposal is to provide a list of potential consultants who can be invited by NCATE to be part of the visiting team, proposal review team, or to provide institutional assistance in development and implementation of the Transformation Initiative, as appropriate.

[1] The unit is responsible for acquiring IRB approval for this study as appropriate.

There will be a formative period of proposal development with the NCATE staff. When the unit and NCATE staffs 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 six individuals who meet semiannually 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 for their development to institutions.
2) Provide recommendations regarding policies, procedures, and priorities related to the implementation of transformative initiatives.
3) Deliberate and make recommendations on appropriate policies and procedures for demonstrating that standards continue to be met.
4) Deliberate and make recommendations 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.

- The CTI reviews the TI proposal as submitted and may contact the institution via conference call to clarify issues during its deliberations about the proposal.
- The CTI considers the need for and may recommend a consultant as appropriate to support the unit's TI.
- The CTI will write a substantive feedback report which may include suggestions for strengthening the proposed TI. This report will include the CTI's decision about the proposed TI.
- The CTI sends a copy of its report to the UAB as an information item.
- The CTI will review the unit's annual status report (PEDS Part C) and the final TI report.
- The CTI may recommend ways to disseminate findings.

What are the possible CTI decisions?
The Committee on Transformation Initiatives will make one of the following four decisions about the TI proposal:
1. Approval of the proposal.
2. Approval of the proposal with the requirement to provide additional information for review by NCATE staff.
3. Request that changes be made to the proposal. The revised TI is returned to the Committee for review at its next meeting.
4. Not Approved. The unit reverts to a Continuous Improvement Option for its scheduled visit.

What is the role of a consultant in a TI?
An institution may identify a formative consultant to provide advice about the TI during its implementation. In consultation with the institution, the CTI may designate an individual with expertise related to the TI to serve as this formative consultant. 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 BOE onsite team. The unit will be responsible for any expenses related to the consultant's service.

What is expected in an Institutional Report for a TI?
The content of the TIIR should:

(1) Report on its continuing ability to meet national standards through narratives and exhibits,
(2) Address what the unit 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.

Appendix A includes a proposed template for the TIIR. It should be completed in Word and then cut and pasted into the template for uploading into NCATE's Accreditation Information Management System (AIMS). The TIIR should not exceed 40 pages in length. During the pilot phase (through fall 2015) the format of the TIIR may be altered or negotiated with NCATE staff in order to determine what format would best support an understanding of the TI and fulfill the need to provide evidence of continuing to meet national standards

Appendix B contains the list of required exhibits and documents that support the narrative in the TIIR. The TIIR and its accompanying exhibits should clearly show that the unit continues to collect and use data and research to meet standards and to improve its educator preparation programs.

When the system for the Transformation Initiative is fully implemented in the fall of 2015, the professional education unit will submit its programs for national review up to 3years before the onsite visit and the TI proposal and TIIR up to 2 years before the onsite visit. Please refer to the timelines included in Appendix C.

What are the processes for review and accreditation visits with a TI?
There are four steps in the review process:

A. **Offsite visit**: Thus, an Offsite Board of Examiners (BOE) Team will be convened electronically to review the TIIR and supporting exhibits within 1-2 months after the TIIR is submitted in AIMS. The process will include the following steps:

- NCATE staff identifies national BOE team members (3-5). If NCATE'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 NCATE to participate in the electronic meeting. An NCATE 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 NCATE staff. All meeting participants access the TIIR, the unit's exhibits, and documents and information in AIMS.
- The Offsite BOE Team writes a 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,
    v. A list of evidence that the Onsite BOE Team should validate during the visit, and
    vi. A recommendation for the size of the team (3-5) members needed to conduct the onsite visit.

B. IR addendum. This is the document prepared by the unit to respond to the Offsite Feedback report. It contains a narrative and reference to documents or additional exhibits to address items iv and v, described above.

C. Previsit. The Onsite BOE Team chair, state team co-chair (if joint or concurrent visit with the state), and state consultant conduct a previsit with the unit head and NCATE coordinator at the institution. The previsit provides the opportunity for the key participants in the onsite visit to meet, review the TIIR Addendum that responds to any areas of concern raised during the Offsite Review, provide suggestions related to supportive evidence, and arrange the logistics for the conduct of the visit, including the roles of individuals involved in the visit, interview schedule, visits to schools, and other logistical details.

D. Onsite Visit: The onsite visit will generally last for 2 and ½ days, Sunday through Tuesday. Documentation Available to Onsite BOE Team will include the institutional report (TIIR) submitted for the Offsite Review, the Offsite BOE Team Feedback Report, the TIIR Addendum that addresses any areas of concern raised in the Offsite Review, any new exhibits requested by the offsite BOE team, updated exhibits, appropriate state reports, and information in NCATE's Accreditation Information Management System (AIMS), including but not limited to SPA program reports.

What occurs during the TI onsite accreditation visit?

In the first ½ day of the onsite visit the BOE team will validate that standards continue to be met and resolving any areas of concern noted by the Offsite BOE Team. This validation will be primarily completed through:

- *Sampling:* consisting of a review of assessments to ensure their use for program improvement; accessing the unit's database to see how data are collected and disaggregated; and reviewing selected documentation such as candidate records, data from assessment system, faculty evaluations, diversity, faculty service/collaborative activities, and scholarly work. An initial list of evidence to be validated by the Onsite BOE Team will be included in the Offsite BOE Team Feedback Report.

On the second and third days of the visit the BOE team will review the unit's progress at implementing the TI primarily through:

- *Observations:* Tour facilities and visit external partners (such as P-12 schools) related to the TI.
- *Interviews*: Limited in number and predetermined during the pre-visits by Onsite BOE Team chair in consultation with state co-chair, state consultant, and institutional representatives; flexible to context of institution and the focus of the TI.

The Onsite BOE Team will only review the evidence that validates the TIIR, makes recommendations concerning continuation or removal of AFIs, and provides feedback on the status and implementation of the TI. The Onsite BOE Team makes recommendations to the Unit Accreditation Board (UAB) regarding whether standards continue to be met at initial and advanced levels for the UAB to make a determination of continuing accreditation. The Onsite BOE 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 as informative and lead to useful information about what educator preparation programs should NOT do. 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?
Units that have selected the TI option report their progress on implementation of the TI in PART C of the AACTE/NCATE PEDS annual report. The annual report will be reviewed by NCATE staff and feedback will be provided to the unit, if needed.

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 Institutional Report (IR) simply by notifying NCATE staff. However, once the IR has been submitted using the TI template, a decision to revert to Continuous Improvement must be made in consultation with NCATE staff and the BOE chair if one has already been assigned.

What happens when a TI is completed?
When the unit or system completes its TI, a final report is submitted to NCATE. The final report will be reviewed by the Committee on Transformation Initiatives and the UAB at their next meetings. If the TI extends beyond the onsite visit at the end of the accreditation cycle, an onsite visit after completion of the TI is optional. Institutions or systems will have an opportunity for dissemination of TI findings through NCATE'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?

Deborah Eldridge, NCATE's Senior Vice President, is currently responding to any institution engaging in or interested in the Transformation Initiative option. Contact her as noted below:

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