

March 10, 2015

Dear CAEP Stakeholders:

We are in the midst of a sea change in expectations for teacher preparation in our country. Many forces are in play, including efforts to dismantle teacher licensure and to bypass the institution of accreditation. These threats to our field's professionalization and its stature should not be underestimated. Others will step in if we do not step forward ourselves.

Amid this cacophony of self-described reformers, CAEP has emerged as a voice for the preparation of P-12 educators as a profession. This is a singular achievement, and one which can counter ill-advised proposals that would take our country backwards by weakening teacher preparation as a profession and accreditation as an effective and preferable alternative to excessive government regulation.

CAEP was born for the very purpose of reforming our field. In the words of the [report](#) of the NCATE/TEAC Design Team, which was created on the recommendation of an AACTE Task Force to consider the need for a single accreditor for our profession:

We wish to emphasize that we have not approached our task as merely unifying NCATE and TEAC with the least possible change to two accrediting systems that are already quite similar and effective. Rather, we have set a much more ambitious goal: to create a model unified accreditation system. We believe that CAEP can elevate educator preparation to the new level of excellence that the public and its policymakers expect.

Such a system would not merely stand as the traditional bar to unsatisfactory professional preparation. Instead, it would encourage and assist all institutions and other entities that prepare educators . . . , even those that already exceed that bar, to go beyond it towards excellence by continuously improving the quality of their completers and programs. CAEP's goals should be not only to raise the performance of candidates as practitioners in the nation's P-12 schools, but also to raise the stature of the entire profession by raising the standards for the evidence the field relies on to support its claims of quality. With the great changes currently being proposed and taking place in our field, this is a unique opportunity for us to show the value we add to quality assurance, accountability and the overall performance of the profession.<sup>i</sup>

CAEP's mission was widely vetted in its formative stages and took its form from that early commitment. The mission reads "to advance excellent educator preparation through evidence-based accreditation that assures quality and supports continuous improvement to strengthen P-12 student learning." Each word in this mission statement was carefully vetted. CAEP is about excellence, not adequacy. We are committed to a culture of evidence. Our work must be organized around the principle of continuous improvement rather than a compliance-oriented, static conception of quality assurance. And most dramatically and crucially, we are committed to linking teacher preparation to the improvement of P-12

student learning and development in our nation. None of the other reformers competing for attention in America's policy arena can make the claim to such a comprehensive vision of how to transform America's teaching workforce. By contrast, CAEP offers a professional vision that is at once transformational and inclusive.

Many decades ago, accreditation of educator preparation was removed from the exclusive confines of AACTE to a new organization, NCATE, formed by a coalition of teacher educators, states and practitioner representatives. CAEP's ambitious goals to improve educator preparation required another bold organizational move. So, one of the principal tasks of the Design Team, co-chaired by two former Deans (including myself) and with current and former teacher educators numbering about half its members, was to develop a governance system appropriate to its ambitious goals. It proposed a governance structure that would be broadly inclusive of our profession to include all stakeholder voices, and not just those of higher education. To quote, "Our plan is to combine the best attributes of both the NCATE and the TEAC current board structures in a way that would enable CAEP to be even more inclusive of the profession and other stakeholders" (p. 10). To reduce costs, the governance model was streamlined and made smaller, although not dramatically so. At the same time, the Bylaws of the new organization were written to ensure that the voice of higher education, as well as all its stakeholders, would be heard throughout its governance structure, including as peer reviewers and decision makers on the CAEP commissions and Accreditation Council. After public comment that was without controversy, that model was recommended unanimously by the Design Team and adopted by the NCATE and TEAC boards.

CAEP recognizes that its new standards will require institutions to do things somewhat differently and to reach higher levels. That was not only their stated purpose but also why a [Commission](#) of 41 members, co-chaired by a dean and a chief state school officer, and again with current and former teacher educators and higher education representatives numbering about half its members, worked so diligently to set those standards and addressed challenging issues in a spirit of fairness and openness. The Commission realized that CAEP would encounter many implementation challenges. Among them was a recognition that states would have to develop new data systems to assist providers in data collection, and school districts would have to embrace a partnership approach to preparing teachers. The Commission carefully considered feedback during the public comment period. It made revisions after deliberation and debate. All members of the Commission unanimously supported the final product. Those [standards](#) were subsequently adopted unanimously by the CAEP Board.

CAEP set an aggressive timetable for implementing the standards and making them mandatory by 2016. We have done this out of concern for the profession, knowing that any slower timeframe would invite policymakers to supplant accreditation with other, potentially more onerous alternatives that would completely diminish the power of educators and stakeholders to shape how we assure quality. We also sought to use this opportunity to strengthen what institutions do and demonstrate that the requirements for education preparation are on par with those of other professional fields. We have worked to provide flexibility in the types of evidence used, to gradually phase in the uses of new evidence as it becomes available, and to provide needed guidance and assistance to providers to ensure that they can meet current timetables and choose how best to provide evidence of their success. We have also pledged to study carefully the actual consequences of implementation as it proceeds and to

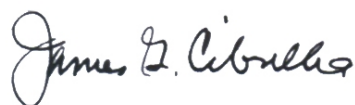
make mid-course corrections when necessary. The recent action the CAEP Board has taken with respect to Standard 3.2 (selectivity based on academic qualifications), the details of which can be found [here](#), is an example of the CAEP Board listening to feedback.

I regretfully acknowledge that CAEP, as a new organization just finding its legs, has not always provided consistent or sufficient guidance to providers, particularly to those early adopters with visits prior to 2016. My staff and I have spent tens of thousands of hours, if not more, in preparing written manuals and other guidance and in participating in conferences, webinars and in individual meetings, phone calls and email exchanges with all our stakeholders. An [Evidence Guide](#) has been available for over a year and is now in its second edition, and a draft of the [CAEP Accreditation Manual](#) was released in January, with opportunity to provide feedback to CAEP. That said, what CAEP has provided up to now has not been sufficient. In the words of our Standards Commission, “results matter – effort is not enough.” As the CEO of CAEP, I take full responsibility for our shortcomings. I pledge to you that we will redouble our efforts to assist you in fulfilling the new responsibilities created for you by the CAEP Standards. As a first step, I am initiating a new **CAEP Accreditation Updates** that will be put on its website each week. This will include meetings, presentations, and events, resources that will be available, what is coming soon, organization updates, and policy updates. I also assure you that CAEP will continue to make every effort to listen to and respond to feedback.

We are at a pivotal moment for our profession. We must not allow those who oppose CAEP’s standards or even CAEP itself to use this situation for their own purposes. We all have too much at stake in the success of the reform efforts that CAEP represents.

All of us at CAEP look forward to collaborating with you to achieve CAEP’s mission and its promise.

Sincerely,



James G. Cibulka,  
President, CAEP

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<sup>i</sup> Report and Recommendation of the NCATE/TEAC Design Team to Our Respective Boards of Directors, 2-3. Retrieved from <http://www.caepsite.org/documents/designteamreport.pdf>