1. Description of Focal Area and Rationale:

CAEP Standard 1 asserts the importance of a strong content background and foundation of pedagogical knowledge for all candidates. The candidate’s academic preparation must provide sufficient opportunity to develop a deep understanding of major concepts and principles within the candidate’s field, including college and career-ready expectations. Specifically, EPP candidates need to understand their subject matter deeply and flexibly so they can apply this knowledge to help P-12 students connect ideas across disciplines. Providing EPP candidates with an increasingly strong foundation of pedagogical content knowledge is key to improvements in overall program impact and effectiveness.

Content Knowledge is addressed as the second of four main categories in the updated InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards. Content Knowledge and Application of Content is described within InTASC Standards #4 and #5 and emphasize not only the understanding of central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) but also the candidate’s ability to apply and connect these concepts to engage P-12 learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving. The progression for InTASC Standard #4 highlights the need for candidates to develop (1) a deep understanding of knowledge in the content area, (2) the capacity to analyze and reflect on content knowledge and learner needs, (3) to expand professional connections in content areas, and (4) to expand his/her knowledge of resources within the content area(s). Within this standard is the expectation that once candidates possess the prerequisite understanding of the content, they will be capable of “progressing” to being able to use that knowledge to create meaningful learning experiences. Candidates should continue to develop by demonstrating (5) analysis and reflection of learning materials and resources, (6) an ability to use their research skills to assess student learning and (7) to adapt the classroom learning environment for all P-12 students. InTASC Standard #5 focuses on the application of this content knowledge across interdisciplinary themes and outlines the need for candidates to (1) develop interdisciplinary real-world applications of their content knowledge, (2) to engage P-12 students in real-world applications, project and inquiry-based approaches, and (3) to evaluate the impact of selected teaching strategies on student learning.

Although both InTASC Standards #4 and #5 work together to ensure candidate progression in content knowledge, the EPP focused primarily on developing strategies to improve depth of content (InTASC #4) as it impacts the candidate’s skills in applying these concepts during Internship I, II and after completion of the program (InTASC #5).