



January 5, 2021

Dr. Lisa Freeman
President
Northern Illinois University
Altgeld Hall 300
DeKalb, IL 60115

Dear President Freeman:

This letter is accompanied by the Quality Initiative Proposal (QIP) Review form completed by a peer review panel. Northern Illinois University's QIP is approved.

Within the QIP Review form, you will find comments from the panel for your consideration as you proceed with your Quality Initiative. The panel reviewed the QIP for four areas:

- Sufficiency of initiative's scope and significance
- Clarity of initiative's purpose
- Evidence of commitment to and capacity for accomplishing the initiative
- Appropriateness of the timeline for the initiative

If you have questions about the panel's review, please contact either Kathy Bijak (kbijak@hlcommission.org) or Pat Newton-Curran (pnewton@hlcommission.org). For any questions about your Quality Initiative, contact Andrew Lootens-White at alootenswhite@hlcommission.org.

The Higher Learning Commission

Open Pathway Quality Initiative Proposal Review Form

Date of Review: December 23, 2020

Name of Institution: Northern Illinois University State: IL

Institutional ID: 1134

Reviewers (names, titles, institutions): Dr. Patricia Okker, Dean of College of Arts and Science, University of Missouri and Dr. Jonah Rice, President, Southeastern Illinois College

Review Categories and Findings

1. Sufficiency of the Initiative's Scope and Significance

- Potential for significant impact on the institution and its academic quality.
- Alignment with the institution's mission and vision.
- Connection with the institution's planning processes.
- Evidence of significance and relevance at this time.

Finding:

- The Quality Initiative Proposal demonstrates acceptable scope and significance.
- The Quality Initiative Proposal does not demonstrate acceptable scope and significance.

Rationale and Comments: (Provide 2–3 statements justifying the finding and recommending minor modifications, if applicable. Provide any comments, such as highlighting strong points, raising minor concerns or cautions, or identifying questions.)

This is an excellent QI proposal that focuses on improving student success and reducing equity gaps in gateway courses. This effort is extremely well aligned with the mission of NIU, particular its student population. 55% of NIU full-time students are Pell eligible, 47% are students of color and 51% are first generation. Reducing equity gaps will have a profound impact on student success at NIU. One notable strength of this proposal is that it is fully aligned with larger planning efforts at NIU, most notably the institutions Strategic Enrollment Management plan.

2. Clarity of the Initiative's Purpose

- Clear purposes and goals reflective of the scope and significance of the initiative.
- Defined milestones and intended goals.
- Clear processes for evaluating progress.

Finding:

- The Quality Initiative Proposal demonstrates clarity of purpose.
- The Quality Initiative Proposal does not demonstrate clarity of purpose.

Rationale and Comments:

This proposal has clearly been carefully developed. Goals, definitions, and timelines, for instance, are clearly spelled out.

3. Evidence of Commitment to and Capacity for Accomplishing the Initiative

- Commitment of senior leadership.
- Commitment and involvement of key people and groups.
- Sufficiency of the human, financial, technological, and other resources.
- Defined plan for integrating the initiative into the ongoing work of the institution and sustaining its results.
- Clear understanding of and capacity to address potential obstacles.

Finding:

- The Quality Initiative Proposal demonstrates evidence of commitment and capacity.
- The Quality Initiative Proposal does not demonstrate evidence of commitment and capacity.

Rationale and Comments:

This proposal requires—and is based on—collaboration across many units on campus. Units involved include, for example, IT, diversity and inclusion office, institutional research, undergraduate studies, academic affairs. This proposal shows significant collaboration.

4. Appropriateness of the Timeline for the Initiative

- Consistency with intended purposes and goals.
- Alignment with the implementation of other institutional priorities.
- Reasonable implementation plan for the time period.

Finding:

- The Quality Initiative Proposal demonstrates an appropriate timeline.
- The Quality Initiative Proposal does not demonstrate an appropriate timeline.

Rationale and Comments:

NIU has identified a realistic and specific timeline that is aligned with campus-wide planning efforts.

General Observations and Recommended Modifications

Panel members may provide considerations and suggested modifications that the institution should note related to its proposed Quality Initiative.

Good luck! This is an excellent project.

Conclusion

- Approve the proposed Quality Initiative with or without recommended minor modifications. No further review required.
- Request resubmission of the proposed Quality Initiative.

Rationale and Expectations if Requesting Resubmission

Timeline and Process for Resubmission

(HLC staff will add this section if the recommendation is for resubmission.)