



Open Pathway

Quality Initiative Report Panel Review and Recommendation Form

The Quality Initiative panel review process confirms or questions the institution's effort in undertaking the Quality Initiative proposal approved by the Commission. As indicated in the explication of the review, the Quality Initiative process encourages institutions to take risks, innovate, take on a tough challenge, or pursue a yet unproven strategy or hypothesis. Thus, failure of an initiative to achieve its goals is acceptable. An institution may learn much from such failure. What is not acceptable is failure of the institution to pursue the initiative with genuine effort. Genuineness of effort, not success of the initiative, constitutes the focus of the Quality Initiative review and serves as its sole point of evaluation.

Name of Institution: Chadron State College

State: Nebraska

Institutional ID: 1479

Reviewers (name, title, institution):

Dr. Larry R. Peterson, Director of Assessment, North Dakota State University

Dr. Laurie Pemberton, Retired Director of Institutional Research & Planning, Allan Hancock College

Date: September 19, 2016

I. **Quality Initiative Review**

The institution demonstrated its seriousness of the undertaking.

The institution demonstrated that the initiative had scope and impact.

The institution demonstrated a commitment to and engagement in the initiative.

The institution demonstrated adequate resource provision.

II. **Recommendation**

The panel confirms genuine effort on the part of the institution.

The panel cannot confirm genuine effort on the part of the institution.

III. **Rationale** (required)

Chadron State's successful Quality Initiative (QI) focused on supporting their Essential Studies Program (ESP) that was launched in 2012. The ESP was a significant investment of faculty time and energy to create a

more vigorous and exciting General Education. Their QI built on the foundations of two national programs. First, from 2006-10 they participated in HLC's Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning. Second, from 2010-14, they developed twenty strategic planning initiatives working with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' Red Balloon Project. Six of the twenty initiatives were linked to what became their QI.

The QI was also clearly aligned with the 2014 Master Academic Plan, the first priority of which was to "continue to implement and improve" the ESP. The campus has devoted considerable time and energy to carefully implementing the ESP. In 2012-13 the Presidential Committee on Essential Studies oversaw this work and then handed it off to the Essential Studies Faculty Senate Committee. HLC's QIP reviewers encouraged Chadron State "to carefully consider how the new ESP relates to the rest of their curriculum" and they have made several related adjustments such as reducing the capstone credits from 6 to 3 and accepting certain department capstone courses as fulfilling requirements.

Chadron State identified "three critical objectives" to meet their goal of supporting the ESP and integrating it across campus: establish a Teaching and Learning Center; streamline and improve support for adjuncts; and improve communication between Academic Affairs and Student Services.

The Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) was established in 2013 with a Director. The Director returned to the faculty in 2015, and there are now three full-time professional staff and a faculty member who serves as the New Faculty Orientation facilitator. From 2012-15, the TLC sponsored almost 170 events and provided a laundry list of services, highlighted by the three ESP Summer Institutes. The fact that 42% of faculty reported requesting TLC assistance in 2015-16 is strong evidence that its services are used and valued on campus. TLC's dedicated space is almost completed. The QI Proposal reviewers were concerned about the inadequate operational budget and the absence of a set of activities and an assessment plan for the TLC. The first two concerns have clearly been addressed. It is not clear if the TLC has an assessment plan. However, the plans to establish a TLC endowment, to hire an Associate Vice President for Teaching and Learning Technologies, as well as a Director of the Teaching and Learning Center demonstrate the commitment of resources that should put the TLC on a firm footing.

Streamlining and improving support for adjuncts was the "second pivotal goal" of their QI. They undertook this seriously, were committed to it, and devoted resources to it, but it was the least successful of their three objectives. Realizing that the process of hiring and orienting adjuncts was problematic, they created a static website, followed by an interactive hub with a mentor to assist adjuncts. The resignation and reassignment of the key leads has left this in the hands of office assistants. Academic leaders drafted an adjunct mentor proposal that was subsequently tabled due to concerns about resources. Although these difficulties occurred after the QIP review, they nonetheless are examples of what the QIP reviewers referred to "key challenges" presented by "budget and turnover in personnel." Campus plans to explore adjunct processes with other nearby colleges and to launch a new adjunct website seem small, but appropriate, steps forward.

Improving communication between Academic Affairs and Student Services was the "third pivotal goal" of Chadron State's QI. They undertook four structural changes to reach this goal. The deans joined the Student Services Steering Committee to improve collaboration. A new Graduate Office was created, which employs automatically generated emails to help students keep on track. The President's Executive Council was reorganized to focus on the Master Academic Plan. Finally, the Executive Council Retention Task Force was established to work collaboratively across all areas of campus.

Although the QIR did not detail the financial support for these three pivotal objectives, it is clear that the campus planned carefully and devoted considerable energy to implementing them. Although all three did not succeed to the same degree, Chadron State is an exemplary model of how faculty, staff, and administrators can collaborate to successfully tackle a major quality improvement initiative.

