



June 28, 2022

Dr. Terisa Riley
Chancellor
University of Arkansas-Fort Smith
5210 Grand Avenue
P.O. Box 3649
Fort Smith, Arkansas 72913-3649

Dear Chancellor Riley,

This letter is accompanied by the Quality Initiative Proposal (QIP) Review form completed by a peer review panel. University of Arkansas-Fort Smith'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 Dr. Gigi Fansler at gfansler@hlcommission.org.

The Higher Learning Commission

Open Pathway Quality Initiative Proposal Review Form

Date of Review: 06/22/2022

Name of Institution: University of Arkansas-Fort Smith

State: Arkansas

Institutional ID: 1035

Reviewers (names, titles, institutions): (1) Dr. Jerry D. Durham, Chancellor Emeritus, Allen College and (2) Dr. Clyne Namuo, President, Joliet Junior 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.)

The institution's QI Initiative seeks to improve student success and seeks to achieve greater persistence and retention of student from three identified groups. The Initiative is aligned with the UAFS mission to prepare students "to succeed in an ever changing global world." The Initiative is also aligned with two of the institution's strategic plan that includes deploy resources to increase enrollment, retention and graduation rates of its students and to use resources to achieve institutional objectives. While the provided information does not speak directly to the Initiative's connection to the planning process, the Initiatives is clearly aligned with the institution's mission and strategic plan. The Initiative addresses areas of concern identified by Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Faculty Senate, and Financial Affairs and to the State of Arkansas at large.

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:

X The Quality Initiative Proposal demonstrates clarity of purpose.

The Quality Initiative Proposal does not demonstrate clarity of purpose.

Rationale and Comments: This QI Initiative seeks to improve the retention and persistence of three student groups: Lion Scholars, First Year Students and Academic Probation and Academic Suspension status students. Milestones have been developed for each of these groups of students. The institution has begun to implement activities for each identified group of students and has collected data as a resulting from these activities. These data are now under review by various collaborating parties (e.g., advisers, success team members, Division of Student Success and Retention). The institution plans to form a committee to review processes and procedures in place and student best practices related to academic probation. In addition, as a result of the first year experience review, UAFS will create a First Year Task Force to further review this experience at UAFS. In addition a comprehensive review of the Lions Scholars program to identify possible changes in communication, curriculum, and the first year experience for these students.

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:

X 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: The proposal reported that institution's senior leadership and chancellor support the QI Initiative which was supported by faculty in the Faculty Senate. Quality Initiative Team is leading this QI Initiative. Key leaders of this team include the Director of the the Academic Success Center, the Associate Provost for Student success and Retention, the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs and Director of Graduate Studies, the Executive Director of Student Retention, the Vice chancellor of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, and the Director of Financial Aid, among others. The University has invested resources to implement and

sustain the Initiative, including migration to technology to track student success, participation in a national first year experience conference, hiring of a new position (Assistant Provost for Student Success and Retention), creating new positions for academic advisers and academic coaches, and preparing for a performance-based funding model. Human and technological resources have been reallocated to support the QI Initiative. The work groups that play key roles in the QI Initiative's planning, implementation and evaluation are part of a system of ongoing committees, task forces, and work groups.

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:

X The Quality Initiative Proposal demonstrates an appropriate timeline.

The Quality Initiative Proposal does not demonstrate an appropriate timeline.

Rationale and Comments: The QI Initiative will begin implementation in summer 2022 and continue two years through the spring of 2024. During these two years the QI Initiative will implement and evaluate strategies for each group of students to increase persistence and retention. During this time frame, data will be gathered and evaluated in order to make adjustments to interventions. During the summer of 2023 all parts of the QI Initiative will be reviewed to determine progress to dates. In the final semester of the QI Initiative (spring 2024) academic probation/suspension student interventions will be finalized and Lions Scholar changes will undergo a final evaluation. In this final semester recommendation regarding the First Year Experience will also be proposed. Provided that all parties and groups involved in this Initiative complete their activities in a timely manner, the timeline for completing the Initiative is reasonable.

General Observations and Recommended Modifications

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

Conclusion

- X 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.)