



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500
Chicago, IL 60604-1411
312.263.0456 | 800.621.7440
Fax: 312.263.7462 | hlcommission.org

July 6, 2022

Dr. Tisa Mason
President
Fort Hays State University
600 Park Street
Hays, Kansas 67601

Dear President Mason,

This letter is accompanied by the Quality Initiative Report (QIR) Review form completed by a peer review panel. Fort Hays State University's QIR showed genuine effort and has been accepted by the Commission. The attached reviewer evaluation contains a rationale for this outcome.

Peer reviewers evaluate all the QIRs based on the genuine effort of the institution, the seriousness of the undertaking, the significance of scope and impact of the work, the genuineness of the commitment to the initiative, and adequate resource provision.

If you have questions about the QIR reviewer information, please contact either Kathy Bijak (kbijak@hlcommission.org) or Pat Newton-Curran (pnewton@hlcommission.org).

Higher Learning Commission



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 HLC. 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.

Submit the final report as a Word document to HLC at hlcommission.org/upload. Select "Pathways/Quality Initiatives" from the list of submission options to ensure the report is sent to the correct HLC staff member. The file name for the report should follow this format: QI Report Review <Name of Institution>.

Name of Institution: Fort Hayes State University

State: Kansas

Institutional ID: 1279

Reviewers (names, titles, institutions): John Folkins, Provost Emeritus, Bowling Green State University, Cynthia Grunden, Powers Pyles Sutter and Verville PC

Date: July, 2022

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)

Fort Hayes State University (FHSU) has done a good job developing this Quality Initiative to address and improve the methods they use to track learning outcomes. The seriousness of their effort is demonstrated by the inclusion of three different strategies in the institution's strategic plan. They established a structure to assess student learning outcomes, they provided training and support for programs and instructors, and implemented tools to measure the learning outcomes.

The scope and impact of the Quality Initiative is shown by the actions of their Learning Assessment Committee. A robust assessment management platform is an essential component of any contemporary curriculum. This initiative made it much easier for the faculty of FHSU to participate and to establish a culture that embraces assessment. The scope of the changes needed was broad enough to require a number of policy adjustments, which were supported by the Provost and approved by the appropriate committees. In addition, common learning outcomes for the general education program were implemented. A Survey of Assessment Culture showed substantial faculty involvement with the learning outcomes.

Engagement with the initiative is clear. Rather than using their existing learning management system (Blackboard), they purchased and implemented AEFIS campus wide. This greatly eased the burden of collecting assessment data and helped the institution identify gaps, redundancies, and misalignments within programs of study. Programs loaded learning outcomes onto AEFIS and crafted curriculum maps showing which learning outcomes are supported by which courses. As always, it takes a lot of effort to get all programs involved in an effort of this sort. Training programs helped to make adoption easier for programs with less background in the assessment of learning outcomes.

The resources devoted to the initiative are clearly adequate. Several faculty and staff members were involved in the many aspects of the initiative. A new software package was purchased and installed. Training programs were conducted, and the Institutional Effectiveness and Quality Improvement Office improved ease of adoption by providing hands on assistance to academic programs in setting up the software configuration for their programs. Surveys were completed to assess the level of involvement by faculty, the strength of the culture of assessment, the perceived value in assessing student learning, and to understand feedback and attitudes related to FHSU's practices related to assessing learning outcomes.

Assessment of program and core learning outcomes are a common challenge for institutions because they require collaboration, agreement, cultural change, focus, and sustained effort. It is both commendable and evident that FHSU invested significant financial and human resources into their Quality Initiative. FHSU's faculty seem to have embraced this effort in that 67% of programs are now regularly submitting their Annual Program Learning Outcomes Assessment reports. FHSU recognizes that assessment of student learning is often regarded as a bureaucratic requirement, cannot be "top down," and that faculty dedicated to teaching and learning are just as valuable as faculty who publish. To reinforce this cultural value, FHSU created an Advancing Assessment Award and a Closing-the-Loop Award to recognize exceptional efforts in assessment.