Open Pathway Quality Initiative Report

Institutional Template

The enclosed Quality Initiative Report represents the work that the institution has undertaken to fulfill the quality improvement requirements of the Open Pathway.

Signature of Institution’s President or Chancellor Date
Tim Hood

Printed/Typed Name and Title
President

Name of Institution
Mid Michigan College

City and State

The institution uses the template below to complete its Quality Initiative Report. The institution may include a report it has prepared for other purposes if it addresses many of the questions below and replaces portions of the narrative in the template. This template may be used both for reports on initiatives that have been completed and for initiatives that will continue and for which this report serves as a milestone of accomplishments thus far. The complete report should be no more than 6,000 words.

The report must be submitted by June 1 of Year 9.

Submit the report as a PDF file at hlcommission.org/upload. Select “Pathways/Quality Initiatives” from the list of submission options to ensure the institution’s materials are sent to the correct HLC staff member. The file name of the report should follow this format: QIReport[InstitutionName] [State].pdf (e.g., QIProposalNoNameUniversityMN.pdf). The file name must include the institution’s name (or an identifiable portion thereof) and state.

Date: 05/17/23

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Overview of the Quality Initiative

1. Provide a one-page executive summary that describes the Quality Initiative, summarizes what was accomplished and explains any changes made to the initiative over the time period.

Previous feedback from HLC Peer Reviewers, along with internal stakeholder feedback, indicated Mid’s processes historically have leaned towards a top-down approach in regards to planning. With the expiration of a previous strategic plan, and the changeover in presidential leadership, an opportunity presented itself to build a new strategic plan. While this is to some degree a perfunctory endeavor, the goal was to dramatically change the culture of the institution by engaging in a process that represented a shift in organizational planning and an attempt to drive quality principles much further into the organization by allowing individual departments and divisions to be much more heavily involved in goal setting and vision building.

The process began in the fall of 2020 with a robust data collection process to gather thoughts, opinions, and ideas from a variety of constituent groups. Led by Mid’s College Council, the main shared governance committee with representatives from students and all employee groups, a survey was created and distributed to all employees, registered students, members of departmental advisory groups, local chambers of commerce members, and recipients of our annual Connections annual report. While focus groups would have been preferable, COVID limited our ability to conduct in-person meetings. The survey was distributed in April of 2021 and gathered significant feedback from 225 individuals.

After a committee of three narrowed qualitative data into overarching themes and presented initial results to College Council and the college’s Board of Trustees resulting in the establishment of four enduring goals:

1. Encouraging Student Success;
2. Engaging our Community;
3. Enhancing Employee Success;
4. Ensuring Institutional Effectiveness

After the establishment of the four enduring goals, a 13-member representative sub-committee (under the umbrella of College Council). This group was divided into four sub-groups (one for each enduring goal), with additional members who were not already part of the committee invited to participate. This was done in an effort to maximize participation. These four groups were responsible for the initial drafts of established priorities under each of the enduring goals. These drafts were then brought back to the original 13-member sub-committee for additional edits before finalization by College Council and the Board of Trustees.

Building of the strategic plan was only the first step in this transformative process. The goal was to engage individual departments and divisions in the overall planning process.
Building the plan with such wide participation accomplished this at the macro level. But the desire was to carry this through to the micro level as well. As such, each department/division was tasked with creating their own strategic plan to address the priority areas as appropriate to their operations. To provide adequate support for this endeavor, the college engaged Ellucian to assist in providing training for department heads in establishing their own strategic plans. The first training session occurred at the annual fall welcome back day in August. Additionally, monthly training sessions (complete with lesson plans and assignments) were conducted throughout the fall 2021. Departments/divisions completed their strategic plans and presented them to College Council at the end of the winter semester. Evaluation of the plan is expected to occur at the end of each academic year. Additionally, a schedule was created for each department to provide updates directly to the Board of Trustees. This was designed to help ensure that the plans remain active and “living.”

Scope and Impact of the Initiative

1. Explain in more detail what was accomplished in the Quality Initiative in relation to its purposes and goals. (If applicable, explain the initiative’s hypotheses and findings.)

After all trainings were completed, twenty-eight departments created individual strategic plans addressing each of the thirteen priorities established under the four enduring goals. While some priority areas were more heavily represented than others in the departmental strategic plans, every priority was addressed by at least one department. Additionally, thirteen departments have already presented to the Board of Trustees their strategic plan updates and future plans. Twelve more are already scheduled for future Board presentations. See attached chart detailing the priority areas covered by each department.

2. Evaluate the impact of the initiative, including any changes in processes, policies, technology, curricula, programs, student learning and success that are now in place in consequence of the initiative.

The original goal was to change the culture at Mid by moving from a top-centered approach to a more collaborative process. The development of the plan was the first step, however, the spirit has filtered out into other endeavors. For example, the Academic division undertook several large initiatives this past academic year. Each one involved the creation of a 10-member faculty implementation team to ensure planning was inclusive and not centered at the top. In Student Services, representatives from multiple offices initiated a project to better understand why dual enrolled students weren’t matriculating at Mid in larger numbers and why Michigan high school college matriculation is trending down. Data were gathered and were brought back to a shared governance committee (Enrollment Management) with review and responses in progress. So in addition to the creation of a comprehensive plan that was built on 28 individual departmental plans built by the departments themselves (with training and support offered by the college), the culture is slowly starting to change into a more collaborative environment where planning and priority setting are centered at the top and pushed downward.

3. Explain any tools, data or other information that resulted from the work of the initiative.

As part of the overall process of establishing a strategic plan, each endeavor that departments/divisions created to address priorities required the establishment of metrics/measure and budgets. This requires much closer relationships with the colleges institutional research...
function and even other departments. This has led to new “discoveries” that have challenged basic assumptions. For example, Off-Campus Programs has as part of their plan to improve the pull-through rate of dual enrolled students. Simultaneously, Admissions has been working on ways to reverse the trend of dropping higher education matriculation rates in our area. In working with Institutional Research, it was discovered that there was a much higher than expected number of dual enrollment students, who despite having completed a significant number of credits, still chose not to attend college upon graduation. We as a college had assumed that dual enrolled students were attending four-year universities straight out of high school. Realizing the overlapping interests of both departments, a new marketing strategy was created to target these students more specifically and early in their high school careers in an attempt to help them understand the importance of completing some type of credential and how inexpensive it is to do so. Additionally, marketing pieces are being developed to target and engage parents as partners in this process at a much earlier timeframe.

In addition to required metrics, each endeavor created by departments must have a budget figured attached. This information is used in our yearly budgetary planning process when considering new endeavors tied to the strategic plan. This gives individual departments much more input on the types of budgetary resources needed to accomplish their goals that are tied specifically to the college’s established priorities.

5. Describe the biggest challenges and opportunities encountered in implementing the initiative.

The biggest opportunity for the college is to engage employees, particularly front-line employees, in the decision-making process at a level where it will have the biggest impact. Additionally, it mandates the inclusion of metrics which ties endeavors and results to actual data which opens up new avenues for data collection and analysis. This has the impact of building more targeted endeavors that can be connected to one another as opposed to a scattershot approach of different departments all doing different things that are not necessarily tied to any data element or communicated outside individual departmental staff. However, while this has generated bountiful ideas on how to address the established priority areas, budgets are still limited and choices have to be made. This presents the biggest challenge to this project. Without funding, staff can become frustrated by the inability to implement the plan they created.

Commitment to and Engagement in the Quality Initiative

6. Describe the individuals and groups involved at stages throughout the initiative and their perceptions of its worth and impact.

Those most directly involved were the strategic planning sub-committee who were responsible for drafting the priority area language. They included representatives from: Career Center and Accommodations, Finance, Facilities, Information Technology, Workforce Development, President, Academic Affairs, Student Services, Foundation, Advising, Institutional Research, and Faculty (Science and Business). Once the plan was built, the VP of Academic Affairs and the VP of Student Services coordinated the training sessions that were conducted by Ellucian, a 3rd party provider. Those departments that built individual strategic plans included: Arts and Sciences, Business and Professional Studies, Health Sciences, Career and Workforce Development, Off-Campus Programs, Online and Distance Learning, Library and Learning Services, Admissions, Mentoring, Financial Aid, Registration and Records, Student Wellness and Equity, Athletics, Student Advancement, Office of the President, Workforce and Economic Development, Mid Foundation, Community Outreach, Institutional Research, Strategic Communications, Facilities, Business Services, Information Technology, Technology Services, Compliance/Ethics and Security, Human Resources, Educational Talent Search, Small Business Development Center.
While there was no official satisfaction survey gauging thoughts/opinions on the process or the project, participation was very high and all departments submitted a plan. Anecdotal comments, particularly about the value of the training were overwhelmingly positive.

7. Describe the most important points learned by those involved in the initiative.

The most important lesson learned is the value of engaging employees at all levels to both build an overall college-wide strategic plan and a department-specific plan. This process builds a sense of ownership among the staff for their own plans and builds a sense of connection with the college as a whole. Secondly, mandatory reporting to the Board ensures that the plan does not simply sit on a shelf so to speak. It’s meant to be a living document to be reviewed regularly and updated appropriately.

Resource Provision

8. Explain the human, financial, physical and technological resources that supported the initiative.

The overall process was co-chaired by the Provost and the VP of Student Services who invested a significant amount of human resources building the entire process schedule, developing the various writing teams, vetting the consultant, finalizing the product, and creating the Board presentation schedule. Since nearly 30 plans were developed, there was a significant human resource expenditure across campus. The consultants were not paid separately. This service was part of an existing contract Mid has with Ellucian. The process largely played out during COVID, so the college leaned heavily on Zoom and other technologies to meet as teams and provide training.

Plans for the Future (or Future Milestones of a Continuing Initiative)

9. Describe plans for ongoing work related to or as a result of the initiative.

The plan was developed to last through 2025. As mentioned previously, each department provides yearly updates to our Board of Trustees. Originally the plan was to also update the community at one of our college-wide professional development days. But those days were eliminated in the last round of faculty negotiations. So evaluation of the plans will take place over the summer with a college-wide reporting structure yet to be determined. Two options that have been considered is to present summaries of plan progress at the fall welcome back day, or create/host an internet site for progress to be placed and tracked.

10. Describe any practices or artifacts from the initiative that other institutions might find meaningful or useful and please indicate if you would be willing to share this information.

It is our opinion that trainings provided to the department leaders was a very beneficial activity. To achieve buy in, it is important to provide support to those building the plans. And it is also important to have leadership participation included.