HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

FORM

Open Pathway Quality Initiative Report

Institutional Template

The enclosed Quality Initiative Report represents the work that the institution has undertaken to fulfill the Improvement Process of the Open Pathway.



April 27, 2018

Signature of Institution's President or Chancellor *Date*

John Masterson: President

Printed/Typed Name and Title

Allen County Community College

Name of Institution

Iola, Kansas

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.

Quality Initiative Reports are to be submitted by August 31 of Year 9. HLC recommends that institutions with comprehensive evaluations in the first half of Year 10 submit their report at least six months prior to their Assurance System lock date. Submit the report as a PDF file to pathways@hlcommission.org with a file name that follows this format: QI Report No Name University MN. The file name must include the institution's name (or an identifiable portion thereof) and state.

Date: April 27, 2018

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Report Categories

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.

Overview of the Quality Initiative (one-page summary)

Allen County Community College engaged in the Quality Initiative, *Institutional Data Improvement and Utilization*, as part of its accreditation process through the Open Pathway for the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). This initiative was selected as a response to the College's concern about the quality of institutional data within the Student Information System, the quality of data reports, both internal and external, and the need for more robust data usage in discussions as part of decision-making processes throughout the College.

As ideas for the Quality Initiative Proposal were initially being discussed, a working group was established to document needs, lead internal discussions and draft the proposal. The Proposal for data improvement aligned with the College's mission and the then-active 2012-2017 Strategic Plan. Once the Quality Initiative Proposal was submitted and approved by an HLC panel of reviewers, a task-force was established to direct implementation of the goals set forth in the Quality Initiative Proposal.

The Quality Initiative Task Force has worked consistently for the two-year implementation phase of the Quality Initiative, meeting monthly to establish and monitor timelines, review milestones, discuss challenges, and support the progress of the college-wide effort. Members of the task force met with College divisions and individual employees to establish methods for improving the data-enhanced decision-making processes within each division and institution-wide.

The Institutional Data Improvement and Utilization Quality Initiative included clear goals with accompanying timelines. The task force coordinated efforts and documented successes and obstacles as the initiative progressed. The goals were specifically developed as broad-based objectives that included all established areas of the College and also included new personnel, new and revised policies and procedures, and new strategies for Program Reviews. While the goals of the Quality Initiative were challenging, the College was dedicated to initiating a culture change regarding data use, which led to the successful achievement of the intended outcomes.

Since this Quality Initiative was a part of a greater culture change, the project also included a review of efforts already completed and plans for further developments to continue after the completion of the official Quality Initiative timeline. These long-term goals will be incorporated into the culture change as the College continues to move from anecdotal evidence decision-making to data-informed decision-making. This culture change will continue to improve systems within the College, improving data collection, analysis, reporting, and utilization.

Scope and Impact of the Initiative

2. 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.)

Scope and Impact of the Initiative

Allen County Community College's Quality Initiative, *Institutional Data Improvement and Utilization,* focused on improving the collection, analysis, reporting, and utilization of institutional data. The College aspired to use quality institutional data toward improving student learning and overall institutional effectiveness by making data-informed decisions. In addition, the College wished to improve the quality and consistency of its data reporting to its coordinating body, the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR), and its accrediting body (HLC).

As a rural community college in an economically-challenged region of Kansas, Allen County Community College is committed to offering its students exceptional learning experiences in a caring environment. College data collections are maintained to support Allen's mission "to provide quality educational and support services in an atmosphere that is caring, safe, and conducive to learning." For Allen to achieve its mission, institutional data collection, analysis, reporting, and utilization are essential. Data-informed decisions assist the College in using its resources wisely and efficiently in the best ways to support students in their learning and to support instructors and staff members in their professional development. College data collection must be accurate and efficient; data analysis must be appropriate and contextual; data reporting must be timely and complete; data utilization must be balanced and informed.

"College data" refers to individual and collections of data elements relevant to the operations, planning, or management of any unit at Allen, or data that are reported or used in official administrative College reports. College data must be accessible, must correctly represent the information intended, and must be clear to the intended audience. As the use of data is expected throughout the College on a regular basis, this initiative, in essence, included all aspects of Allen County Community College. While some individuals were more involved initially, by serving on the Task Force or creating systematic changes, essentially all faculty have seen the impact of the initiative through enhanced Program Review materials and processes. Additionally, most staff members have or will be impacted as they work on Institutional Effectiveness Reviews, have data request needs or access reports on the enhanced data dashboard.

By assessing and addressing College-wide institutional data usage and reporting needs, the College is being more purposeful in its creation of data reports, more purposeful about making these reports accessible to users, and more purposeful in making institutional decisions based on data analysis. In addition, the College is effectively improving the quality and consistency of its data reporting to both its coordinating body, the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR), and its accrediting body (HLC).

As indicated earlier, Allen had historically struggled to pull the same or similar data for consistency among internal and external reports. As an example, three external reports were reflections of data based on enrollment for Fall Census Day. Two reports are required by the Kansas Board of Regents (KHEER and Fall Census) and the third is the IPEDS Fall Enrollment Survey. Because these reports were developed and interpreted by different people, the data was significantly different on each report, even though the enrollment data was based on the same parameters. By working through data definitions with both internal personnel and external agencies, taking snapshots of enrollment information on specific days during each semester, and developing new, consistent structures, these three essential reports now reflect the same enrollment information.

Accomplishments in relation to purpose and goals of the initiative

Accomplishments of the goals established in the Goals and Timeline Section of the Quality Initiative Proposal include:

- Create data standards and conduct data clean-up
  - The standing Allen Jenzabar Users Group (AJUG) led the task of creating a Data Standards Manual. This group meets monthly and is comprised of Directors of the departments that most heavily utilize the Jenzabar student information system. The manual gives guidance for new and existing personnel who enter data into the system to ensure clean, consistent data. The manual was completed in March 2017, and is posted on the MyAllen portal for easy accessibility to employees.

- Rename present institutional data reports for clarified accessibility
  - This milestone was completed in conjunction with the creation of the institutional data reports directory and the Institutional Research Master Calendar. As an example of a report name change, the official census day enrollment report that had been used for several years was termed "President's Report." The IR office now generates this data and the subsequent report is called "20th Day Enrollment Report."

- Create an institutional data reports directory
  - Two institutional data reports directories have been created: an external reports directory and an internal reports directory. The external reports directory was created by the AJUG standing committee and completed in June 2017. The internal reports directory was developed by the IR and IT offices. It is a portal-based directory of data reports and surveys pulled for official Allen reporting. It was completed December 2017.

- Create an accessible data report request and response process
  - Prior to the creation of the Office of Institutional Research and Reporting, all ad-hoc data and reporting requests were made to the IT office. Following the startup of the IR Office, the two departments worked together to create the Allen County Community College Reporting and Data Requests Guidelines. This is a one-page document that reviews good planning for making data and report requests and references the office employees to contact for data and reporting needs. The College is small and requests are generally informal, so the guidelines were developed to mirror the culture of the College and not create undue bureaucracy. The Guidelines were completed in November 2017.

- Search for and hire an employee to fill a Data and Reporting position
  - A position description for a Director of Institutional Research and Reporting was created, a search initiated, and the position filled in April 2017.

- Create an IT and Data and Reporting personnel succession plan
  - This has been integrated into the larger scope of succession planning identified as a goal in the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan.

- Implement the Accounts Receivable and Finance modules of Jenzabar JX
  - This milestone has been reconsidered as Jenzabar Inc. has changed its database products. An enhanced Jenzabar CX system is now being pursued by the College.

- Create Acceptable Use policies and practices for institutional data
  - As discussed above, a Data Standards Manual and Data Access and Usage Guidelines have been developed and implemented. Employees were trained on the guidelines at convocations.

- Create and implement a term / AY calendar for the review of institutional data
  - A data calendar was created by the AJUG standing committee for external reports. Additionally, the IR office Master Calendar includes a very robust monthly calendar of both internal and external reports used for regulatory reporting, benchmarking, internal discussions and program reviews. Although the IR Master Calendar continues to evolve, this milestone was essentially completed in January 2018.

- Create quick access to institutional data reports by employee function
  - The College purchased Crystal report software for the IR office to utilize to improve data reports. The IR and IT offices developed a document outlining the process for requesting data and institutional reports. The IT department improved the functionality of a quick access data dashboard that was created in 2011. The functionality of the dashboard has been enhanced with the addition of a collection of the most recently submitted data sets sent to external regulatory agencies.

- Imbed expectations for data-informed decision-making into college processes, focusing on Program Review, Institutional Effectiveness, and Budget development.
  - While the Program Review process has historically included data, the Director of Institutional Research met with each division during 2017-2018 to determine additional needs. The office worked specifically with the Physical and Life Science and Social and Behavioral Science divisions as members created their documents for review in the 3-year cycle. It has been Allen's practice to make improvements each year to Program Review materials and the addition of an Institutional Research office will help facilitate this practice with data. The College has also initiated a similar 3-year Institutional Effectiveness cycle for non-academic areas. This process is led by the Vice President for Student Affairs with support from the IR office.

Accomplishing the Goals of the Quality Initiative impacted all sectors of the College and improved individuals' abilities to access and analyze data. Greater access and utilization of data has allowed for a better quality decision-making process. The scope of the initiative involved efforts from all areas of the College and has impacted every aspect of the College with a culture change. The College is becoming an institution that bases decisions on data rather than anecdotal evidence and hunches.

Positive changes have occurred in methods of data collection, in policies and processes, in strategic planning and in budgeting, and most importantly in individuals' perceptions of the importance of data analysis and data use in decision-making. Individuals in all areas of the College have noted the value of the Quality Initiative and the positive impact it has had on their areas. The only goals in the original proposal that were not achieved were goals that required the involvement of an outside entity. The College did not move to the Jenzabar JX version of the SIS system. This change did not occur because the

company, Jenzabar Inc., is rethinking changes to the information system, is continuing support of the CX version of the software that Allen currently employs, and is working on future enhancements to this product. With the upcoming enhancements to the CX product, and continued Jenzabar Inc. support, the move to JX was not a necessity for the College.

3. 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.

Impact of the initiative, including changes in processes, policies, technology, curricula, programs, student learning and success

With this initiative, the College has created policies and processes for data collection, reporting, analysis, and usage; policies and processes for data records security and retention, and tools for data storage and retrieval. Two new positions were created and filled, a Director of Institutional Research and Reporting position through the Quality Initiative and a Retention Specialist position through an Academic Support initiative. The Director of Institutional Research and Reporting position was created to assist in all areas of data collection, reporting, and analysis. The Retention Specialist position was created to assist in retention of students, using data for tracking the success of retention initiatives being implemented. Creating and filling these two new positions are examples of the dedication to quality improvement reflected in the efforts of this Quality Initiative and its impact across the College.

Examples of improvements in Processes, Policies, Technology, and Program Curricula resulting from work on the Quality Initiative in an attempt to improve Student Learning and Success that have had a positive impact on the College include:

Policies and Processes Improvement Examples:

Academic Affairs Policies and Processes Examples:

- Program Review process –The Program Review process has been strengthened with an emphasis on data on student enrollment, course retention, and persistence to degree or credential. A planned annual data review has also been implemented and practiced as part of the regular Program Review process.
- New Retention Specialist position – A position description for a Retention Specialist was created, a search initiated, and the position filled in November 2016.

Student Services Policies and Processes Examples:

- Collecting student information – One of the concerns that Allen had prior to the start of the Quality Initiative was lack of information collected that was needed for regulatory reporting and outdated student information in the SIS. Traditionally, Allen had not requested military-related data on a regular basis and left it to the student to self-disclose to the Registrar's Office when requesting military benefits. In 2016, questions regarding military affiliation were added to the application for admission so that Allen had better data to report to KBOR. Additionally, major and degree information was collected on the application for admission and not updated until an application for graduation was submitted and a degree audit completed. This also caused poor and

outdated information on regulatory reports. Beginning with the fall 2017 semester, students who self-enroll online are required to review and update (if applicable) degree and major before enrollment is allowed. Students who enroll with an advisor update through their advisor.

- Selecting target markets – Prior to the Quality Initiative, marketing had been generic, not aimed at a specific audience. A new data report has been developed and will be analyzed each term following the census day snapshot for marketing as a means of assessing the effectiveness of marketing funds by targeted region. As this new marketing data was initially analyzed, the Marketing Committee established an improved process for selecting target markets for advertising.

- Identifying prospective graduates – The Registrar's Office has created a new method, using data, to identify students who are close to graduating, to allow for improved communication between the Registrar and potential graduates.

Administrative Policies and Processes Services Examples:

- Records security and retention – A Records Security and Retention Policy was developed by Students Services and approved by the Board of Trustees in January 2018. The policy details what constitutes a record, who should have access to records, and discusses a Records Retention Schedule. This new policy was reviewed at the spring 2018 College convocation.

- Budget preparation - To improve budget preparation efforts, increased access to prior budget planning and expenditures was provided electronically to budget supervisors.

Business Office Policies and Processes Examples:

- Athletic/Activity scholarships – During the fall 2017 term, a task force was formed to review current scholarship processes and recommend potential changes. The Director of Institutional Research and Reporting was included in the discussions and supplied data from a variety of viewpoints to aid in the discussion. Using this data, the task force recommended, and the College adopted, new guidelines for awarding athletic/activity scholarships.

- Scholarship deadline – After an analysis of data, the Financial Aid Office established a new scholarship application deadline to better process scholarships for students.

- Student removal process – A new data analysis has been created to analyze students lost through removal for non-payment from Allen's purge date to census date. This analysis has led to a new process of having the Retention Specialist reach out to students who still need to pay before the purge date, and data is being collected to determine if there are strategies to better retain students and to determine if the numbers and percentages of students lost is from natural attrition.

Technology and Curricula Improvement Examples:

- New curricula for Biology - Biology Programs of Study were changed as a result of data assessment during Program Review. Data is being collected to determine the impact on student success.

- New software for Biology - The Biology Program allocated budgeted funds into new software to instruct students in Human Anatomy & Physiology I and II. The software connects the students to the physiology equipment on the campuses, but stores the information in a cloud-based server. By using this software, students are able to access data that they have collected while they were in the lab even when they are off campus. Students also have the ability to access pre-lab material while they are off campus so they can prepare for the lab activity before attending class.

These improvements represent some of the positive impacts of the Quality Initiative on the College's processes, policies, technology, and curricula to improve College operations and student learning and success.

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

Tools, data or other information that resulted from the work of the initiative

As the College engaged in the Quality Initiative, the need for guidelines for data usage as well as a method for accessing data became apparent. To assist the College in the implementation of the Quality Initiative, a set of Data Access and Usage Guidelines were developed and implemented.

The purpose for creating the Data Access and Usage Guidelines was to outline procedures that ensure that College data meet set criteria and are used for their intended purposes and to achieve the following:

- Establish appropriate responsibility for the management of College data as an institutional asset.

- Improve ease of access and ensure that users have enough information about the data to interpret them correctly and consistently.

- Improve the security of the data, including confidentiality and protection from loss.

- Improve the integrity of the data, resulting in greater accuracy, timeliness, and quality of information for decision-making.

Other examples of tools developed through the Quality Initiative were two Data Reports Directories and an enhanced Data Dashboard.

To assist in organizing reporting efforts, the standing committee, Allen Jenzabar Users Group (AJUG), created a Report Directory for internal reports and a Report Directory for external reports. These directories improve both organization and access to data for all areas of the College.

The IT area also enhanced the content and usability of a Data Dashboard, which was originally developed through an AQIP Action Project in 2011. These tools assist individuals in accessing data for better quality decisions.

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

Biggest challenges and opportunities encountered in implementation

Allen strives for continuous quality improvement, directly addressing areas of concern when they are identified. Focusing on the College's data collection, reporting, analysis, utilization capacity and processes met a need within the College, addressing areas of concern identified by Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Business Affairs as priorities for improvement and growth.

One of the greatest challenges in implementation came in working with Jenzabar to identify planned improvements to the student information system and devise a timeline for the intended implementation of the JX system. While the CX system has historically provided technological challenges for some types of data collection, Jenzabar did not achieve full functionality of the proposed JX system, and opted to provide enhancements to the CX system that are intended to improve the functionality of the system. So while the delay was initially concerning, the end result of staying with an improved but known product will serve the College well.

One of the greatest opportunities in implementation came in developing the new Strategic Plan. The College's new Strategic Plan has been aligned with the Quality Initiative. The five-year cycle of the College's Strategic Plan matured during the timeframe of the Quality Initiative. One goal of the Quality Initiative, to hire a Director of Institutional Research and Reporting, aligned with the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan Objective 5b4, which determined the need to hire a "Research Data Management" position. As the 2012-2017 Strategic Plan was retired, the process for developing the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan was conducted with the goals of the Quality Initiative in mind. The first night of the Strategic Planning meetings was devoted to data sharing and analysis before any future planning was discussed. As a result of the College being invested in the Quality Initiative, data played a stronger role in the process of developing the new Strategic Plan than for previous Strategic Planning sessions, which improved the overall quality of the Strategic Plan.

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.

Commitment to and Engagement in the Quality Initiative

Allen County Community College is committed to continuous quality improvement and a cultural change to data-informed decision-making. This Quality Initiative involved all areas of the College and has had a positive impact on the different programs and individuals involved. During the timeline of the Quality Initiative, each convocation was opened with the use of data to frame, set context, and drive discussion. Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Business Affairs have all seen the benefit of an emphasis on data collection and analysis in decision-making processes. This Quality Initiative was an aspect of a larger

institutional strategic direction that had already begun, developed in intensity and scope with the Quality Initiative, and will continue in the future.

Individuals and groups involved at stages throughout the initiative and their perceptions of its worth and impact

The College has a structure that includes councils, standing committees, and task forces. There is a standing Accreditation Committee that leads all aspects of Allen's relationship with the Higher Learning Commission. For implementation of the Quality Initiative, a separate Institutional Data Improvement and Utilization Task Force was established to coordinate efforts specific to the initiative. This task force, which included members from administration, faculty, and staff, was responsible for ensuring the goals and timeline of the Quality Initiative were met. The task force members were also responsible for communicating with different areas of the College as changes in their processes, data usage and results analysis were implemented.

As progress continued, other working groups became involved. For example, AJUG created the Data Standards Manual and the Data Directories and supervised data clean-up efforts. All areas of the College were then responsible for using the new guidelines and directories. All areas of the College were asked to begin collecting data that they may not have been collecting prior to implementation of the initiative and centralizing that data with the Director of Institutional Research and Reporting.

Academic Affairs embraced the goals of the Quality Initiative. With direction from the Deans and Division Chairs, faculty revised the Program Review process and implemented an annual data review for each academic program.

Finally, the positive effect of the Quality Initiative on the perceptions of individuals in all areas of the College can be demonstrated in the shift of discussion from anecdotal evidence to discussion involving the Director of Institutional Research and Reporting in the collection, dissemination, and analysis of data-informed evidence when making decisions.

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

Most important points learned by those involved in the initiative

The College has aspired to use quality institutional data toward improving student learning and overall institutional effectiveness by making data-informed decisions. The value of data as an institutional resource has increased through its widespread and appropriate use.

In addition to realizing the importance of data and its use, the importance of communication also became a strong aspect of this initiative, both communication among task Force members and College-wide communication. As the Quality Initiative progressed, it became imperative that all areas of the College had buy-in and were adopting the new processes. This necessitated the need for meaningful communication about the process changes and the rationale behind process changes which were made with reflection on data.

More accurate data collection and analysis have allowed for improved data reporting. External reports are better aligned with more accurate data. The Data, Research and Planning (DRP) unit within the Kansas

Board of Regents worked with Allen's IR and IT departments as internal interpretations of reporting parameters were reviewed and revised where appropriate, and data submissions became more reliable. Multiple comments have been made by state DRP personnel about the improvement in the quality of Allen's data. The College is striving to be recognized by the DRP with the Annual Data Quality Award that is presented to only one of the 32 public institutions in Kansas.

Improved data collection and analysis have impacted Academic Affairs in Program Review processes and curricula changes, and impacted Student Services in marketing, processes for student enrollment, removal of students, awarding scholarships, and identifying potential graduates.

For assessment of the impact of the Quality Initiative, the College is measuring success in improved data accuracy, such as in aligning data in our external reports, and in improved utilization, such as impacting changes in College processes and Program Reviews.

Resource Provision

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

Resource Provision

Having successfully implemented the *Institutional Data Improvement and Utilization* initiative and its on-going process changes, the College is committed to the ongoing culture change derived from the Quality Initiative. The College is dedicating the human, financial, physical, and technological resources necessary for continued success.

Human, financial, physical, and technological resources that supported the initiative

Human Resources

- Director of Information Technology
- Director of Institutional Research and Reporting (new position)
- Retention Specialist (new position)
- Registrar
- Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Business Affairs, instructors, and staff members
- President's Council (senior administrators).

Financial Resources

- Employment of a newly created position, Director of Institutional Research and Reporting
- Technology infrastructure upgrades
- Data analysis software
- Training for new technology and software
- Membership in the National Community College Benchmarking Project.

Physical/Technological Resources

- New office space for IT and IR
- Technology infrastructure upgrades
- Data analysis software
- Data Reports Directories
- Data Dashboard improvements.

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.

Plans for the Future

This Quality Initiative has been a major component of an ongoing and College-wide strategic direction to improve institutional data quality and usage. The result is a culture focused on data-informed decision-making.

Plans for ongoing work

Senior leadership, faculty, and staff members continue to be committed to the process, and the College is achieving concrete results in improving the quality of data collection, analysis, reporting, and utilization. The College participated in the National Community College Benchmarking Project (NCCBP) during the Quality Initiative. Having established a peer group and initial data for benchmarking, the College has begun analyzing data and started discussions concerning that data.

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.

Practices and/or artifacts to be shared

During the work on the Quality Initiative, the College created policies, processes, position descriptions, and directories and guidelines for data. Allen County Community College would be pleased to share any of these with colleagues at other HLC institutions.