

June 15, 2023

Dr. Thomas W. Newsom
President
Southeastern Oklahoma State University
425 West University Boulevard
Durant, Oklahoma 74701-3347

Dear President Newsom,

This letter is accompanied by the Quality Initiative Report (QIR) Review form completed by a peer review panel. Southeastern Oklahoma 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: Southeastern Oklahoma State University

State: OK

Institutional ID: 1639

Reviewers (names, titles, institutions): Dr. Norma Noonan, Professor Emerita of Political Science, Augsburg University; Dr. Marie S. Morris, Provost Emerita, Anderson University

Date: June 13, 2023

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)

This is an ambitious and far-reaching QI and is intended to continue beyond the initial QI period. It is a comprehensive review of Southeastern's online program and will be incorporated into the University's ongoing activities.

Among the five pillars in Southeastern Oklahoma State University's strategic plan (*Vision 2040*) Southeastern Oklahoma State University engaged a project to address two of the five pillars: 1) "Sustainability" by providing high quality online instruction, and 2) "Student Ready Campus" by investing in initiatives to identify and address barriers to retention and completion as it relates to advising, online instruction, student engagement, and immersive/experiential learning. The two main foci of the project were: 1) quality of online instruction and 2) academic and student advising.

The institution addressed changes in learning delivery systems occasioned by the Covid pandemic and prepared for post-Covid online education as well.

Activities related to online instruction involved assessing existing courses and providing training in Quality Matters®. One hundred thirty-one (131) courses were assessed and found to be in "good condition." Faculty teaching the assessed courses were receptive to constructive feedback and made improvements in their courses. The report did not indicate how large a percentage of the overall online offerings the 131 courses represent. Also omitted is the percentage of the overall curriculum that is offered online. The report did not indicate how substantive were the changes to courses nor the precise nature of the changes. A cohort of 17 faculty, representing 11 disciplines, participated in seven monthly Quality Matters® online teaching workshops. They received a Teaching Online Certificate (TOC) upon completion. Participants in this training found it helpful and have since shared their learning among the faculty. A second cohort of faculty is scheduled for training during 2023-24.

The institution changed their learning management system (LMS) from Blackboard to Canvas during the time of the project. This LMS transition delayed some of the training initiatives, but the institution is on track to pick those up again during the 2023-24 academic year.

To achieve expectations for academic and student advising the institution hired an AVPAA to lead the advising initiative and an AVPAA for undergraduate studies, developed a concierge model of advising, instituted an advising council, developed plans to implement advisor training, and invested in Civitas Learning software. There was a significant investment in human and financial resources in this comprehensive QI.

Evidence was provided that the institution linked its quality initiative project to the broader strategic plan and is making good progress in goal achievement. Genuine effort, scope, impact, commitment, engagement, and adequate resourcing (both in technology and human resources) was demonstrated.

Southeastern Oklahoma State engaged in an ambitious project that promises significant student impact over time. In part the program rests on the effectiveness of the QM model and the Civitas software, which the university cannot control. Its efforts, however, are serious, intentional and reflect commitment to the goals of quality online education and effective advising.