

May 25, 2023

Dr. Jose Luis Cruz Rivera  
President  
Northern Arizona University  
P.O. Box 4092  
1900 S. Knoles Drive  
Flagstaff, Arizona 86011

Dear President Rivera,

This letter is accompanied by the Quality Initiative Proposal (QIP) Review form completed by a peer review panel. Northern Arizona University'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](mailto:kbijak@hlcommission.org)) or Pat Newton-Curran ([pnewton@hlcommission.org](mailto:pnewton@hlcommission.org)). For any questions about your Quality Initiative, contact Dr. Jeffrey Rosen at [jrosen@hlcommission.org](mailto:jrosen@hlcommission.org).

***The Higher Learning Commission***

# Open Pathway Quality Initiative Proposal Review Form

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Date of Review: June 5, 2023

Name of Institution: Northern Arizona University      State: Arizona

Institutional ID: 1010

Reviewers (names, titles, institutions): Dr. Douglas Davenport, Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs (retired), Missouri Western State University

Mrs. Laurie Johns, Director, Curriculum Management, Columbus State Community College

## Review Categories and Findings

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### 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.)

NAU's proposal outlines an ambitious project entitled "100% Career Ready" that seeks to positively impact every degree-seeking student by modifying all academic programs to include career-focused outcomes and relevant high impact practices, along with comprehensive career services located in each college. As described, this project is intended to address critical workforce development needs in the region and strengthen the success of students following graduation. The project is closely aligned with NAU's strategic priorities related to academic excellence and student success. It is also directly connected to statewide efforts to increase the "economic mobility" of students from lower SES segments. Overall, the "100% Career Ready" project has great potential for significantly enhancing the value of higher education provided by the institution.

### 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:**

- The Quality Initiative Proposal demonstrates clarity of purpose.
- The Quality Initiative Proposal does not demonstrate clarity of purpose.

#### **Rationale and Comments:**

The proposal identifies a clear purpose of preparing “all NAU students to successfully launch into meaningful careers upon graduation.” This is to be accomplished through three key goals: 1) developing a 100% career ready curriculum, 2) developing a 100% career ready support structure, and 3) developing a 100% career ready university infrastructure. Each of these goals have well-defined action items, along with relevant milestones and metrics. The proposed metrics assess progress in terms of absolute values (number of degree programs revised, number of courses examined and modified, number of programs that have embedded co-curricular opportunities into the curriculum, and number of faculty actively involved in curricular revisions. The reviewers encourage the institution to consider relative metrics as well, such as the percentage of degree programs revised, percentage of courses examined and modified, percentage of programs that have embedded co-curricular opportunities into the curriculum, and percentage of faculty actively involved in curricular revisions.

### **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:**

- 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 specifically notes the involvement of the President, Provost, and Vice President of Student Affairs in creating and leading this project. It is fully supported by the Arizona Board of Regents, as well as student government on campus. The project will be led by the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies, working with all academic deans to ensure relevant curricular changes are made. Key leadership is also provided by the Director of the Office of Career Development as it relates to co-curricular career support. The institution has committed

substantial fiscal resources to the project, including a \$375,000 internal grant, summer stipends and reassigned time for faculty, as well as the commitment of ITS and marketing services in the implementation of technological elements.

#### 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:

- The Quality Initiative Proposal demonstrates an appropriate timeline.
- The Quality Initiative Proposal does not demonstrate an appropriate timeline.

#### Rationale and Comments:

The project began in Fall 2022 and will continue beyond the two-year timeframe expected for the Quality Initiative. The institution has outlined a reasonable timeline for the work to be completed as planned. Full implementation will occur no sooner than 2025 with assessment to occur beyond that year.

### General Observations and Recommended Modifications

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

This is a compelling project that has important implications for the institution, its students, and the region. It is encouraging to see the stated level of commitment on the part of external constituents and the groundwork that has already been laid by the institution. Given the expectation that significant curricular changes are in order, it is crucial that administration and faculty remain fully engaged in the project and ensure its completion in a timely fashion. Finally, this project should have positive effects on student persistence and completion; the institution is encouraged to consider this in creating additional assessment measures moving forward.

### Conclusion

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- 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