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May 19, 2025

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 Report (QIR) Review form completed by a peer review panel. Northern Arizona 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

Review Process

The Quality Initiative panel review process evaluates the institution's effort in undertaking the Quality Initiative Proposal approved by HLC. 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.

Submission Instructions

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: Northern Arizona University

State: Arizona

Institutional ID: 1010

Reviewers (names, titles, institutions): Dr. Jerry Durham, Chancellor Emeritus, Allen College

Dr. Charles (Russ) Hannah, Vice Chancellor for Finance and
Administration and Chief Financial Officer, Arkansas
State University

Date: May 9, 2025

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)

The Northern Arizona University's (NAU) Quality Initiative (QI) focused on developing and implementing activities and changes to ensure that “every undergraduate and masters-level student engages in meaningful, career relevant experiences before graduation.” To achieve this overarching goal, NAU implemented changes in four areas: (1) a 100% career ready curriculum; (2) a 100% career ready support structure; (3) 100% career ready internship offerings; and (4) 100% career ready technological and cultural support. To achieve these goals, NAU faculty embedded career competencies and preparation throughout curricula. In addition, NAU provided workshops to help faculty revise courses and degree programs to incorporate career-related outcomes and competencies; hired career development coordinators for colleges previously lacking dedicated career support; expanded opportunities and participation in internships and other pre-professional experiences for undergraduates; expanded partnerships for internship experiences, including virtual internships; and expanded use of technology to better connect students with career planning resources and employment.

Relative to the scope and impact of the QI, over the past two years NAU built an infrastructure and made progress in four key areas: (1) Curriculum, with the goal of having 100% of NAU's academic programs having career-oriented learning goals in degree curricula and syllabi; (2) Integrated career/pre-professional opportunities, with the goal of providing career/pre-professional experiences for 100% of NAU's students in their academic programs; (3) University-wide ecosystem of career readiness that connects learning outcomes and career/pre-professional experiences with career advising provided by faculty; and (4) Connection to workforce, industry, and alumni, with the goal of connecting students to alumni through intentional engagement programs and outreach initiatives. A key goal is the evaluation of these QI-related changes and activities, including changes in processes, policies, technology, curricula, programs, and student learning and success.

NAU's QI includes several key reported outcomes: (1) Over 80% of the undergraduate academic programs have revised their curricula to include career competencies; (2) Faculty have participated in workshops/fellowships to gain a deeper understanding of how to support students' career development; (3) NAU's Faculty Senate is in the process of approving a university-wide syllabus template that identifies career-related learning outcomes; (4) NAU has established an infrastructure to embed career/pre-professional opportunities in curricular and co-curricular areas; (5) A Career Council has been established and meets regularly; and

(6) NAU has better connected students to alumni and industry partners (e.g., Lumberjacks Thrive Externship Program).

NAU's QI has led to the development and implementation of five tools, data sources and resources that support long-term success and continuous improvement including labor market data integration;

first destination and institutional surveys; create-design-launch framework; Uconnet platform; and Canvas modules for career learning.

NAU's QI reported two challenges related to implementation of its QI; (1) investment of faculty time to work collaboratively to develop career-ready curricula and programs and (2) linking students to paid internships that require significant financial resources.

NAU demonstrated a commitment to and engagement in the initiative by including its career ready initiative in its strategic roadmap and by receiving financial support from the Office of the President. In addition, institutional commitment to the QI included the participation of multiple constituents including the provost, vice-provosts, deans, VP of Student Affairs, college-based career professionals, faculty and external partners. The initiative was supported financially by an internal grant (Elevating Excellence) and five new career development positions. In addition, the provost and academic colleges collaborated with the Office of Alumni Engagement to enhance access to opportunities such as internships and mentorship programs. The QI has also advanced the coordination of technological platforms (e.g., Handshake and Canvas) to achieve its goals.

Future QI-related work includes 100% of syllabi having at least one career-related learning outcome and implementation of a grant from the Strada Education Foundation and AASCU to support four QI-related areas that advance the work already accomplished or underway.

The panel members concluded that NAU's report was thorough, compelling, and demonstrative of the QI's scope and impact. The panel members further determined that the institution was highly committed to and engaged with the QI's success as demonstrated by the commitment of financial and human resources.

Evidence of the institution's implementation of its QI can be found at this website:
<https://nau.edu/accreditation/quality-initiative/>.

The panel affirms NAU's genuine effort in pursuing its quality initiative and applauds its success to date.