



June 23, 2022

Dr. Paul Illich
President
Southeast Community College Area
8800 O Street
Lincoln, Nebraska 68520-1299

Dear President Illich,

Attached is the Quality Initiative Report (QIR) Review evaluation information. Southeast Community College Area'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 hlccommission.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: Southeast Community College

State: Nebraska

Institutional ID: 1898

Reviewers (names, titles, institutions): Dr. Tami Eggleston, Provost, McKendree University and Dr. Stephanie Bulger, Vice Chancellor, Instructional Services, San Diego Community College District

Date: 6/20/2022

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)

Seriousness of the undertaking.

Southeast Community College's Quality Initiative Project (QIP) began in Spring 2020. Its focus has been on improving retention and completion by developing academic resiliency in students with a concomitant objective to develop the employees who directly interface with students (e.g., faculty, advisors, and student affairs staff) and play a role in advancing the project's focus. This project led to the institution including two objectives in the SCC 2020-2024 Strategic Plan to improve emotional intelligence and resiliency skills in student and employees. The QIP examined data on student retention after implementing a professional development program for employees, developing a curriculum on emotional intelligence, and embedding the curriculum in courses, including those with a high failure rate.

The QIP focused on two strategies: to improve faculty and staff professional development in college and program advising, resilience, and emotional intelligence skills; and to improve student ability to overcome challenges through enhanced emotional intelligence and resilience skills. The findings suggested that retention and dropout rates were the opposite of expectations. That is, retention was lower than expected and drop out was higher than expected. SCC speculated that the results could be explained by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, results were consistent with the hypothesis when the emotional intelligence curriculum was embedded in a small number of high failure rate courses (8) taught by 22 faculty.

SCC used qualitative and quantitative analysis when evaluating the QI.

Initiative scope and impact.

SCC was committed to moving forward with the QI in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic. The institution pivoted from an initiative with three strategies to two of those strategies, utilized existing staff as trainers, and did not use an external consultant trainer as originally planned. The implementation of the QI was with 7500 students.

Strategy #1: Comprehensive professional development training on academic resiliency for faculty, advisors, and student affairs staff.

Strategy # 2: Engaged learning activities embedded into gateway courses that have the highest number of failing grades.

Strategy # 3: Implementation of a software solution, CRM Advise (this strategy was put on hold due to COVID).

Some of the significant progress:

1. Developed an Emotional Intelligence (EI) curriculum.

2. Trained faculty and staff.
3. Completed three comprehensive analyses of grade patterns, success rates, retention, and completion rates.
4. Added to the Strategic Plan.
5. Redesigned college student success course.

The results for the study in terms of receiving an F went from 47% down to 37% This seems very notable.

The retention and dropout rates actually went in the opposite direction, but again this could have been due to COVID. Overall there was just a higher dropout rate during COVID regardless of if the students received an F or not. But clearly students who did not receive an F in the first term retain at higher rates.

The trends on failure rate for English and Math courses is quite impressive as nationally these number keep going up and also that it was done during COVID. So congratulations to your English and Math instructors!

SCC should be commended for taking on a challenging QI project, at a challenging time in our history, and then truly studying it with numbers, hypotheses, and rigor. Even though it would be hard to label this project a “success” the topics, the initiatives, the strategy, and the documentation was excellent. I appreciate the college started to implement a “Failure Award” and reframing failure as a discovery that occurs throughout a successful journey.

Commitment and engagement in the initiative.

There appeared to be good engagement with this initiative and there was involvement from faculty, institutional research, student affairs staff, and students. An unintended positive consequence was infusion of the concept of resiliency and emotional intelligence into the broader college, for example, in using these concepts as design drivers in a campus renovation, creating a Failure Award to promote calculated risk-taking in employees, including questions on emotional intelligence in climate surveys and student satisfaction surveys, a new advising model, and resuming full in person student orientation in Fall 2020 to promote academic resiliency skills. There appeared to be a good number of people involved.

Adequate resource provision.

SCC invested \$30,000 to train three full-time employees to facilitate professional development with faculty and staff on resiliency and emotional intelligence skills. This QI had the most important resource of all—people. People from the administration to faculty to staff.

The QI budget also allowed for students to complete surveys, add a server, complete reports, and paid for professional development. SCC included a clear budget with a total of over a quarter of million in expenses.

The report suggested that that investment of financial and people resources was adequate. The project will continue with several activities that began with the QIP. For example, SCC will require all new students to take a student success course in Fall 2022 that was redesigned with the emotional intelligence curriculum. There appears to be a commitment to share the results of their work and to assist other institutions interested in building similar institutional, employee, and student resiliency.