Open Pathway Quality Initiative Proposal

Institutional Template

The enclosed Quality Initiative Proposal represents the work that the institution will undertake to fulfill the quality improvement requirements of the Open Pathway.

[signature]   06-01-2022

Signature of Institution's President or Chancellor   *Date*

Samuel Stanley

Printed/Typed Name and Title

Michigan State University

Name of Institution

East Lansing, Michigan

City and State

The institution completes the Quality Initiative Proposal by responding to the questions in each category of the template. Proposals should be no more than 4,500 words. The institution may choose to submit a brief implementation plan or supplemental charts or graphs as appendices to the template. The Quality Initiative Proposal will be accepted beginning September 1 of Year 5. It is due no later than June 1 of Year 7.

Submit the proposal as a PDF file to hlcommission.org/upload. Select "Pathways/Quality Initiative" from the list of submission options to ensure the institution's materials are sent to the correct HLC staff member. Submission file names should utilize the following format: QIProposal[InstitutionName][State].pdf (e.g., QIProposalNoNameUniversityMN.pdf). The file name must include the institution's name (or an identifiable portion thereof) and state.

Overview of the Quality Initiative

1. Provide a title and brief description of the Quality Initiative. Explain whether the initiative will begin and be completed during the Quality Initiative period or if it is part of work already in progress or will achieve a key milestone in the work of a longer initiative.

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"Great institutions never stand still." (Executive Summary, MSU 2030 Strategic Plan)

The MSU 2022 Quality Initiative, "Closing the Gap" is a comprehensive plan to improve the quality of academic support, student achievement initiatives, and–ultimately–our undergraduate graduation rate by closing opportunity gaps for minoritized students. Closing the Gap has been developed in support of the university's strategic plan, "MSU 2030: Empowering Excellence, Advancing Equity and Expanding Impact," which puts people first and prioritizes the success of students, staff and faculty. Theme one, Student Success, includes many areas of impact around Closing the Gap, including curriculum, access and persistence, student experience, and commitment to DEI student success initiatives.

Our work on Closing the Gap began in the planning stages of the 2030 Strategic Plan, but was wholly implemented with the plan in September 2021. Over the next two years, we hope to take steps toward accomplishing the plan, described below, and of course, the full plan has a goal date of 2030.

In Spring 2022, after the beginning phases of the Strategic Plan implementation process, the Student Success theme of the 2030 Strategic Plan has over 70 projects in various stages of review, planning, and implementation. In the next two years, we hope to accomplish several key components of the plan; what follows are five highlights of Closing the Gap.

First, our offices of Financial Aid, Registrar, Enrollment/Admissions, and the Controller will work to develop what we are calling the One Stop Shop to improve the student experience to remove barriers around information sharing and gathering.

Second, we are enhancing our low income student support program aligned with the needs and experiences of our students called the Spartan Advantage Program (SPAD). Institutional funds supplement other non-loan forms of financial assistance a student receives so that the costs of tuition, fees, room, board, and books are covered. MSU will expand the SPAD program to include more of our very high need students, beyond the 2000 students who are enrolled.

Third, in our Advising Expansion we will restructure and infuse resources into MSU's advising community to ensure that MSU can provide the holistic and intrusive advising necessary for all students to learn, thrive, and graduate. MSU's advising community will be appropriately structured and adequately resourced to meet the diversity of our students' needs, to help students develop their purposes and passions, and to support the migration of students between majors and colleges at MSU.

Our fourth example is the First Generation Student Success Project. MSU's recent designation as a First-gen Forward Institution allowed us the dedicated opportunity to work on a series of efforts to address the opportunity gaps for first-generation students.

A final example of the type of work being done on campus to Close the Gap is the Inclusive Campus Initiative from the Division of Student Life & Engagement. The Inclusive Campus Initiative (ICI) is designed to create a space wherein discussions of student social justice and advocacy issues involve students' voices firsthand.

As a final component of our Quality Initiative project, we are applying for the HLC's Assessment Academy to send a cohort from our colleges to ensure that we are developing appropriate assessment plans around Closing the Gap. We are particularly interested in this opportunity so that we can enhance our culture of assessment around these student success initiatives.

Another thoughtful feature of Closing the Gap is its connection to and inclusion of MSU's 2016 Quality Initiative The Neighborhoods. That on-going work has continued to inspire our innovative efforts in student success initiatives on campus.

Sufficiency of the Initiative's Scope and Significance

2. Explain why the proposed initiative is relevant and significant for the institution.

"I am perhaps most enthusiastic about its blunt reframing of student success away from being a moral claim about an individual student's supposed willingness or ability to learn, thrive, and graduate to focusing on meeting students' needs by reforming our university." (Mark Largent, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education)

Closing the Gap is a large student success initiative that touches every point of our campus. It has the potential to directly affect the academic achievement of every undergraduate student on campus, and as we develop programs such as the One Stop Shop or update our financial aid opportunities, our graduate student populations may also benefit.

The significance of Closing the Gap to the MSU community cannot be understated. It will further the good work of the university by reaching the student population equitably and sustainably.

From our Strategic Plan:
"At Michigan State, we believe every student we admit has the ability to succeed and graduate. We feel a sense of urgency to improve graduation rates, because a college degree is the best route to individual opportunity and an educated workforce strengthens Michigan and the nation."

"Finally, the past decade has been marked with challenges. As an institution, we have reflected deeply, learned, and become better and stronger today. We have committed to continue to listen and learn from our students, faculty, staff and all stakeholders in all aspects of our mission and operations. The strategic plan and its implementation provide an avenue to structure continued engagement around the university's priorities."

3. Explain the intended impact of the initiative on the institution and its academic quality.

One example mentioned above as an initiative in support of Closing the Gap is the Inclusive Campus Initiative (ICI); the impact of this one example can change the institution and the academic quality for the student experience. This project is a result of the on-going student concerns shared at town halls and through multiple lists of student demands. Senior Vice President Vennie Gore explains, "We are undertaking this project to develop inclusive strategies that can be implemented in fall of 2021 and beyond toward the vision that any identity will feel safe on the MSU campus." As Gore has noted, over the years, he has consistently heard from students, "I don't feel safe." This lack of safety is a tremendous concern especially as students return to campus in person. This initiative will help to develop a sense of belonging across identity groups.

The work is completed in four ICI Inclusive Task Forces: Inclusive Education, Training, and Programming; Inclusive Physical Environment; Inclusive Policies & Procedures; and Inclusive Representation & Retention. These task forces meet monthly, and their discussions center on how to support
student demands and on-going student concerns by strategizing around campus-wide resources: increasing and centralizing communications, following up on progress, and identifying the need for additional resources.

This project aims to increase awareness of DEI efforts on campus, to arrive at the same intellectual level of DEI perspectives, to increase collaboration across units, and to *do something* about the issues. By mobilizing a team of resourced campus professionals, significant change can and will occur in our students' experience of MSU and will help us to Close the Gap.

From our Strategic Plan:

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"Student success is the measure of an institution's ability to provide an inclusive, equitable curriculum and environment with the academic, social, wellness and financial support that enables all students to learn, thrive, persist, graduate and succeed after graduation.

Understood this way, student success is not a measure of the academic achievement of either individual students or students collectively; rather, measures like academic standing, persistence, graduation, sense of belonging, engagement, time-to-degree and placement rate indicate how well an institution supports its students."

Clarity of the Initiative's Purpose

4. Describe the purposes and goals for the initiative.

The Student Success theme of the 2030 Strategic Plan has five objectives (listed under Objectives below). In the next two years, we will focus on these five key initiatives, as described above, as examples of how we will Close the Gap:

Strategic Plan Element	"Closing the Gap" Example Initiatives	Sponsors	Leads	2024 Goals
SP. 1: Obj. 1	Spartan Advantage Program (SPAD)	ES, APUE	Dave Weatherspoon, Keith Williams	Increase affordability for our neediest resident students Reduce reliance on student employment to allow more time for student to focus on studies Allow students to graduate from MSU without significant student loan debt Provide adequate financial counseling that will prepare students for the future
SP 1: Obj. 5	One Stop Shop	ES, APUE	Dave Weatherspoon, Keith Williams, John Ambrose, Steve Shablin	Find a location for the one-stop shop and hire a team from all units to staff the one-stop Create robust training for one stop personnel to be able to answer questions across multiple areas Begin hiring process for new Director
SP 1: Obj. 1	Advising Expansion	APUE, Provost	Mark Largent, Renata Opoczynski, Amy Martin, Jonelle Golding, Beth Judge, Qiana Green	Conduct a landscape survey of advising, benchmarking internal and external structures for advising to understand the state of our current advising structure and suggest improves to better support students

Strategic Plan Element	"Closing the Gap" Example Initiatives	Sponsors	Leads	2024 Goals
				Develop a centralized advising structure and team of advisors in APUE to focus on student experiences in their first two years Provide robust training and development opportunities to the advising community annually
SP 1: Obj. 1	First Generation Student Success Project	APUE	Mark Largent, Perry Fittrer, Christina Bridges	Create a new first gen support program for 20 students each cohort Create a First Gen advisory board Create a First Gen website on the main MSU website
SP 1: Obj. 2, 4 & 5	Inclusive Campus Initiative	SL&E	Vennie Gore, Meaghan Kozar	Solidify programs established to channel student voices to detect and anticipate demands before they materialize through direct, ongoing interaction (in person or virtual) with administrators holding decision making authority. Better understand and account for, through work of the ICI Taskforces, the student demands landscape in terms of what has been accomplished, what is ongoing and what remains to be addressed. Implement ICI Taskforces deliverables, as planned in their respective timetables, towards the overall aim of students feeling safe on campus. Develop an assessment framework for 'feeling safe on campus' so that we can baseline and measure our progress over time.
SP 1: Obj. 1	HLC Assessment Academy	Accreditation, Program Review, and Assessment	Stacia Moroski-Rigney	Complete Years 1 & 2 with an eight-person team

2030 Strategic Plan: Student Success Objectives
Objective 1
Strengthen MSU's ability to attract and meet the needs, goals and aspirations of dynamic undergraduate students from all backgrounds
    Strategies/Actions
- Decrease average student debt and maintain access to high-quality MSU education for students of all economic backgrounds by increasing on-time graduation rate for undergraduate students

- Invest in maintaining and/or building leadership in differentiating and high-demand undergraduate programs (i.e., supply chain, packaging, entrepreneurship and ethics, game design, biological/agricultural engineering, forestry)
- Ensure all students have high-quality academic and career advising that grows with them from admission through graduation
- Ensure continuing quality and improvement of academic programs by clearly articulating learning outcomes; regularly and appropriately assess and align outcomes
- Redesign gateway courses to improve learning outcomes and eliminate opportunity gaps
- Expand and deepen support of Neighborhood Student Success Collaborative initiatives demonstrating success in promoting persistence of students from diverse and historically underrepresented backgrounds

Objective 2

Increase access to and successful completion of highly ranked graduate and professional education by an increasingly diverse population of students

Strategies/Actions

- Increase the number and percentage of high-quality doctoral and master's programs by improving existing programs and eliminating programs of insufficient quality through regular Strategic Program Assessment overseen by the Graduate School
- Increase the number of quality online master's programs to improve access to graduate education
- Develop new cross-disciplinary doctoral programs to provide the multidisciplinary expertise required for many areas of inquiry
- Increase the diversity of students within graduate programs
- Increase the number of university fellowships to improve graduate recruitment
- Support high-impact mentoring for all graduate students and training for all faculty mentors to fully implement the Guidelines for Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising
- Increase support for graduate student placement (jobs or further educational opportunities), improve communication about diverse career pathways and options, and monitor placement rates into these alternative careers

Objective 3

Increase the number and diversity of learners we serve through an online learning strategy that provides wider access through targeted programs

Strategies/Actions

- Create a dedicated academic unit to support online programs
- Create targeted, market-driven post baccalaureate and post-master's degrees and certificates that include coordinated continuous-learning programs and alternative credentials
- Develop online and alternative pathways for some-college-no-degree students and prospective students who already are in the workforce and/or for those who cannot engage in a traditional course delivery structure
- Increase access to MSU for students transferring from 2- and 4-year institutions by creating clear and well-supported pathways for transfer students into MSU and by deepening MSU's relationships with Michigan community colleges
- Partner with key international institutions to enable students to earn an MSU degree while starting or finishing courses online in their countries of origin

Objective 4

Strengthen each student's educational experience to eliminate opportunity gaps and support success through graduation and beyond

Strategies/Actions

- Ensure every undergraduate has at least two high-impact learning experiences (i.e., education abroad, experiential learning) and reduce barriers to opportunities with historically lower participation
- Ensure all graduates develop leadership, entrepreneurial attitudes and skills, ethics and digital and technical/analytical abilities appropriate for a world transformed by technology and automation

- Elevate the stature of the Honors College and enhance the experience of Honors College students
- Transform the intellectual habits of students by intentionally integrating ethics and the arts into curricular and cocurricular experiences
- Increase the number of advisers to better assist students in navigating program, course and career options
- Continue to standardize and structure a record for cocurricular and extracurricular activities to allow students to better demonstrate the value of their college experiences
- Increase alumni engagement in student mentorship and career development

Objective 5
Provide a positive climate and holistic support throughout the student experience, understanding that providing high-quality out-of-classroom experiences and care are essential to student success

   Strategies/Actions
   o   Establish a comprehensive sense-of-belonging initiative that recognizes the individual identities, affinities and aspirations of each student
   o   Provide support to student groups to increase reach and resources for student members
   o   Regularly implement campus climate assessments and engage in reflection and action based on the results
   o   Establish a comprehensive holistic wellness initiative addressing academic, financial, physical, mental and emotional health for all students
   o   Establish a comprehensive digital experience initiative that enables academic achievement and institutional navigation, including access to digital health and wellness resources, access to technology to engage online and clear, relevant digital communication

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5. Select up to three main topics that will be addressed by the initiative.

☐ Advising	☐ Leadership	☐ Retention
☐ Assessment	☐ Learning Environment	☒ Strategic Planning
☐ Civic Engagement	☐ Online Learning	☐ Student Learning
☐ Curriculum	☒ Persistence and Completion	☒ Student Success
☐ Diversity		☐ Teaching/Pedagogy
☐ Engagement	☐ Professional Development	☐ Underserved Populations
☐ Faculty Development	☐ Program Development	☐ Workforce
☐ First-Year Programs	☐ Program Evaluation	☐ Other:
☐ General Education	☐ Quality Improvement	

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6. Describe how the institution will evaluate progress, make adjustments and determine what has been accomplished.

As stated above, the Closing the Gap initiative will hopefully be supported by MSU's participation in the HLC Assessment Academy in 2022-23 and 23-24. As we continue to build the culture of assessment around student success, we will enhance our policies and processes to collect the data and narratives needed to tell our stories. In

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advance of this participation, we have also set benchmark goals for early summer 2024 in our Quality Initiative Report.

2024 Goals (see chart above):
Our goals for 2024 are necessarily smaller, but that gives us the opportunity to take advantage of the timeline to take risks with the goals we set.

Closing the Gap Highlights
SPAD
- Increase affordability for our neediest resident students
- Reduce reliance on student employment to allow more time for student to focus on studies
- Allow students to graduate from MSU without significant student loan debt
- Provide adequate financial counseling that will prepare students for the future

One Stop Shop
- Find a location for the one-stop shop and hire a team from all units to staff the one-stop
- Create robust training for one stop personnel to be able to answer questions across multiple areas

Advising Landscape
- Conduct a landscape survey of advising, benchmarking internal and external structures for advising to understand the state of our current advising structure and suggest improves to better support students
- Develop a centralized advising structure and team of advisors in APUE to focus on student experiences in their first two years
- Provide robust training and development opportunities to the advising community annually

First Gen
- Create a new first gen support program for 20 students each cohort
- Create a First Gen advisory board
- Create a First Gen website on the main MSU website

Inclusive Campus Initiative
- Solidify programs established to channel student voices to detect and anticipate demands before they materialize through direct, ongoing interaction (in person or virtual) with administrators holding decision making authority.
- Better understand and account for, through work of the ICI Taskforces, the student demands landscape in terms of what has been accomplished, what is ongoing and what remains to be addressed.
- Implement ICI Taskforces deliverables, as planned in their respective timetables, towards the overall aim of students feeling safe on campus.
- Develop an assessment framework for 'feeling safe on campus' so that we can baseline and measure our progress over time.

HLC Assessment Academy
- Recruit an eight-person cohort from across the colleges to work as a team, building on our academic and student success assessment plans and strengthening the foundation of our culture of assessment
- Complete the two-year program with the option of two more years

Overall Closing the Gap Goals for 2024
- Retention rate increases for underserved populations
- Probation rate decreases for underserved populations
- Debt at graduation decreases

2030 Strategic Plan
Student Success Illustrative Metrics:
- Six-year graduation rate for first-time and transfer undergraduates to increase by 5% to 86%
- Time-to-degree, cost-of-degree, and value-of-degree measures — undergraduate and graduate
- Placement rates — undergraduate and graduate (increase)
- Probation rates (decrease and close gaps)
- Sense-of-belonging measures and climate assessments (improve)

- Number of online courses, certificates and degrees (increase)
- International opportunities for students (increase)
- Number of high-impact opportunities offered; student participation in opportunities (increase)
- Use of student support services (increase)
- Student debt upon graduation (decrease)

Evidence of Commitment to and Capacity for Accomplishing the Initiative

7. Describe the level of support for the initiative by internal or external stakeholders.

As part of the 2030 Strategic Plan, Closing the Gap is one of five major themes supported by upper administration, faculty, and staff. Offices across campus are working in support of and in partnership with this initiative. A full list is available below.

From the Strategic Plan:
"On Jan. 6, 2020, President Samuel L. Stanley Jr., M.D., charged co-chairs Vennie Gore and Joseph Salem and an 18-person committee comprising administrators, faculty, staff and students to engage in a strategic planning process for the university…. From October through December 2020, through online feedback forms and 28 live engagement sessions, the SPSC gathered input from 220 faculty, 350 staff, 120 students and 65 alumni about a draft set of values and how they might shape the future of MSU…. The final plan, reflecting input and refinements from many facets of the Spartan community, was finalized and endorsed by the Board of Trustees in September 2021."

8. Identify the groups and individuals that will lead or be directly involved in implementing the initiative.

Closing the Gap is primarily the responsibility of the Provost Office, with leadership of the initiatives falling under the responsibility of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education, the Assistant Dean for Student Success Assessment and Strategic Initiatives, the Associate Provost for Enrollment and Strategic Planning, and the Senior Vice President for Student Life and Engagement.

Sponsors of projects within the initiative include the Academic Advancement Network, Institutional Research, the Center for Teaching and Learning Innovation, the Department of Student Life, Enrollment Services, Institutional Diversity and Inclusion, and the library.

Specific examples of the human resources for projects we have listed above:
- SPAD: Keith Williams, Dave Weatherspoon
- One-Stop-Shop: Keith Williams, John Ambrose, Steve Shablin, Vince Schimizzi/Greg Depong, Dave Weathersppon
- Advising: Mark Largent, Renata Opoczynski, Amy Martin, Qiana Green, Beth Judge, Jonelle Golding, University Advising Leadership
- First Gen: Mark Largent, Renata Opoczynski, Genyne Royal, Perry Fittrer, Christina Bridges
- Inclusive Campus Initiative: Vennie Gore, Meaghan Kozar, Tariq Abdelhamid, Kelly High McCord
- HLC Assessment Academy: Stacia Moroski-Rigney

In the Assessment Academy, we hope to have representatives from several of our colleges to ensure participation across academic units in our student success programming, specifically in Closing the Gap.

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9. List the human, financial, technological and other resources that the institution has committed to this initiative.

Michigan State University is committed to this Quality Initiative of Closing the Gap. It is a part of our 2030 Strategic Plan, and it is the lifeblood of our university's success in the future. We believe it is our role in the state of Michigan to close this achievement gap.

Some examples of the commitment are as follows:
SPAD: $35M annually; expand the SPAD program to include more of our very high need students. Advising: $2 million investment over the next 3 years
First Gen: $12 million endowed gift
One Stop Shop: $3.1M investment for first year for space renovations, technology, and personnel; $2.1M recurring.
HLC Assessment Academy: $25k for the first two years, including travel for the team

Appropriateness of the Timeline for the Initiative
(The institution may include a brief implementation or action plan.)

10. Describe the primary activities of the initiative and timeline for implementing them.

Over the next two years, we hope to implement many initiatives in addition to the five key components described here. These should be seen as samples of what we hope to accomplish, not the only accomplishments.

Summer 2022
- Apply for HLC Assessment Academy; recruit 8-person cohort
- Conduct a landscape survey of advising, benchmarking internal and external structures for advising to understand the state of our current advising structure and suggest improves to better support students
- Create a First Gen advisory board
- Create a First Gen website on the main MSU website

Fall 2022
- Begin HLC Assessment Academy
- Launch a new first gen support program for 20 students each cohort
- Develop a centralized advising structure and team of advisors in APUE to focus on student experiences in their first two years
- Begin implementation of ICI Taskforces deliverables, as planned in their respective timetables

Spring 2023
- Complete Year 1 of Assessment Academy
- Begin hiring process for new One Stop Shop Director
- Provide robust training and development opportunities to the advising community annually
- Complete ICI assessment framework for 'feeling safe on campus'

Summer 2023
- Find a location for the One Stop Shop and hire a team from all units to staff the one-stop
- Expand SPAD beyond 2000 recipients

Fall 2024
- Begin Year 2 of Assessment Academy
- Create robust training for One Stop personnel to be able to answer questions across multiple areas

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Spring 2024
- Complete Year 2 of Assessment Academy

From the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education:
"Our goal of an 86% graduation rate by 2030 means that we have three years to lay the foundations for our students' success. We must build, reorganize and reform, and expand the many different aspects of the student experience to ensure that the students who start at MSU in the fall of 2024 enter an institution designed to meet their needs and support their learning and success. Three years seems like a very short time, but many of the necessary elements are already emerging or in place. Perhaps the most valuable attribute we possess is clarity of purpose."

Institutional Contact for Quality Initiative Proposal

Include the name(s) of the primary contact(s) for the Quality Initiative.

Name and Title: Stacia Moroski-Rigney, Director of Accreditation, Program Review, and Assessment in the Office of the Provost (ALO); Renata Opoczynski, Assistant Dean for Student Success Assessment and Strategic Initiatives, Office of Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education

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