



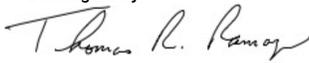
HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

FORM

Open Pathway Quality Initiative Report

Institutional Template

The enclosed Quality Initiative Report represents the work that the institution has undertaken to fulfill the quality improvement requirements of the Open Pathway.

DocuSigned by:

 6/1/2022
 Signature of Institution's President or Chancellor Date

Dr. Thomas Ramage, President

Printed/Typed Name and Title

Parkland College

Name of Institution

Champaign, Illinois

City and State

The institution uses the template below to complete its Quality Initiative Report. The institution may include a report it has prepared for other purposes if it addresses many of the questions below and replaces portions of the narrative in the template. This template may be used both for reports on initiatives that have been completed and for initiatives that will continue and for which this report serves as a milestone of accomplishments thus far. The complete report should be no more than 6,000 words.

The report must be submitted by June 1 of Year 9.

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

Date: 06-01-2022

Contact Person for Report: Kevin Knott

Contact Person's Email Address: kknott@parkland.edu

Report Categories

Overview of the Quality Initiative

1. Provide a one-page executive summary that describes the Quality Initiative, summarizes what was accomplished and explains any changes made to the initiative over the time period.

The Quality Initiative was an effort to improve service excellence. The intention was to sustain and improve a culture committed to serving all constituencies with excellence. Three core elements of the plan were to improve processes, provide training in service excellence, and review user-friendliness of the physical space on campus.

The project began in fall 2019 with the first phase of process improvement. There were two goals – first, to make some concrete improvements and second, to develop a framework for continuing to review processes and make improvements over time. The first goal was met with a number of offices participating by identifying a process to improve, engaging in process mapping activities and then redesigning the process for improved efficiency, simplicity, or ease of navigating.

The second element was training for front-line staff and their supervisors in service excellence. 39 staff from the participating departments completed the Customer Service Foundations training course on LinkedIn Learning and provided their feedback afterward via a survey. The goal of this element of the project was both to provide a baseline level of training for staff but also to collect feedback on what kind of training would be helpful going forward. The feedback we received was helpful in identifying elements of training we will need to take into account in future iterations of this kind of training. While the training was generally viewed favorably (received decent marks for satisfaction, and over 80% of participants felt it offered a quality program and would recommend it to others), it was not universally appreciated and there were a number of comments that it was too basic, obvious, etc. There was helpful feedback about several points that could be improved in future training, including emphasis on examples from higher education and more team or discussion based elements.

The third element was review of physical space. This was done in two ways. First, employees were identified to visit certain offices with which they may not have been familiar and to report a summary of their findings. Second, volunteers from the community were identified to visit campus and attempt to locate certain areas, and then provide their feedback. This feedback was generally positive about our campus, which was encouraging, especially since it came at the end of our project and was evidence of good service excellence. However, there was also helpful feedback about some areas for improvement, particularly in the areas of wayfinding (such as better signage), suggestions for the use of digital tools to improve navigation around campus, and some identified inconsistencies between offices in terms of resources they made available to visitors (such as printed campus maps) and the manner in which staff directed visitors to other parts of campus. This surfaced both possibilities for improving wayfinding on campus as well as ideas for staff training for consistency of any visitors' experience.

The only part of the project that had begun prior to the shift to remote work and remote learning in spring 2020 was the process mapping, so the scope of the project evolved with the changing circumstances, although we were able to return to a review of physical space by 2022 since there was sufficient return to on-campus activities by that time. Additionally, due in part to remote work, the customer service training ended up being delivered via an online platform, which, by the feedback we received, may have gone better with an in-person format.

Scope and Impact of the Initiative

2. Explain in more detail what was accomplished in the Quality Initiative in relation to its purposes and goals. (If applicable, explain the initiative's hypotheses and findings.)

39 staff completed the LinkedIn Learning customer service training. In addition to providing this training, we also collected feedback on the training itself so that we could use this information to modify or improve the training in future iterations. Only 17 staff reported a useful key takeaway, which indicates that the outcome of the training was not as successful as we hoped.

Six different processes were improved as a result of the process mapping component of the initiative: Alternative Loan Acknowledgement, CaMLA (Cambridge-Michigan Language Assessment) Test of English as a Second Language; Payroll Monthly Lost Time Reports; Batch Graduation Process; Employee Tuition Waivers; and MPR (Marketing and Public Relations) Project Process.

Campus/office visits were conducted by both employees and non-employees, with feedback collected through in-person debriefing meetings which was used to identify key lessons learned from the experience: the need for improved wayfinding (including possibly the use of digital tools) and training student services staff to provide consistent answers and help for visitors to campus.

3. Evaluate the impact of the initiative, including any changes in processes, policies, technology, curricula, programs, student learning and success that are now in place in consequence of the initiative.

The groups involved in the process mapping initiative selected processes that had direct impact for students or for employees. Processes included:

- **Alternative Loan Acknowledgement:** Resulted in the creation of a new form that eliminated the need to send multiple emails back and forth with the student which in turn improved processing time for the student.
- **CaMLA (Cambridge-Michigan Language Assessment) Test of English as a Second Language:** This is an important process for international students. The process of mapping helped identify and document important control points and measurements of the process which resulted in a consistent and efficient process for students. The process was implemented in Fall 2019 and proven to be successful for students, faculty, and assessment center staff.
- **Payroll Monthly Lost Time Reports:** The mapping of this process included important proofing steps performed by both payroll and human resources staff. These steps helped improve the accuracy and timeliness of paid time off balances which helps employees track their balances and plan their absences. Employees can better manage their time off with the most current and accurate data which helps supervisors plan operational coverage for serving the students.
- **Batch Graduation Process:** Mapping process created documentation of the cycling of multiple steps involved in processing graduation petitions. Included multiple checks in a simulation mode prior to updating records in the production mode. Process

documentation would allow other staff to follow and complete the process in the absence of the main processor.

- Employee Tuition Waivers: Streamlined the process for employees and their families by improving form by replacing the paper form with an electronic form. The electronic form is set up to assist the employee with accuracy and form completion. The electronic form can be routed easier for processing. No lost paper and saved space by eliminating paper files. Improved tracking of tuition waiver processing.
- MPR (Marketing and Public Relations) Project Process: Documented process for requesting print projects. Uses online request form that requests information that MPR can use to determine if the request is within their realm of skills and abilities. Process helps inform internal customers of steps in the process and what to expect. Helps manage expectations on the frontend for both MPR and the internal customer.

The feedback from the office visits was overall very positive, with several visitors to campus emphasizing that their overall impression of the campus was that they were impressed with the look and feel of physical space (it is a “really nice campus”, “feels professional”, “clean”, “felt safe”). Even with some helpful feedback about where difficult spots are, overall it is “not worse than going anywhere else” for the first time.

The feedback on areas that could be improved are wayfinding, consistency of signage, and the need for digital tools for navigation. Overall feedback on interaction with specific offices is that staff are helpful, but there are a few points at which regular training would help ensure that all staff, including new staff, provide consistent and helpful responses to common questions.

4. Explain any tools, data or other information that resulted from the work of the initiative.

N/A

5. Describe the biggest challenges and opportunities encountered in implementing the initiative.

Three significant challenges were the sudden shift to remote work/learning in spring 2020 , increasing time demands on staff following spring 2020, and significant turnover among staff from 2020-2022. We were unable to give serious consideration to how to review use of physical space until 2022, and the increasing demands on staff and administrators as well as the significant staff turnover made it difficult to move forward with the planned service excellence training. However, we were able to adapt to changing circumstances and continue to work toward the overarching goal of providing the training that we could and to an honest evaluation of our processes and physical spaces.

In spite of these challenges, the pandemic did provide an impetus to moving a number of processes online and forced a significant amount of process review and redesign that furthered the goal of the project, even in ways that were not done in conjunction with project. For example, most offices found ways to utilize online forms and processes which previously required in person interaction.

Commitment to and Engagement in the Quality Initiative

6. Describe the individuals and groups involved at stages throughout the initiative and their perceptions of its worth and impact.

The individuals and groups that were involved in the process mapping were from student services areas such as admissions, assessment center, and financial aid; and from institutional operation and support areas such as marketing, payroll, and human resources.

Staff from multiple departments were involved in the online customer service training. The net impact of this training is questionable given the low response rate to what participants learned (only 17 of 39 reported something specific), but staff's reported perspectives on the training were generally, though not universally, positive. 82% of participants agreed that the platform was a good training program, and 87% of participants would recommend the training to someone else. On average, participants' satisfaction with the training fell between "Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" and "Somewhat satisfied".

Multiple staff from different departments in the college, and with varying levels of prior knowledge of institutional processes, participated in the office visits. Their feedback was generally positive but they did also help identify specific points at which processes could be made helpful, such as providing an admissions process/checklist to prospective students earlier in the process, and ensuring that there are campus maps available at every office and that all staff are trained on the best ways to give instructions to other locations on campus.

Multiple community members (including high school juniors, seniors, and adults with varied previous exposure to the campus) also visited campus and were impressed both by the campus and also the effort to get their feedback. Each of them were glad to participate and grateful for the opportunity.

7. Describe the most important points learned by those involved in the initiative.

With respect to training that we can provide, from the feedback received we learned that such training should have a component that includes team discussion (perhaps case studies/scenarios), more in-depth discussion rather than just hearing from someone else, and more concrete examples or scenarios from our context as a community college. We learned that we need to be careful about canned training that people think of as obvious, trivial, or "common sense." Such an approach probably requires in-person presentation and team discussions of interesting situations.

Resource Provision

8. Explain the human, financial, physical and technological resources that supported the initiative.

Staff time that was devoted to this project included time involved by the project leaders, which included the Associate Vice President for Human Resources, Dean of Career and Technical Education, Senior Accountant, and VP/Chief Financial Officer, as well as the time involved by participating units in process mapping and customer service training and multiple employees participating in the office visits.

Campus technology resources were used to support the project, especially use of the college's license for LinkedIn Learning, as well as funds involved in appreciation/feedback lunches for the campus visitor feedback sessions.

Plans for the Future (or Future Milestones of a Continuing Initiative)

9. Describe plans for ongoing work related to or as a result of the initiative.

The college will benefit from continued training, but we should modify the training from the LinkedIn Learning platform if we want to increase positive outcomes and engagement, especially if this is training for which we want to encourage faculty participation.

The college is currently engaged in a project to update its signage, and we can consider options for digital tools to support navigation around campus. Such digital tools must compete with other technology demands for time and resources, so it is unknown at what level such projects could be prioritized but it can be a topic for discussion and deliberation.

Now that several departments have engaged in project mapping exercises, this is a fruitful activity that can be replicated and continued to encourage departments to improve processes that are identified as difficult, inefficient, or cumbersome.

10. Describe any practices or artifacts from the initiative that other institutions might find meaningful or useful and please indicate if you would be willing to share this information.

We gave our employee volunteers and also the campus visitors instructions on what to do when they attempted their office visits. We are willing to share if there are other institutions that would find this useful.