HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

Open Pathway Quality Initiative Proposal

Institutional Template

The enclosed Quality Initiative Proposal represents the work that the institution will undertake to fulfill the Improvement Process of the Open Pathway.

Signature of Institution's President or Chancellor   1/22/19 _Date_

Dr. Janet Cunningham / President

Printed/Typed Name and Title

Northwestern Oklahoma State University

Name of Institution

Alva, OK

City and State

The institution completes the Quality Initiative Proposal by responding to the questions in each category of the template. The institution may choose to submit a brief implementation plan or supplemental charts or graphs as appendices to the template. Proposals should be no more than 4,500 words. The Quality Initiative Proposal will be accepted beginning September 1 of Year 5 and is due no later than August 31 of Year 7. Submit the proposal as a PDF file to pathways@hlcommission.org with a file name that follows this format: QI Report No Name University MN. 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.

   Northwestern Oklahoma State University's project, "Implementing the Ellucian Enterprise Resource Planning System (ERPS) to Enhance Efficiency and Improve the Student Experience," is intended to focus efforts toward, and track progress of, improvement of the student experience resulting from the

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implementation of a more efficient and robust information system for the university. More specifically, the project will analyze the impact of new tools and ready access to information about financial processes, financial aid, and academic planning and progress, provided electronically to advisors and students through the new system, on student and faculty experiences with these functions. The expectation is that the tools will increase student satisfaction and, ultimately, retention.

Planning for implementation of the new system began in FY16, in response to the anticipated obsolescence of the university's current system, Jenzabar POISE. Recognizing that adoption of a new system would involve significant financial commitment, the university had begun saving dedicated funds in FY16 for the transition. After the formation of a core implementation team consisting of primary stakeholders, training on various systems within the ERPS began in summer 2018, with plans for phased implementation over a two-year period. The university anticipates full implementation of the ERPS by fall 2020. Pre-implementation and post-implementation results of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (Noel-Levitz) as well as an institutionally developed survey of faculty advisors will be used to determine impacts of the change on relevant aspects of the student experience. Based on this timeline, the project will begin and be completed within the Quality Initiative period.

Sufficiency of the Initiative's Scope and Significance

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

The proposed initiative is relevant and significant for the institution because it addresses a concern identified during the 2016 strategic planning process: the need for more efficient institutional processes. Strategic Direction 3, Goal 1 of the plan states that "the university will review and update, where necessary, processes across campus that impact students, faculty, and staff to ensure cost effectiveness and efficiency." The ERPS has implications for systems and processes identified within the strategic plan:

- Upgrade and fully utilize the degree audit software available through the Registry Office.
- Upgrade software and improve staff knowledge concerning automatic packaging of student financial aid and scholarship awards.
- Review and improve where necessary the processes for (...) purchasing and other administrative operations.
- Upgrade administrative management software.

The first two goals relate directly to the focus of the Quality Initiative project, while the third and fourth will be additional benefits to the university resulting from the ERPS implementation. The adoption of Ellucian's Colleague package was undertaken in collaboration with two other Regional University System of

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Oklahoma institutions, Southwestern Oklahoma State University and Southeastern Oklahoma State University. The collaboration on this initiative will have a significant impact on institutional costs. Moreover, the implementation will greatly improve the quality of services for students, who will be able to conduct virtually all aspects of their university business online, including enrollment, financial aid application, book purchase, and bill payment. Additionally, faculty, financial aid personnel, and students will have access to resources for processing applications, obtaining information about financial aid eligibility, and verifying current aid award status. Other university constituencies will benefit as well:

- **Human Resources:** Employees will have easy access to current information on benefits, compensation, leave, and payroll.
- **Finance:** University personnel will benefit from automated financial functions related to information processing, dissemination, and analysis. Outdated purchasing processes will be replaced by an automated purchasing and procurement system.
- **Reporting and Data Analysis:** Faculty and staff across all areas of university services will have access to shared and consistent data on students, institutional initiatives, finances, and other areas of mutual concern.

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

Northwestern serves a broad spectrum of students at approved additional locations and through multiple modalities (online, hybrid, face-to-face). The academic experience for all of these students will be positively impacted primarily through the availability of more useful information for advising, more timely and complete information about financial aid, and more ready access to tools for managing their academic and financial processes. Removing barriers to functions such as financial aid and empowering students to generate and review their own educational path through convenient access to tools such as degree audits will improve students' educational experience. Specifically, students will have greater ownership and understanding of the financial aid process, registration, degree program planning, and billing processes. The expected outcome is that this ownership will positively impact student retention and completion.

While the focus of the initiative is on enhancing the student experience with advisement and thereby improving retention, institutional effectiveness will be broadly impacted by this initiative. All constituents, including students, faculty, and staff, will experience enhanced access to information. Because student, faculty, and operational data will be housed in a single database management system, from which varied reports may be generated, centralized and consistent data will be easily accessible through all offices. Within pre-FY19 procedures, multiple sources of data and multiple modes of data collection undermined consistent reporting and analysis. The new system will facilitate more efficient and integrated information collection

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and reporting. Examples of enhanced efficiency include automatic packaging within the financial aid office, automated degree audit generation within the registry office, and a greater degree of transparency in relation to the budgetary cycle. As an added benefit, processes and reporting will largely be paperless within the new system.

Clarity of the Initiative's Purpose

4. Describe the purposes and goals for the initiative.

As stated above, the implementation will improve the quality of services, processes, and capabilities of all offices on campus. The following are individual quality improvement goals related directly to the student experience:

- Financial Aid Office
  - Auto packaging of student aid
  - More timely completion of student aid calculation and reporting
  - Accept financial aid awards electronically
- Registry
  - Automatic generation of degree audits
  - Self-registration to ease enrollment process/load in office
  - Efficiency in schedule building
- Faculty
  - Advising with user-friendly and precise degree audits, as well as the capability to run alternate degree audits based on a potential academic major change
  - Building and review of departmental/divisional schedules, course rotations, and prerequisites
  - Access to student information
- Student Services
  - Electronic assignment and management of student housing
  - Access to shared and consistent student information
  - Efficient collection, storage, and utilization of recruitment data

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

☒ Advising	☐ Curriculum	☐ Faculty Development
☐ Assessment	☐ Diversity	☐ First-Year Programs
☐ Civic Engagement	☐ Engagement	☐ General Education

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☐ Leadership   ☐ Program Development   ☐ Student Success

☐ Learning Environment   ☐ Program Evaluation   ☐ Teaching/Pedagogy

☐ Online Learning   ☒ Quality Improvement   ☐ Underserved Populations

☐ Persistence and Completion   ☒ Retention   ☐ Workforce

☐ Professional Development   ☐ Strategic Planning   ☐ Other:

     ☐ Student Learning

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

Assessment of the impact of the implementation will be facilitated by the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness, under the supervision of its director, Kaylyn Hansen. Pre-implementation student responses to relevant items on the Noel-Levitz and NSSE will be compared to post-implementation responses to gauge the degree to which the new tools have had an impact on the student experience. The list of example items below from the Noel-Levitz is not comprehensive but rather illustrative:

- Registration processes and procedures are convenient.
- Billing policies are reasonable.
- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts.
- I am able to take care of college-related business at times that are convenient for me.
- I receive ongoing feedback about progress toward my academic goals.
- My academic advisor helps me set goals to work toward.
- Financial aid awards are announced in time to be helpful in college planning.
- This institution helps me identify resources to finance my education.

Similarly, the list of relevant data from the NSSE is also illustrative rather than comprehensive:

- Assessment of "Quality of Interactions" with academic advisors
- Assessment of "Quality of Interactions" with student services staff
- Assessment of "Quality of Interactions" with other administrative staff and offices (registrar, financial aid, etc.)
- Aspects of advisor interaction such as the advisor's having "been available when needed," "listened closely to your concerns and questions," and "helped you understand academic rules and practices"

As stated in previous sections, the expectation is that enhanced tools will improve student perceptions of institutional processes. Faculty perceptions will also be analyzed through the use of pre- and post-implementation surveys related to advising and financial aid processes. Sample items from the ten-item

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survey, administered to faculty in early spring 2019 and scheduled for re-administration after full implementation of the Ellucian system, follow. Faculty were asked to respond on a five-point scale:

- How do you rate the effectiveness of the university academic advising process used to enroll students?
- The administrative system provides adequate academic information to assist you in advising a student.
- I have access to financial information needed to advise students effectively.
- The registration processes and procedures are convenient.

The Quality Initiative project and data collection are being undertaken within the broader context of the Ellucian implementation, for which evaluation of progress is ongoing. Members of the Project Leadership Team (see table in response 8) meet weekly to evaluate implementation progress, discuss areas of shared concern, and review upcoming training and implementation tasks. The Project Leadership Team works in collaboration with a representative of the consulting group Brown, Hendrix and Associates. Team leaders talk through decision workbooks generated during training and implementation activities and debrief on recent activities and upcoming sessions.

Ellucian provides communication, engagement reports, action items, due dates, and progress reports through an electronic, password-protected Customer Collaboration Environment portal accessible through the Ellucian website. Project managers and executive sponsors from Regional University System of Oklahoma schools undertaking the implementation meet with Brown, Hendrix and Associates consultants and Ellucian officials regularly to discuss more global implementation concerns. The timeline in response 10 provides more specific information on deadlines for implementation goals.

Evidence of Commitment to and Capacity for Accomplishing the Initiative

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

After the need for a new administrative system was identified as part of the strategic planning process, the university began researching options for this project. As early as FY16, the university set aside $100,000 for the project, allocating an additional $225,000 in FY17 and $177,921 in FY18. The university made initial payments totaling $402,432 in FY18 in preparation for the initiative.

Beginning in FY18, administrators and key department heads engaged in a year-long discussion with vendors, researched product options, and corresponded with colleagues at other Regional University System of Oklahoma institutions that were also engaged in software upgrades. Stakeholders from the administrative team, the financial aid office, the registry office, the bursar's office, the student affairs office, and human resources completed the vetting process for potential vendors. After careful consideration, and with the

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appropriate due diligence, Northwestern entered into a contract with Ellucian for its Colleague system. This system will provide higher levels of services to students, staff and faculty, while also improving efficiency. Fortunately, the university was able to partner with two other Regional University System of Oklahoma schools in negotiating with Ellucian, resulting in cost savings and enhanced training opportunities for all institutions. The Regional University System of Oklahoma board approved the collaborative effort and system software purchase in spring 2018.

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

As stated in section 6, the Office of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness will have the primary responsibility for data collection. The Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Dean of Faculty will provide leadership and support and will participate in the data analysis process. The Ellucian implementation process, detailed below, provides the framework within which the project is being undertaken.

A Steering Committee comprising key leaders at the institution serves as the escalation point for project issues related to scope and other challenges that arise during implementation. In addition, personnel form core teams of decision makers and primary users representing each functional area on campus. These core teams include personnel in offices related to given ERPS functions, information technology personnel, and key university administrators. A senior ranking administrator serves as the executive sponsor who, though not involved with day-to-day decisions and activities, is aware of progress and milestones.

The tables below, extracted from the Project Contacts overview document within the Ellucian implementation plan, show the groups and individuals who lead or are directly involved in the initiative.

Project Leadership Team	
Role or Area of Representation	**Member Name**
Steering Committee	
Executive Sponsor	Dr. David Pecha
Director of Information Technology	Craig Ricke
Vice President of Academic Affairs	Dr. Bo Hannaford
Vice President for Administration	Dr. David Pecha
Project Management Team	
Project Manager	Chris Lauderdale
Project Technical Lead	Dalton Moser
Implementation Team	
Project Manager	Chris Lauderdale
Admissions – Graduate	Sheri Lahr
Admissions – Undergraduate	Sheri Lahr
Controller	Chris Lauderdale
Director for HR	Cheryl Ellis
Director of Financial Aid	Tara Hannaford

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Housing/Accounts	Fawn Kingcade
Project Technical Lead	Dalton Moser
Residence Life Assistant Director	Matt Adair
IT Support	Craig Ricke
IT Support	Tara Sander

Finance Team	
Role or Area of Representation	**Member Name**
Team Lead	Chris Lauderdale
Accounts Payable	Glenda Arndt
Budget	Dr. David Pecha
Endowment	N/A
Fixed Assets	Chris Lauderdale
General Ledger	Chris Lauderdale
Non-Student Accounts Receivables	Fawn Kingcade
Purchasing	Eric Reames

Human Resource Team	
Role or Area of Representation	**Member Name**
Team Lead	Cheryl Ellis
Benefits/Deductions	Vanessa Scoggins
Biographic/Demographic	Cheryl Ellis
Compensation	Judy Dollar
Payroll	Jackie Kephart

Student Team	
Role or Area of Representation	**Member Name**
Team Lead	Chris Lauderdale
Academic Affairs	Dr. Bo Hannaford
Admissions/Advisement	Sheri Lahr
Bursar	Fawn Kingcade
Degree Audit	Sheri Lahr
Finance	Chris Lauderdale
Financial Aid	Tara Hannaford
Housing/ Residence Life Assistant Director	Matt Adair
Human Resources	Cheryl Ellis
Records/Registrar	Sheri Lahr

Financial Aid Team	
Role or Area of Representation	**Member Name**
Team Lead	Tara Hannaford
Director of Financial Aid	Tara Hannaford

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Disbursement Officer	Sue Burks
Financial Aid Staff	Staff
Technical Support for Financial Aid	Tara Sander

Reporting Strategy	
Role or Area of Representation	**Member Name**
Team Lead	Dalton Moser
Institutional Research	Kylea Amerin
Technical Support for Student Records	Tara Sander

Data Standards Strategy	
Role or Area of Representation	**Member Name**
Team Lead	Chris Lauderdale
Financial Aid	Tara Hannaford
HR Director	Cheryl Ellis
Technical Support for Student Records	Tara Sander

Security Strategy	
Role or Area of Representation	**Member Name**
Team Lead	Dalton Moser
Controller	Chris Lauderdale
Director of Financial Aid	Tara Hannaford
Human Resources and Payroll	Cheryl Ellis
Information Technology Security Officer	Tara Sander
Records	Sheri Lahr

Technical Team	
Role or Area of Representation	**Member Name**
Team Lead	Craig Ricke
Database Administrator	Dalton Moser
Network Specialist	Tara Sander

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

During FY18, Northwestern collaborated with sister institutions Southwestern Oklahoma State University and Southeastern Oklahoma State University to investigate options for updating the ERPS for all three universities. Stakeholders spent many hours researching possibilities, attending demonstrations, and analyzing proposals submitted for review. The universities selected Ellucian as the vendor, and a two-year

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implementation process began in spring 2018. By working together and selecting a common vendor, all three institutions will see significant cost savings. Collaboration on negotiation, training, and implementation will save an estimated $2,724,000 over unilateral implementation.

As detailed above, in an effort to avoid borrowing funds to implement this nearly $1.8 million endeavor, the university started saving funds for this project during FY16. Funds are being utilized from University capital funds, technology services fees, and other cash savings.

To assist with the implementation process, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, along with the two sister institutions, engaged the services of Brown, Hendrix and Associates. Initially, this firm provided two key services. First, they helped with preparing the RFP process paperwork. Once all bids had been received, consultants worked with the institutions to secure the software and services needed for each university. They also worked to leverage optimal price discounts for the institutions. Brown, Hendrix and Associates continues to serve the institution during the implementation process by assigning a .5 FTE staff member to work with the Ellucian project manager and key staff on campus.

Dedicated staff is critical to the success of the implementation process. In spring 2018, the university added one new FTE in the information technology department to work directly with this implementation process. The university also assigned a project manager outside of the IT department to be the liaison between the Brown, Hendrix and Associates consultant, Ellucian, and the university. As training continues, each department is allocating time and support staff to complete the necessary steps to design, test, and implement the software, which will improve the university's overall efficiency.

The university allocated physical and technological resources to furnish a dedicated training room for this project. Equipment includes a Smart Board, 13 computer work stations, and desks and chairs to support staff needs. This room also allows personnel involved in training, implementation, and eventual production to leave their respective offices and transition to a quiet work environment. A second room was also identified in the library to serve as an overflow training room.

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.

During the initial stages of planning, university team leaders, Brown, Hendrix and Associates consultants, and Ellucian personnel articulated a detailed timeline for implementing the quality initiative. Dedicated team members were identified to receive training on specific areas of concern and report on progress toward goals, thus meeting the identified implementation deadlines specified below. The table below reflects a two-year, phased implementation strategy, with some capabilities enabled by fall 2019 and full implementation

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achieved by fall 2020. The current administrative system will run simultaneously with the Ellucian system during the implementation process to maintain institutional service and functionality.

Tentative Timeline	2018									2019												2020			
INITIATION	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A
Contract Signing and Turnover																									
Ellucian Project Manager Services																									
Hardware and Software Configuration																									
Discoveries and Project Planning																									
Integration Assessment																									
Core																									
FINANCIAL SYSTEM																									
General Ledger																									
Purchasing/Accounts Payable																									
Projects Accounting																									
Synoptix Financial Statements																									
Budget Management																									
Fixed Assets																									
STUDENT SYSTEM																									
Admission						Adm								A/P											
Curriculum & Faculty Information					P		S																		
Financial Aid						I	A									D									
Academic Records/Registration																									
Accounts Receivable/Cash Receipts																									
Degree Audit/Student Planning										SP									DA						
Residence Life						N	R												N	R					
Ellucian Mobile																									
ILP																									
WebAdvisor Retention Alert																									
HUMAN RESOURCE SYSTEM																									
Human Resources/Position Mgmt**																									
Payroll/Web Time Entry																									
Assignment Contracts																									
Enterprise																									
Data Migrations																									
Integrations																									
Reporting Inventory/Development																									
Argos/Analytics																									
Ellucian Workflow																									

* Estimated timeline subject to change based on project planning engagements.

Implementation

Live

> **Legend for Student System section**: Letters represent an abbreviation of functions that will be live and available for use by a targeted month. For example, "Adm" indicates that admissions functions will be available by the specified date, while "S/P" indicates that student planning functions will be available by the specified date.

Data collection related to student satisfaction will continue after full implementation is achieved and systems related to student financial processes, financial aid, and academic planning and progress are fully operational.
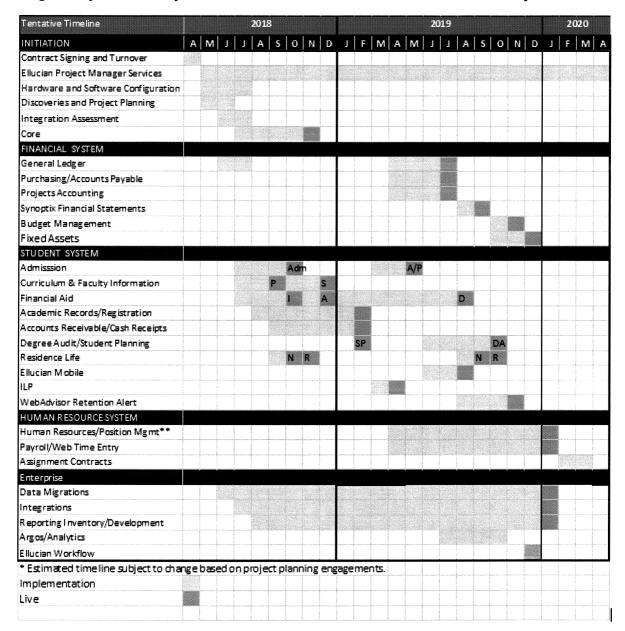
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Institutional Contact for Quality Initiative Proposal

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

Name and Title: Kaylyn Hansen / Director of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness, HLC Liaison

Phone: (580) 327-8150   Email: klhansen@nwosu.edu

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