



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

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July 8, 2020

Dr. Joseph Manickam
President
Hesston College
301 South Main Street
P.O. Box 3000
Hesston, KS 67062

Dear President Manickam:

Attached is the Quality Initiative Report (QIR) Review evaluation information. Hesston College'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 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: Hesston College

State: Kansas

Institutional ID: 1282

Reviewers (names, titles, institutions): David Jones, Professor of Psychology, Westminster College; Donald A. Johns, Professor Emeritus (Theology), Evangel University

Date: July 1, 2020

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 undertaking

The Quality Initiative undertaken by Hesston College (HC) was founded on one of the overall priorities in its 2015 three-year strategic plan. That priority comprised seven goals to improve employee growth, health, and engagement, and to improve overall HR policies, procedures, and practices. The college identified four major goals for the QI: revision of its HR practices (including centralization and consistency of application), improvement of employee satisfaction, lowering employee turnover, and increasing employee diversity. The college administered the Ruffalo Noel-Levitz College Employee Satisfaction Survey (CESS) in the spring of 2016 as a beginning, followed by focus groups in the fall. HC repeated the CESS in 2019 and analyzed the changes in results, and it has plans to do so again in 2022. The college reported statistically significant improvements in HR-related scores between its 2016 and 2019 administrations of the CESS.

Scope and impact

The QI primarily focused on HC's non-teaching staff, but there were some policy alignments with respect to faculty areas.

As a result of the QI, the college created and filled an HR director position and developed an online HR Policy Guide, which includes 15 updated HR policies and 16 entirely new HR policies. In addition, the college implemented 42 recommendations of its Sexual Misconduct and Interpersonal Safety Task Force recommendations regarding its Title IX policies and practices, including new efforts in training and awareness, reporting and investigation, the creation of a support position for reporters, victim support through the college website, offender accountability, and systems accountability.

The QI involved the participation of an appropriate number of college staff, including the VP for Finance, the Benefits and Payroll Mgr, the Director of Institutional Data, the VP for Academics, the Faculty Chair, the Dean of Assessment and Accreditation, and the Assessment and Research Coordinating Committee.

Commitment to and engagement in the undertaking

Hesston's commitment to the QI was demonstrated by its integration with its strategic plan, particularly the effort to recognize and prioritize the importance of strong employees. Evidence of commitment and engagement can also be seen in the involvement with the range of departments mentioned in the previous paragraph. Further, HC's commitment is demonstrated by adopting changes in HR policies and practices through both initial auditing of current policies and practices as well as the development of new ones, and its analysis of survey data to plan for further improvements. Policies changed or developed include new hiring policies, internal promotion policies, and changes in practices included new practices for onboarding and training of new employees as well as new practices to encourage and promote diversity.

Adequate resource provision

Several factors demonstrated the college's provision of resources: HC hired a full-time Director of HR in 2017 to lead the project after having a decentralized model for HR for many years. In addition, HC invested in the use of an external survey instrument, Ruffalo Noel-Levitz' CESS survey to examine attitudes and opinions. Additionally, the institution established an ongoing budget line for professional development of \$10,000 specifically for staff, as no professional development lines had existed for staff prior to the QI. Procedures were established for staff to request professional development funds through a similar process for which faculty had previously been able to request such funding. Hesston College also set aside thirty spots in its "Lifestyle of Leadership Training Program" for staff. Each of those spots were worth \$1100, as priced for outside professional training.

Overall

Hesston College has successfully engaged in a Quality Initiative of sufficient scope and has provided sufficient resources to effectively change this area of the institution. HC recognizes that the QI, although providing significant improvement in HR functioning to the benefit of all employees, has not been sufficient to decrease employee turnover or to increase employee diversity at the college. Nevertheless, the QI has been helpful to improve the employee climate at the college, and Hesston College realizes that it must still continue to work to improve both employee turnover and employee diversity.