Open Pathway

Quality Initiative Institutional Proposal

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

Dr. David P. Svaldi, President
Printed/Typed Name and Title
Adams State University
Name of Institution
Alamosa, Colorado
City and State

8.27.2014

Date

The institution completes the Quality Initiative proposal by responding to the questions in each category of the template. The institution may choose to include a brief implementation plan that addresses many of the questions below and replaces portions of the outline. Proposals should be no more than 4,500 words.

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.

   Title: Focus on Finishing at ASU

   Adams State University will engage in a coordinated effort to increase the number of undergraduate degrees (AA/AS and BA/BS/BFA) awarded each year and to reduce the length of time it takes our students to earn those degrees.

   Over the years, Adams State has attempted to increase the number of degrees awarded; however, recently there has been a concerted effort throughout the institution with specific targets to achieve this initiative. This initiative will bring Adams State’s efforts into focus across all departments so that a degree completion milestone can be met by the end of the QI period (2014-16), although the intent is that the increase in degrees awarded continues well beyond the QI period.

   "But over the past few years, it has become clear that the United States does not so much have a problem of limited and unequal college access; it has a problem of limited and unequal college completion." ~Paul Tough in "How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character"

Sufficiency of the Initiative’s Scope and Significance

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

   Adams State’s Quality Initiative is significant because rapid improvement is needed in the number of undergraduate degrees completed and the length of time to degree completion.

   ASU is a moderately selective institution that serves a diverse population of undergraduate students. Adams State’s student body is unique in that its minority, first generation and low income percentages are higher than most public institutions of higher education. Thirty percent are Hispanic, qualifying the institution to be a federally designated Hispanic Serving Institution. Forty-two percent are considered low income, 57 percent are Pell Grant eligible, and almost 60 percent of our students need at least one developmental course. Historically, Adams State has low retention and graduation rates despite the institution trying, albeit not systemically, a wide variety of retention and graduation strategies. The 2011 to 2012 full-time undergraduate retention rate was 59 percent. The four-year graduation rate for our 2006 full-time, first-time students was 8 percent and six-year is 25 percent.

   Studies have shown that blue collar jobs are diminishing while the service and information technology sectors, which require education and specific training, are growing. For the students of ASU to be competitive in today’s job market, they will need a relevant 2- or 4-year degree. The cost of 2- and 4-year degrees keeps increasing, placing a significant
financial burden on students, particularly low income students, which is a large portion of Adams State’s student body.

It doesn’t matter what tuition is if a student doesn’t earn a degree. Education is only affordable in today’s economy if one earns a degree. Furthermore, federal student aid changes have limited the semesters that students can receive the Pell grant and Stafford loans so it is even more important than ever that a student earn their degree in a timely fashion, especially with our high percentage of Pell eligible students.

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

The initiative will improve developmental education programming; therefore, students will complete remedial coursework sooner. Academic advising will be more thorough and personal. Course sequencing and offerings will be optimized and streamlined.

Clarity of the Initiative’s Purpose

4. Describe the purposes and goals for the initiative.

The purpose of the initiative is to increase the number of undergraduate degrees (AA/AS and BA/BS/BFA) awarded each year and to reduce the length of time it takes our students to earn those degrees.

Adams State has found that the rolling three-year average time to degree of associate’s students is 4.1 years. For bachelor’s students, the three-year rolling average time to degree is 5.4 years. The goals of the initiative are to increase the number of degrees awarded by 1% each academic year and reduce average time to degree of bachelor’s students to 5 years or less (and 3 years or less for associate’s degrees).

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

To evaluate progress of this initiative, the institution will collect baseline data around each of the primary activities. Data will then be collected each semester or year as appropriate to track progress of each measure. If progress is not demonstrated, the methods for achieving the initiative will be reevaluated by Adams State’s Quality Improvement Committee. Some activities may take more time to implement and see results than others.

The primary measures are:

- Increase number of students who have accumulated at least 24 credit hours to 55% for fall 2014, 55.5% for fall 2015 and 56% for fall 2016 (prior measures: fall 2010 cohort: 42.3%, fall 2011: 49.6%, fall 2012: 50.1%, and fall 2013: 54.4%)
- Annually increase the average number of semester credit hours taken per undergraduate headcount by 0.2 credits each year (prior measures: fall 2011: 12.58, fall 2012: 12.82, and fall 2013: 13.10)
- Reduce average time (3-year rolling average) to 2-year degrees to 3 years or less and 4-year degrees to 5 years or less by fall 2016 (prior measures: 2012: 4.1 years for associate’s students and 5.4 years for bachelor’s)

The impact our activities have on the quality initiative will be measured as follows:

- Declaration of major: undeclared students and their graduation rates will be compared to declared students. Baseline data will be gathered by the enrollment management subcommittee overseeing this.
- Remedial course completion rates will be tracked by cohort and graduation rates of 2-year students will be compared pre- and post-implementation of this quality initiative.
- Supplemental instruction resources will be monitored, and student persistence of supplemental instruction sections will be compared to non-SI sections.

Evidence of Commitment to and Capacity for Accomplishing the Initiative

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

Adams State’s Quality Improvement Committee (QIC), overseen by the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA), has presented this proposal to multiple groups across campus. The president’s cabinet, which has campus-wide representation, academic council (department chairs) and the board of trustees provided feedback and approved the proposal in the spring of 2014. Cabinet approved the proposal at their February 24 meeting and the board at their April 3-4 meeting. Administration will be a key stakeholder in approving new programming, funding, or policy and granting authority to those implementing the proposed activities for the initiative.

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

- Invasive advising—the new faculty development fellow as well as advisors across campus: Academic Advising Center, faculty, admissions counselors, Student Support Services advisors, career advisors
• Declaration of major or readjust as soon as possible—academic advising subcommittee of retention committee
• Prescribed degree schedules (2- and/or 4-year course plan)—academic departments/advisors (publicity implemented by Creative Relations)
• Developmental education (English)—English department and Academic Affairs
• Developmental education (math)—Math department and Academic Affairs
• Course schedule analysis/course enrollment trends—Academic Affairs and Institutional Reporting
• Supplemental instruction—academic programs and retention team
• Semester course loads >15 hours—executive team, financial aid, admissions, faculty advisors

8. List the human, financial, technological and other resources that the institution has committed to this initiative.
   • The QIC, under leadership of the VPAA, will oversee the initiative.
   • A faculty development fellow was hired in August 2014 and will lead invasive advising activities with faculty. Academic (faculty) advisors and developmental education departments will conduct most of the activities for the initiative.
   • Financial resources have been allocated to support the demand for supplemental instruction (SI). Academic Affairs and department chairs will continue monitoring the demand for SI.

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

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

   Methods for achieving initiative:
   • Invasive Advising
     Invasive advising activities are expected to reduce time to degree and increase completion rates. Academic and career advisors will work with students to:
     o Declare a major early in their degree. A subcommittee has been charged with collecting baseline data to determine how many freshmen and seniors have a declared major and the impact new practices in early major declaration will have on graduation rates. This committee will also establish guidelines and policy to implement a regular process for identification and connection with undeclared students.
       Timeline: August-October 2014, implement: December 2014)
     o Prescribe a degree schedule aligned with course rotation. Four-year degree maps for all bachelor’s degree programs were published on academic department web pages in August 2014.
       (publicity/implementation: fall 2014)
     o Complete developmental education as quickly as possible to decrease time to degree. In 2012-13, 56.9% of our undergraduates needed remediation. Remedial coursework delays students’ ability to start courses that are applicable to degree requirements. By fall 2014, students will be advised and required to:
       ▪ Complete developmental education English prior to or within first semester.
       ▪ Complete general education math by end of fourth semester (with realigned curriculum for MATH 097 and 099 that includes increased SI and tutoring).

     Student cohort remedial completion and graduation rates will be tracked to measure the outcomes of this activity.

   • Institutionalize supplemental instruction for at least 25 sections of gateway courses (by August 2015). Progress with this activity has been made. Almost 20 additional sections have been put in place for the fall 2014 semester.

   • 15 credit minimum for full-time status (by August 2015)
     o Education of advisors (December 2014)
     o Education of athletics (December 2014)
     o Education of students (December 2014)

Currently, 12 credits are required for full-time enrollment status. If students complete only 12 credits per semester for a 120-hour bachelor’s degree, time to degree is five years. This can be reduced by two semesters, or a full academic year, if students complete at least 15 credits per semester! Increasing the minimum number of credits for full-time status will require more students to complete their degree in fewer semesters. The current average credit load per semester is 13.1 credits with a goal of increasing this by 0.2 annually the next three years.
**Institutional Contact for Quality Initiative Proposal**
Include the name(s) of the primary contact(s) for the Quality Initiative.

Frank Novotny, Vice President for Academic Affairs
Name and Title

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Phone  Email

**Adams State University**
Institution