



## Open Pathway

### Quality Initiative Proposal Review Form

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**Date of Review:** November 4, 2013

**Name of Institution:** Washburn University of Topeka

**State:** Kansas

**Institutional ID:** 1303

**Reviewers (names, titles, institutions):**

Jervaise McDaniel, Associate Dean, Adult and Continuing Education, Illinois Eastern Community College

Jan Murphy, Professor of Nutrition, Illinois State University

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#### Review Categories and Findings

1. **Sufficiency of the Initiative's Scope and Significance**

- ◆ Potential for significant impact on the institution and its academic quality
- ◆ Alignment with the institution's mission and vision
- ◆ Connection with the institution's planning processes
- ◆ Evidence of significance and relevance at this time

**Finding:**

The Quality Initiative proposal demonstrates acceptable scope and significance.

The Quality Initiative proposal does not demonstrate acceptable scope and significance.

**Rationale and Comments:** Washburn University has chosen an initiative that would undoubtedly have an impact on student learning and faculty professional development. Since the University does not currently have a center for teaching support, this initiative fills a significant campus need. The plan is tied to the strategic planning process and the university has recommitted itself to teaching excellence after celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. They have identified four foundational pillars on which outstanding teaching is based: use of technology, a dynamic learning environment, consideration of a diverse student body and learning models which will engage students through high impact practices.

This proposal is significant in scope and indicates that the Center would be used to support education and teaching in all its forms both in academic affairs and student affairs. One concern is the limited funding dedicated to personnel in the Center. It is difficult to imagine a Center of this magnitude, particularly with an emphasis on technology, being staffed with a part-time director and half-time staff member.

2. **Clarity of the Initiative's Purpose**

- ◆ Clear purposes and goals reflective of the scope and significance of the initiative
- ◆ Defined milestones and intended goals
- ◆ Clear processes for evaluating progress

**Finding:**

The Quality Initiative proposal demonstrates clarity of purpose.

The Quality Initiative proposal does not demonstrate clarity of purpose.

**Rationale and Comments:** The purpose is clear, but very large in scope. Washburn anticipates that establishment of a Center for Teaching Excellence and Learning will "significantly improve faculty, staff, and student peer teaching and student learning." The proposal also lists a number of milestones to achieve

these goals. However, less evident is how the Center will be organized to achieve this very broad purpose.

The proposal also provides a lengthy list of assessment tools to be used to evaluate progress in improving student learning. The list of assessment instruments is all-inclusive, but not all relate to the purpose and some may actually confuse the effort. Additionally, there is no mention of how enhancement of teaching by faculty, staff, and students will be assessed. The proposal indicates that the Center is to be established for three years and then evaluated to determine if it will continue beyond that. It is not clear what specifically will be evaluated to determine success of the unit.

### 3. Evidence of Commitment to and Capacity for Accomplishing the Initiative

- ◆ Commitment of senior leadership
- ◆ Commitment and involvement of key people and groups
- ◆ Sufficiency of the human, financial, technological, and other resources
- ◆ Defined plan for integrating the initiative into the ongoing work of the institution and sustaining its results
- ◆ Clear understanding of and capacity to address potential obstacles

#### Finding:

The Quality Initiative proposal demonstrates evidence of commitment and capacity.

The Quality Initiative proposal does not demonstrate evidence of commitment and capacity.

**Rationale and Comments:** There is evidence of commitment by the administration and faculty of Washburn. The process for gathering ideas on the concept of Teaching Excellence ensured campus-wide involvement in developing the Quality Initiative proposal. The University has involved key leadership groups and shared governance committees in this planning process and thus has institution-wide support. A C-TEL advisory committee will be established drawing on membership from key leadership committees. Having the Center Director report to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs will help ensure visibility for the Center.

The institution has identified a number of obstacles and adjustments to this proposal including the difficulties in engaging faculty in activities sponsored by such a center. Almost all of the obstacles identified are addressed by teaching centers all across the nation, but it is a time-consuming process that takes dedicated staff. Given the size of the campus and the broadness of the purpose of this Center, proposed funding for the project seems minimal and may fall short of what is needed to be successful. A part-time director with a part-time staff member seems inadequate to handle the workload. For example, there were no dollars budgeted for technology for faculty, just for the Center. If faculty are to incorporate technology into their teaching, they will need computers and software to train on and use. Year One suggests visiting other centers for teaching excellence and this would be an opportune time to explore funding models and organizational structures.

It was also unclear from the proposal who coordinates assessment at Washburn University and how this Center will interact/interface with that person or office.

### 4. Appropriateness of the Timeline for the Initiative

- ◆ Consistency with intended purposes and goals
- ◆ Alignment with the implementation of other institutional priorities
- ◆ Reasonable implementation plan for the time period

#### Finding

The Quality Initiative proposal demonstrates an appropriate timeline.

The Quality Initiative proposal does not demonstrate an appropriate timeline.

**Rationale and Comments:** The proposal provides a very clear timeline for the first three years of this project during which the initiative will be under review. The timeline doesn't address the actual training of faculty, but does seem to be reasonable.

**5. General Observations and Recommended Modifications:** This is a very exciting proposal that has the potential to significantly enhance the teaching and learning environment on the Washburn University and Washburn Tech campuses. If done correctly, the center will become an essential resource for faculty and staff and will help them make connections with colleagues throughout the University. The center can host events designed to create a community for faculty that can help promote the use of technology at various levels to accommodate each faculty member's teaching goals and style. This shared commitment to excellence will impact student learning. The biggest challenge for Washburn will be to launch the Center successfully. To accomplish this may take a very different level of funding than what is proposed.

**6. Conclusion:**

Approve the proposed Quality Initiative with or without recommended minor modifications. No further review required.

Request resubmission of the proposed Quality Initiative

