

Quality Initiative Initial Proposal

The purpose of the initial proposal is to identify a problem or opportunity as it relates to one of the strategic framework priorities. It is not intended to outline a specific plan or solution.

Title (*Brief working title that captures the essence of the problem or opportunity.*)

* Online Course Quality Improvement Project

Problem/Opportunity Statement (*One or two sentence description of the problem or opportunity. Should focus on specific, observable indicators. Should not infer cause and should not include solutions.*)

* The current problem is a lack of university-level guidelines to guide the development of new courses and the continuous improvement of existing online courses. This leads to inconsistencies in course quality across the campus that negatively impacts the student learning experience, faculty engagement, and compliance with regulatory standards. Additionally, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) requires Washburn to implement a quality assurance process to ensure consistent online course quality to enhance the overall student experience, making the development of these guidelines essential for institutional compliance and continuous improvement.

Proposal Themes (*Select one quality initiative theme for the proposal*)

- * Expand Learner Success Opportunities and Pathways
 - Enhance our Environment to Learn, Work, and Thrive
 - Accelerate Collaborative Partnerships to Grow the Community

(For more on Washburn's Strategic Framework, see the [Strategic Framework](#))

Description of how the problem or opportunity relates to the identified theme

* The identified problem—lack of university-level guidelines for online course development and improvement, as well as the absence of a guided process for continuous course improvement—directly aligns with Washburn's Priority A, particularly in expanding learner success opportunities and pathways. Without consistent course design guidelines and a structured process for continuous improvement, academic learning is inconsistent, potentially hindering student success and accessibility. By developing clear, consistent guidelines and a continuous improvement process, Washburn will be able to enhance current offerings and faculty professional development. This process will guide faculty in systematically refreshing and improving their online courses based on the evidence-based guidelines, ensuring that courses remain up-to-date and aligned with best practices in online education. This course continuous improvement process will create innovative academic pathways that ensure high-quality, accessible, and engaging online courses for a diverse student body, including adult learners and underrepresented groups. Furthermore, addressing this problem will help increase academic success for all learners by improving course design and supporting equitable access to high-quality online education. It also aligns with the objective to grow the number of students in targeted populations, such as first-generation and military learners, by offering more well-designed and engaging online learning environments. By establishing this guided improvement process, Washburn will be better positioned to provide equitable opportunities for all students, fulfilling its commitment to expanding learning pathways, supporting student success, and promoting continuous course quality improvement.

Benefits (*Description of desired outcomes, both tangible, such as decreased costs or increased revenue, and intangible, that is those improvements that are important to control, protect or enhance but are difficult to quantify. Benefits should be realistic and measurable.*)

- * Tangible Benefits:
1. Increased Student Retention and Success: By improving the quality and consistency of online courses, students will have a more positive and engaging learning experience, leading to higher retention rates and improved academic performance.
 2. Enhanced Online Experience and Satisfaction: The initiative will promote consistent, high-quality course design, creating a more engaging and supportive learning environment that enhances student satisfaction with online courses.
 3. Enhanced Faculty Competency in Online Teaching: Faculty will receive tools and support to continuously improve their competencies in course design, engagement, assessment, and accessibility.
 4. Increased Enrollment and Revenue: As the quality and accessibility of online courses improve, Washburn will attract a broader range of students, including adult learners and underrepresented groups, driving increased enrollment and revenue growth.
 5. Improved Compliance and Streamlined Accreditation: Aligning the initiative with Higher Learning Commission (HLC) requirements will ensure compliance with regulations, enhance accessibility (ADA) and student engagement (RSI), simplify accreditation reviews, and reduce the risk of penalties.
- Intangible Benefits:
1. Enhanced Reputation and Competitiveness: Consistently offering high-quality online courses will strengthen Washburn's academic reputation, making the university more competitive in attracting students and faculty.
 2. Equity and Inclusion: The initiative will ensure equitable access to high-quality

education for all students, especially underrepresented and marginalized groups, supporting Washburn's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

3. Sustained Innovation and Flexibility: The continuous improvement process will foster innovation in teaching methods and technologies, enabling faculty to adapt to evolving educational trends and student needs while maintaining high standards for online course quality.

Scope (Description of the scope or impact on the institution as a whole. Specify if the scope is focused on specific areas, units or departments.)

The scope of this initiative encompasses all online courses across Washburn University, impacting faculty, students, and administrative units involved in faculty and student support. While the project is focused on online course quality improvement, the universal guidelines and best practices developed will have broader implications for other departments offering hybrid or technology-enhanced courses.

Key Areas of Impact:

1. Academic Departments and Faculty: All departments offering online programs or courses will adopt the standardized guidelines. Faculty members will receive training and support to implement these guidelines, promoting consistency in course design, accessibility, and engagement across disciplines.
2. Students: The initiative directly impacts all online learners, enhancing their experience by providing consistent course structures, accessible materials, and improved interaction with faculty and peers.
3. Administrative Units: Units such as the Office of Academic Affairs, Center for Teaching Excellence and Learning (CTEL), Educational Technology, the Office of ADA, and the Center for Student Success will collaborate to support the development and implementation of the guidelines. Their roles will include training faculty, ensuring accessibility, providing technical support, and enhancing student success through targeted resources.
4. Compliance and Accreditation: The initiative will have a campus-wide impact on ensuring compliance with federal regulations (ADA, RSI) and accreditation standards (HLC), thus supporting Washburn's broader institutional goals and regulatory requirements.

Stake Holders (Identify all persons/groups that have an interest or position in the issue – both internal and external to the University.)

1. Students: The primary beneficiaries of improved online course quality. Their success and satisfaction are directly impacted by this initiative.
2. Faculty: Faculty teaching online courses will adopt the new guidelines and benefit from professional development, workshops, and continuous support, enabling them to improve course design and delivery.
3. CTEL and Instructional Designer: The Director of Online Education will partner with CTEL to provide workshops and training. The instructional designer at CTEL will offer personalized assistance and lead the continuous improvement process, supporting faculty in meeting the guidelines.
4. Administrative Units: Units including Educational Technology, the Office of ADA, and the Center for Student Success will provide technical support, ensure accessibility, and offer resources for student success, all aligned with initiative's goals.
5. Office of Academic Affairs: The Director of Online Education will lead the initiative, with the Office of Academic Affairs ensuring alignment with institutional goals, HLC accreditation standards, and regulatory compliance, while providing strategic oversight.

External Stakeholders:

1. Prospective Students and Families: Washburn's commitment to high-quality, accessible online courses will help attract a diverse range of future students, including those from underrepresented or non-traditional backgrounds.
2. Accreditation Bodies (HLC): As part of Washburn's accreditation process, HLC and other agencies will ensure the university complies with established quality standards in online education.
3. Federal Government (Office of Civil Rights and U.S. Department of Education): These agencies will monitor Washburn's compliance with accessibility standards and Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) requirements for distance education, as mandated by federal guidelines.

Team Members (Individuals who will work on development of full proposal and/or may work towards project implementation.)

1. Director of Online Education: Ju-Yu Chang will lead the Online Course Quality Improvement initiative, developing the proposal, implementing the project, and partnering with CTEL to organize faculty training workshops and materials.
2. Faculty Representatives: Faculty members from various departments, particularly those heavily involved in online course delivery, will provide expertise in developing the guidelines, guide the continuous improvement process, and participate in piloting course templates and peer reviews.
3. Instructional Designers in CTEL: Sue Taylor-Owens and CTEL will play a key role in creating the course design guidelines, offering hands-on support to faculty during the course development process, and ensuring that courses meet both quality and accessibility standards.
4. Office of the Provost/Academic Affairs Representatives: Associate Provosts Danny Wade and Jennifer Ball will provide oversight, ensuring alignment with institutional goals, accreditation compliance, and resource allocation for faculty development. Beth Mathews will manage logistical support, including meeting scheduling and documentation.
5. Office of ADA: Representatives (Heather Popejoy) will ensure that the new course guidelines meet ADA requirements, providing guidance on regulatory issues throughout the development and implementation process.
6. Information Technology Services (ITS): ITS (Marc Routsong) will assist with technical aspects of course delivery and ensure that the necessary technological infrastructure is in

place to support the implementation of the new course design guidelines and tools.
7. Student Success Center Representatives: Representatives from the Student Success Center (James Barraclough, Carissa Schmidlein) will provide feedback on student needs and campus resources. Their input will ensure that the project is student-centered.

Submitter Name: *

Submitter Email: *

Submitter Department: *

Submitter Phone:

Name and contact information of others involved in submission:

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Submitter Signature

Date

After signing, click Submit Form below. Submitters will be contacted after committee review in late November 2024.