

July 2, 2025

Dr. Richard B. Williams  
President  
Missouri State University  
901 S. National  
Springfield, Missouri 65897

Dear President Williams,

This letter is accompanied by the Quality Initiative Report (QIR) Review form completed by a peer review panel. Missouri State University'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](mailto:kbijak@hlcommission.org)) or Pat Newton-Curran ([pnewton@hlcommission.org](mailto:pnewton@hlcommission.org)).

***Higher Learning Commission***

## Open Pathway Quality Initiative Report

### Panel Review and Recommendation Form

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#### *Review Process*

The Quality Initiative panel review process evaluates the institution's effort in undertaking the Quality Initiative Proposal approved by HLC. 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.

#### *Submission Instructions*

Submit the final report as a Word document to HLC at [hlcommission.org/upload](https://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:** Missouri State University

**State:** Missouri

**Institutional ID:** 1449

**Reviewers (names, titles, institutions):** Anne Drougas, Associate Dean & Professor of Finance/Business Analytics at Dominican University of Illinois: Kelly Tzoumis, DePaul University

**Date:** 30 June 2025

### I. Quality Initiative Review

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- ☒ 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

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- ☒ 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)

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The review panel appreciates the opportunity to learn about Missouri State University's Quality Initiative Project (QIP) and commends the institution for its thoughtful, sustained, and inclusive approach to assessment. The initiative was launched during a period of significant institutional transformation, including leadership changes, a shift in Carnegie classification, and the ongoing recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these challenges, Missouri State demonstrated a clear commitment to embedding assessment into the fabric of its academic culture, particularly within its growing graduate programs.

**Seriousness of the Undertaking:** Missouri State University demonstrated a high level of seriousness in its approach to the Quality Initiative by embedding it into institutional planning, sustaining it through leadership transitions, and continuously refining its structure based on faculty feedback. The initiative was launched during a period of significant change, including the appointment of a new president, provost, and three college deans, as well as personnel changes within the Office of Assessment and Accreditation. Despite these disruptions, the university maintained its commitment to the initiative's goals and adapted its delivery model to ensure continuity—shifting from a traditional three-day in-person format to a hybrid model that allowed for broader participation and reduced logistical burdens.

- **Institutional resilience and continuity:** The initiative remained on track through leadership changes at the highest levels of the university, including the President, Provost, and multiple deans, as well as within the Office of Assessment and Accreditation. This continuity reflects strong institutional commitment and planning.
- **Structured and strategic implementation:** The workshops were strategically scheduled immediately after spring graduation to prioritize assessment work. Each team was required to hold at least three meetings, culminating in a formal presentation at an in-person, off-campus event. These sessions were supported by a standardized project template that helped teams stay focused and avoid scope creep.
- **Sustained faculty participation and iterative improvement:** Over the course of the initiative, more than 50 team presentations were developed and archived online, representing participation from all six academic colleges. Notably, more than 20% of participating teams returned in subsequent years to build on their previous work or pursue new assessment goals.
- **Public dissemination and external validation:** Missouri State presented its initiative at the 2025 Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Annual Conference, including a faculty co-presenter who shared insights from the workshop experience. This public sharing of outcomes reflects the university's transparency and seriousness in contributing to the broader higher education community.

**Scope and Impact:** The scope and impact of the initiative were broad, deep, and institution-wide, with participation from all six academic colleges and a wide range of graduate programs. By 2025, 75% of graduate programs had participated in at least one workshop, and 61% of unique programs were represented, including 71% of professional doctoral programs. The initiative led to concrete changes in

curricula, policies, student support systems, and assessment practices, many of which were documented in over 50 publicly available team presentations. These changes included the development of new graduate exit surveys, revised admissions procedures, updated student learning outcomes, and improved alignment with accreditation standards.

**Examples:**

- The MFA in Dramatic Writing program used alumni surveys and TA evaluations to revise its curriculum and improve student outcomes.
- The Master of Arts in Teaching team identified barriers in admissions and revised advising checkpoints and course content.
- The Physical Therapy program integrated professional responsibility and long-term learning strategies into first-year courses.

**Commitment and Engagement:** Missouri State University demonstrated strong and sustained commitment to the initiative through deep faculty and graduate student engagement, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a culture of shared ownership. Faculty teams were self-selected, often interdisciplinary, and many returned for multiple years to build on previous work, reflecting a high level of buy-in. Graduate students were actively involved and incentivized, and faculty feedback was consistently collected and used to refine the workshop experience. The initiative fostered a collaborative environment where faculty could reflect on their programs, share ideas, and implement meaningful changes.

**Examples:**

- Faculty described the workshops as transformative, citing increased trust, collaboration, and understanding of assessment processes.
- Teams developed new graduate exit surveys, updated assessment rubrics, and aligned curricula with accreditation standards.
- The initiative created a space for open dialogue and innovation, with faculty learning from peers across disciplines.

**Adequacy of Resources:** Missouri State University provided robust and sustained resources—human, financial, physical, and technological—to support the success of the initiative. The Office of Assessment and Accreditation coordinated the workshops in collaboration with the Provost, Deans, and the Assessment Council, ensuring broad institutional support. Financially, the university invested approximately \$30,000 per workshop to provide faculty stipends, graduate student compensation, and facilities, including off-campus venues and catered events to foster a collegial atmosphere. Technological tools such as Zoom, PowerPoint, and Qualtrics were used to facilitate collaboration, and all workshop presentations were uploaded to a public website to serve as a shared institutional resource.

**Examples:**

- Faculty received \$500–\$600 stipends, and graduate students received \$125–\$150 for their participation.
- The university hosted final-day presentations in off-campus venues with catered meals to celebrate faculty contributions.
- Presentations were archived online, creating a library of over 50 assessment projects accessible to all faculty.

**Conclusion:** Missouri State University has demonstrated a genuine, sustained, and institution-wide commitment to its Quality Initiative. The initiative was approached with seriousness and strategic alignment to institutional goals. Its scope was broad, its impact measurable, and its engagement deep and inclusive. The university provided appropriate and sustained resources, and the initiative has become a model for interdisciplinary collaboration and continuous improvement.