



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

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June 8, 2022

Dr. David Anderson
President
St. Olaf College
1520 St. Olaf Avenue
Northfield, Minnesota 55057

Dear President Anderson:

Attached is the Quality Initiative Report (QIR) Review evaluation information. St. Olaf 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 hlccommission.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: St. Olaf College

State: Minnesota

Institutional ID: 1404

Reviewers (names, titles, institutions): Dr. J. Richard Ellis, Dean of the College of Education and Social and Behavioral Sciences, John Brown University

Dr. Kathryn Gage, Executive Director for Student Affairs, Oklahoma State University

Date: 6/3/2022

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)

The community of St. Olaf College has demonstrated a clear commitment to planning, executing, and deploying the Quality Initiative (QI) entitled *Equity and Inclusion at St. Olaf College: Assessing, Enhancing, and Sustaining the Vision*. Inclusivity is not only in the name of the QI, it describes the approach that St. Olaf has taken in developing the initiative, by involving constituents throughout the institution, and also by examining how diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are multidimensional concepts that require a multifaceted approach in application.

This QI has origins in the college's 2019 Plan for Equity and Inclusion. Item 5 of the plan called for the development of a system of accountability in which DEI actions could be assessed, reported, acted upon, and celebrated. When initially undertaking the QI, St. Olaf determined to accomplish a single DEI project by constructing DEI dashboards that would display the status of those metrics that were considered the hallmarks of the inclusive community they envisioned. As the work progressed, three more accomplishments were realized. These included the creation of the college's DEI Theory of Transformation framework which provides definitions and visual mapping of what the aspirations of the DEI plan are, by what means it will be achieved, and how capacity to achieve the plan will be met through investment of resources.

The other two accomplishments that evolved as the QI progressed included the "Co-Creating an Inclusive Community Initiative" which promoted institutional change by involving students, faculty, staff, and administrators in designing the vision and means by which persons of all identities would feel valued and connected. A fourth accomplishment, the College-Wide DEI Symposium held in spring 2022 offered presentations and performances on a variety of diversity subjects.

St. Olaf has taken care to lay a foundation of conceptual understanding, by investing in professional development for faculty, staff, and Regents, and training for students. The community has tackled the issue of how to quantify abstract ideas like belonging and engagement by working to identify an array of in-house and national data sources. Communication of the development and status of the plan has been an important aspect of the QI to promote transparency and accessibility. Websites, DEI Updates emails, and the dashboards provide continuous messaging on the progress of the plan.

Investment in the QI is evident not only through financial expenditures, but also in the efforts the St. Olaf community has devoted in tasks such as building websites, coding data, or presenting at the DEI Symposium. In addition to the metrics displayed in the original dashboards project, the impact of the QI can be seen through the sizeable number of St. Olaf campus community members who have been involved in the DEI initiative. The 90% of faculty and staff, and 75% of students, Regents, and administrators involved demonstrate a project that has invited stakeholders to be full participants in building sustainable change at the institution.

The review team finds that St. Olaf's Quality Initiative has met the requirements of the Higher Learning Commission through its commitment to DEI by involving a wide range of the college's

constituents in planning and executing the project. Through investment of time and finances, the plan involves a multifaceted and expansive approach to building a diverse community where its members may find meaningful belonging.