Open Pathway

Quality Initiative Institutional Proposal Template

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
Lendley C. Black, Chancellor

Date
4/9/14

Printed/Typed Name and Title
University of Minnesota, Duluth

Name of Institution
Duluth, Minnesota

City and State

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.

Sufficiency of the Initiative’s Scope and Significance
2. Explain why the proposed initiative is relevant and significant for the institution.
3. Explain the intended impact of the initiative on the institution and its academic quality.

Clarity of the Initiative’s Purpose
4. Describe the purposes and goals for the initiative.
5. Describe how the institution will evaluate progress, make adjustments, and determine what has been accomplished.

Evidence of Commitment to and Capacity for Accomplishing the Initiative
6. Describe the level of support for the initiative by internal or external stakeholders.
7. Identify the groups and individuals that will lead or be directly involved in implementing the initiative.
8. List the human, financial, technological and other resources that the institution has committed to this initiative.

**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.

**Institutional Contact for Quality Initiative Proposal**
Include the name(s) of the primary contact(s) for the Quality Initiative.

Andrea Schokker, Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and Title</th>
<th>218-726-7103</th>
<th><a href="mailto:aschokke@d.umn.edu">aschokke@d.umn.edu</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>Email</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

University of Minnesota Duluth

Institution
HLC OPEN PATHWAY QUALITY INITIATIVE PROPOSAL

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.

Project title: Strategic Balance Through Systemic Planning and Program Prioritization

General Overview: UMD’s Quality Initiative is a long-term project composed of three phases, begun in 2010 and continuing over the next several years. Phase 1: Strategic Planning was completed, approved by the Campus Assembly, and adopted by Chancellor Black (key milestones) during the 2010-2011 academic year.

Phase 2: Program Prioritization launched in June, 2013 as a comprehensive review of all programs (both academic and academic support) with a focus on alignment with UMD’s mission and vision in ways that guarantee a sustainable future with quality programs. In all, over 210 academic programs and over 200 academic support programs were evaluated. The essential timeline and key milestones are built around two stages, described below.

Phase 3: Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement commences June 2014 and will be ongoing. Phase 3 constitutes the remaining portion of UMD’s HLC Open Pathways Quality Initiative project.

Very briefly these three phases are summarized below, with greater detail to follow in subsequent question responses.

Strategic Planning

UMD’s Strategic Planning enterprise set out to strengthen overall institutional quality in both academic and academic support programs by aligning all programs with the institution’s mission and core values. The 2010-11 planning process included six elements.

- Conducting a SWOT analysis of UMD
- Developing core values for the campus
- Updating the UMD mission statement
- Creating a campus vision for 2020
- Identifying 5-7 campus goals to be achieved in 3-5 years
- Identifying action steps required to achieve campus goals

The Strategic Planning process resulted in the clarification of our vision and core values, a new mission statement, and six guiding goals for the campus, as follows.
Mission: The University of Minnesota Duluth integrates liberal education, research, creative activity, and public engagement and prepares students to thrive as lifelong learners and globally engaged citizens.

To achieve this mission our activities are coordinated around six goal statements: 

**Goal 1:** Promote integrated curricular, co-curricular, and living-learning undergraduate experiences that achieve UMD’s student learning goals and prepare students for lifelong learning, globally engaged citizenship, and success in their academic, personal, and professional lives.

**Goal 2:** Create a positive and inclusive campus climate for all by advancing equity, diversity, and social justice.

**Goal 3:** Establish UMD as a center of excellence for graduate studies in the Upper Midwest.

**Goal 4:** Advance UMD’s stature as a major campus for research and creative activities, leveraging our region’s unique natural, human, and cultural resources.

**Goal 5:** Strengthen ties with Duluth and surrounding communities in an intentional, visible, and mutually beneficial partnership.

**Goal 6:** Utilize UMD’s infrastructure; technologies; and information, human and financial resources to support the campus in a sustainable manner.

One final key outcome of the Strategic Planning initiative was the comprehensive reconceptualization and reconfiguration of campus governance at UMD, activated in Fall 2013. It would be difficult to characterize how immense the change in governance is now, compared to one year ago. Beyond a new campus constitution the governance system now revolves around the following committees: University Coordinating Council, Faculty Council, Staff Council, Research and Scholarship Subcommittee, Curriculum Subcommittee, Graduate Council, Athletics Committee, Student Educational Experiences Committee, Strategic Planning and Budget Committee, Facilities Subcommittee, Strategic Enrollment Management Committee, Teaching and Learning Committee, Assessment Subcommittee, Liberal Education Subcommittee, and Institutional Technology and Library Subcommittee.

Developing the new governance system was a participatory project that included administration, faculty, staff, students, and the respective unions, and has brought close to 200 faculty, staff and students into the committee structure to participate in discussions and decisions that affect the campus. All campus constituencies are now much more intimately connected with the oversight and success of the campus’ mission and goals.

**Program Prioritization**

As of this writing we are in the final months of the formal Program Prioritization initiative. As mentioned above, Program Prioritization revolved around two broad stages.

Stage one (June – December, 2013): Data collection and Evaluation. Committees were formed and charged, criteria and rubrics were developed, programs compiled
numerical data and completed narratives relative to the criteria, committees scored
the programs based on the data and narratives, recommendations were made to
senior leadership, and feedback was given to programs. All of this occurred within
an environment of continuous consultation between senior campus leadership,
faculty, staff, and students.

Stage two (January – May, 2014): Implementation. Recommendations are being
considered, decisions are being discussed and finalized relative to program options,
including program strengthening, elimination, consolidation, and so forth; transition
plans are being developed, including budget and HR planning. This stage included
“voluntary layoff” options for both faculty and staff. Presently, 12 faculty have opted
for the voluntary layoff, as have 49 staff. Additionally, four staff have been laid off as
a result of Program Prioritization.

**Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement**
Strategic Planning and Program Prioritization have united our various campus
constituencies in conversations that have not happened here in recent memory and
certainly never to the extent they have over the past three years. Hundreds of
faculty, staff, and students have participated in committees, attended forums, served
on task forces, researched issues, and been part of decision-making groups
discussing a wide range of issues including past practices, governance, campus
priorities, budgets, enrollment management, diversity and social justice, and our
relationship with the broader University of Minnesota system and with the Duluth
community. The results have been productive with far-reaching implications.

Conversations around complicated issues such as campus core values, mission, key
goal areas, program consolidations and/or elimination, and managing finances are
guaranteed to be contentious with diverse opinions on hot topics such as how best
to manage our resources, what our student body should look like, what is core to
our academic mission, how “core” is even defined, and the need for prioritization in
the first place. The intention of the Strategic Planning and Program Prioritization
processes was to provide us with a framework. The next steps will be to implement
the framework’s guidelines, and critically reflect on both the guidelines as well as
the processes we went through to generate them.

Strategic Planning and Program Prioritization must not be seen as discrete projects
that are now completed (Program Prioritization will be “completed” in June 2014).
It would be all too easy to “move on” and look at Strategic Planning and Program
Prioritization in the rearview mirror. Critical Reflection and Continuous
Improvement is where we actually confront the decisions we have made, adjust to
doing work differently, and grapple with the tough questions that all educational
organizations need to face in the 21st century.

**Sufficiency of the Initiative’s Scope and Significance**
1. Explain why the proposed initiative is relevant and significant for the
   institution.

2. Explain why the proposed initiative is relevant and significant for the
   institution.
Strategic planning, program prioritization, critical reflection and continuous improvement are essential concerns whose importance should appear self-evident. One could assume reasonably that a healthy organization, educational or otherwise, would adopt these practices as a matter of course. However, strategic planning can be cumbersome and costly in both human and financial terms. Program prioritization is bound up in both the best and worst of institutional policies, history, and “politics.” Program growth is often driven by enrollment trends and/or faculty interest areas and/or collegiate maneuvering and/or serendipity rather than by over-arching institutional planning and coordination.

UMD’s three-phase quality initiative process is our effort to proactively avoid the sorts of institutional inertia that might otherwise hamper organizational effectiveness. These steps have proven timely, especially given continuing decreases in state funding for higher education in Minnesota. In fact, according to data reported by the Chronicle of Higher Education online (http://chronicle.com/article/25-Years-of-Declining-State/144973?cid=megamenu) in the past 25 years state support for UMD has decreased from 63.5 percent to 24.9 percent, forcing the campus to rely on tuition and other sources of funding for about 75% of our revenue.

It is not just declining funding that makes this initiative timely. Like many institutions, UMD is grappling with a decline in new student enrollment, challenges in student retention/graduation rates and ability to attract transfer student populations or underserved students, a challenging economy, a shrinking Minnesota high school student population, the challenges of moving our curriculum into alternative delivery formats, and competition from other educational outlets, including regional and national campuses, online universities, and MOOCs. To offset such challenges, we need to be relevant, mission-driven, and fiscally responsible. Our three-part initiative across Strategic Planning, Program Prioritization, and Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement gives us the grounding we need to move UMD forward in positive, healthy, and intentional ways.

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

Strategic Planning
It is not an understatement to say that UMD’s Strategic Planning initiative was ground breaking. It isn’t that we never planned before; rather, we had never invested the amount of time and energy that were put into this effort. As described throughout this document, that effort laid the foundation for institutional decision making that will affect UMD for decades to come.

The impacts of Strategic Planning lie primarily in two key areas: focus and direction. Over the course of a year hundreds of faculty, staff, students, and community members worked to clarify what UMD stands for, who it serves, how it needs to be
positioned for moving forward, and what its key values are. Contributors worked in task forces, groups, world cafes, open forums, breakfast meetings, and individually to draft and redraft numerous times the mission, vision, goals and action plans that currently constitute our strategic plan.

All of this work paid off by giving the institution clarity as it makes decisions relative to issues including program growth, student needs, faculty and staff development, shared governance structures, resource utilization, learning strategies, and so forth. For example, the strategic plan served as the backdrop for initiatives including: (a) creation of a Learning Commons in the library (which includes the newly created Writing Center) as a step toward a broader Center for Teaching and Learning; (b) participation in the American Council for Education Internationalization Laboratory; (c) establishment of multicultural living and learning units in the residence halls; (d) recruitment of minority faculty through the Diversity Pre-Doctoral Teaching Fellowship program to diversify our workplace; (e) creation of a faculty and staff of color association to give voice to underrepresented groups in campus governance structures and decision making and foster the mentoring of faculty and staff; (f) funding of 14 new UMD-Community Partnership and Outreach Grants to leverage our resources to address and improve upon the quality of life of our citizens in diverse areas such as the arts, recreation, educational leadership programs for at-risk children, sustainable food, energy conservation, and bike paths to campus; (g) establishment of the Green House: A sustainability focused living-learning community in Housing and Residence Halls; (h) the completely reconceived and reconstituted governance system; (i) installation of 21 hydration stations on campus designed to reduce disposal water usage (over 600,000 disposal water bottles have been avoided by people using these water stations); (j) completion of bike paths to campus (registered bikers logged nearly 12,000 miles thus reducing carbon emissions from commuting by nearly 4 metric tons of carbon which is equivalent to saving 414 gallons of gas); (k) over 20 Strategic Plan funded grants directly related to diversity, community partnerships, and sustainability goals; (l) 18 “Unit Change Teams” working to identify and develop promising practices for making UMD a welcoming and inclusive campus climate; (m) creation of the Mathematics Learning Laboratory for the computer-based delivery of basic mathematics courses.

Each of the above examples plus dozens more can be traced directly back to the six goal statements of the strategic plan. At this writing we are about to complete the third year of the strategic plan’s implementation. All six of the goal areas have been realized, but to greater or lesser degrees. None of the six, however, has been fully assessed relative to questions of key priority areas, commitments necessary to move forward, or the need to modify the original statements and/or intent. Such critique is a necessary part of Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement.

Program Prioritization
Program Prioritization is a natural progression from Strategic Planning. In order to utilize our resources to their fullest potential UMD is conducting a comprehensive
Program Prioritization initiative to review the entire span of programs, courses, and services that we deliver in relation to how they each align with our mission and how they position UMD for growth. The essential primary impact of Program Prioritization is to preserve the overall health and strengths of the entire institution, not of any particular program. One important result to come out of the prioritization exercise was the reminder of how much excellent work is already happening at UMD.

While budget underscores the need for prioritization, it is also crucial to evaluate our priorities with respect to quality, demand, reputation, and many other areas. This broader view allows for prioritization decisions to be made upon more sophisticated grounds than simple numerical data. Numbers become only one of several criteria that impact programmatic health, need, and centrality. In short, the results of Program Prioritization will profoundly impact UMD for years to come. The strategic plan gave us both a philosophical direction as well as specific action steps, and Program Prioritization is the articulation of that forward movement. If Program Prioritization decisions are inconsistent with the strategic plan, then serious conversations will need to occur to account for such decisions; and, even when decisions are made that are consistent with the strategic plan, similar conversations must occur to be sure the decisions are the right ones for this specific time in UMD's history. In short, critical reflection needs to accompany any serious prioritization effort.

**Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement**

The intended impact of the Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement leg of UMD’s quality initiative is a full-scale, all-encompassing critique. Strategic planning and Program Prioritization are both in full swing, Strategic Planning having been fully implemented and the Program Prioritization project concluding in June 2014. Neither, though, has yet undergone rigorous and thoughtful review. For example, we know Strategic Planning is working, but we are not sure which action steps have been most fully explored, or which goal areas are most fruitful, or the campus’ general level of continued satisfaction with the strategic plan, or which goal areas should be revised, eliminated, or expanded. Likewise, we know that Program Prioritization is working, but do not know what impact prioritization will have on morale, working relationships, future program development, ability to grow key functions such as student recruitment, and so forth.

Both Strategic Planning and Program Prioritization were launched as efforts to preserve quality. Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement is our effort to measure systematically and systemically how well Strategic Planning and Program Prioritization met (and are meeting) their goals. This is a long-term project that will call upon all campus constituencies to play a role.

**Clarity of the Initiative’s Purpose**

4. Describe the purposes and goals for the initiative.
Strategic Planning
The purpose of strategic planning was to create a robust and seamless process to accentuate the high quality of educational and research opportunities our campus has to offer. The strategic plan is a way to marshal our collective experiences, our resources and skills, and our visions to articulate multi-prong pathways to the goal of academic excellence. The strategic plan as well as the strategic planning process was also our way to tell our individual and collective stories better, to identify areas of visioning about our future, and to challenge each other to become better stewards of what we have been entrusted with by the citizens of Minnesota. Our collective resolve was to focus on many goals: academic excellence, quality teaching, research, and creative discoveries with a measurable impact on the socioeconomic and cultural well being of our State. We committed ourselves through the strategic plan to accomplish our shared goals in an environment that nurtures tolerance, diversity, social justice, inclusion, mutual respect, and a safe climate for learning and discovery to occur.

Program Prioritization
Through the Program Prioritization initiative, we sought to examine closely and critically the programs, courses, and services that we deliver to see how they align with our mission and how they position UMD for growth. The goal of this initiative is to use limited financial resources in ways that will best meet the needs of our students and our community, as outlined in our Strategic Plan. Program Prioritization has already resulted in specific suggestions for the Chancellor’s unit, Academic Affairs, Student Life, and the Finance and Operations units.

Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement
The purpose of Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement is to critique the degree to which Strategic Planning and Program Prioritization have met their stated objectives, determine how and why they may or may not have met their objectives, and examine the extent to which each has positioned UMD for further, positive growth. Within this purpose lie three key goals:

1. Inclusive participation. This initiative is not intended to be the purview of administration, only; rather, all campus constituencies need to be involved.
2. Embedded within the new campus governance system. Strategic Planning and Program Prioritization were both campus-wide initiatives, and thus need campus-wide oversight, including oversight of how the programs are critiqued.
3. Transparency. Data, inquiries, and results need to be accessible to all members of the campus community.

5. Describe how the institution will evaluate progress, make adjustments, and determine what has been accomplished.
Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement is the answer to this question. UMD's three-phase Quality Initiative project was begun in 2010 and as of June 2014 will have moved through two key phases. The third phase, Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement, is UMD's effort at honest critique aimed at informed decision making to move forward, as outlined in questions 6-9 below.

**Evidence of Commitment to and Capacity for Accomplishing the Initiative**

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

Key internal stakeholders include faculty, staff, and students; key external stakeholders include University of Minnesota senior leadership, Board of Regents, Minnesota legislature, alumni, City of Duluth government and business community, and neighborhoods surrounding the UMD campus.

**Strategic Planning**

The Strategic Planning process enjoyed broad internal and external support including Chancellor Black as well as his entire senior leadership team, a Steering Committee comprised of 35 faculty, staff, students, and community members, an Executive Team of 12 members (drawn from the Steering Committee), and all-campus participation facilitated by a faculty fellow for strategic planning who hosted multiple world cafes, open forums, and town hall meetings. Strategic Planning also enjoyed wide external support, especially from the University of Minnesota senior leadership and the Board of Regents.

**Program Prioritization**

Chancellor Black is leading UMD through this Program Prioritization initiative with the help of the Vice Chancellors, Deans, and Directors, but everyone on campus has been involved at the program level. Criteria and weights for the criteria were developed corroboratively in alignment with UMD's strategic plan, mission, and vision, with an additional focus on financial sustainability. For Program Prioritization, two committees were charged with (a) becoming familiar with the program prioritization process; (b) soliciting feedback from colleagues about the process; (c) reviewing criteria and related questions (for academic and non-academic units as appropriate); (d) making preliminary recommendations for any changes to criteria plus provide an initial draft of categories and weights to the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (EVCAA) by August 1, 2013 (to be shared with the Council of Deans (COD) and campus for feedback); (e) developing draft templates and rubrics for each category to EVCAA by September 1, 2013 (again, to be shared with COD and the campus for feedback); (f) scoring all degree granting programs (or non-degree as appropriate) based on the categories and rubrics developed, and submit to EVCAA as completed with a final due date of November 15, 2013.

The Program Prioritization Committee for Academic (degree-granting) units consisted of two faculty from each of the five collegiate units and was staffed by the
EVCAA office. The Program Prioritization Committee for Academic Support & Services Program Units (non-degree granting) consisted of nine professional staff representing business services, finance and operations, facilities management, athletics, academic affairs (professional advising staff), information technology systems and services, recreational sports and outdoor programs, external affairs, and the committee was staffed by the Student Life Office.

Program Prioritization thus far has received broad praise from the University of Minnesota senior leadership, as well as the Board of Regents and even the Governor. Internal support varies as people begin to understand proposed changes in programs, business practices, and personnel. One thing with which virtually everyone agrees is that program prioritization was necessary, even if uncomfortable. At this point, faculty, staff, and students are seeing that the process was well conceived and the transparency of the process has helped allay any concerns about potentially capricious budget cuts.

Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement
Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement is set to be launched in June, 2014. The first order of business will be key stakeholder identification and inclusion.

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

Strategic Planning and Program Prioritization have each been discussed in sufficient detail relative to involvement in other question responses, so this response will focus on the Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement initiative. As of this writing, 73 draft strategies have been forwarded resulting from the Program Prioritization process. Additionally, the campus is working toward realizing the possibilities in the 47 Action Steps that came out of Strategic Planning. Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement will need to address this full range of potential and change. Doing so will be coordinated from four Responsibility Centers (RC): (1) Chancellor’s Unit, which includes Advancement, Alumni Relations, Athletics, and External Affairs; (2) Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, which includes all five colleges, Library, Information Technology Systems and Services, Admissions, Financial Aid, International Education, all departments, programs, centers, and academic faculty and support staff; (3) Vice Chancellor for Student Life, which includes Health Services, Career and Internship Services, Dining Services, Parking Services, Housing and Residential Life, and the Bookstore; and, (4) Vice Chancellor for Finance and Operations, which includes Human Resources, Business Services, Campus Police, and Facilities Management.

8. List the human, financial, technological and other resources that the institution has committed to this initiative.
Strategic Planning and Program Prioritization have each been discussed in sufficient detail relative to institutional commitment in other question responses. Thus, this response will focus exclusively on the Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement initiative.

Because every constituency on campus is affected by Strategic Planning and Program Prioritization, every constituency will be recruited to participate in the Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement initiative. Our challenges are daunting as we confront new economic realizations, personnel reductions, work restructuring, and our "new normal." Students, faculty, and staff will commit to this initiative for at least two obvious reasons. First, self-interest. Constituents will want to participate in this critique so that their interests are represented. Everyone wants a voice at the table, especially during periods of change. Second, the excitement of a new challenge. UMD is at the threshold of a new era. We are transitioning and, while all transitions bring some discomfort, there is excitement in the possibilities that accompany change. This period in our history is not about just revenue balancing and programmatic realignment. It is about creativity, focused and controlled growth, and intentional decision making.

**Appropriateness of the Timeline for the Initiative**

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

As UMD moves forward with the 3-phase quality initiative, the third phase – Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement – is the piece not yet launched. This vital component serves as an intentional critique of UMD’s success at strategic planning and program prioritization, and given those successes, how the institution will redefine institutional and programmatic balance.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY FOCUSES</th>
<th>KEY ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>TIMELINES and RESPONSIBILITY CENTERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement: Focus on Strategic Plan and Program Prioritization | • Identify key stakeholders and determine how all can be included best in the Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement process  
• Articulate clearly how the program prioritization decisions are integrated with the strategic plan  
• “Gap analysis” where integration is unclear or unknown  
• Determine relative merit of Program Prioritization recommendations  
• Implement appropriate recommendations  
• Measure impact of program prioritization on campus relative to stated objectives  
• Determine key data issues (and thus, data needs), including redefining balance, right-sizing, sustainable level of academic programs, revenue growth  
• Reiterate key data measures for the Strategic Plan (e.g., what did the strategic plan set out to do?) | Chancellor’s Cabinet  
Institutional Research  
Governance System  
Faculty Fellow for Strategic Planning  
Time line: 3-5 years |
| Critical Reflection and Continuous Improvement: Focus on the cyclic nature of program prioritization. Part of phase three is to map out what this alignment looks like and will entail | • Revisit the six campus goals and forty-seven action steps related to those goals to determine relative impact  
• Generate appropriate measurement strategies | • Revision of Strategic Planning and Program Prioritization frameworks | Chancellor's Cabinet  
Institutional Research  
Governance System  
Faculty Fellow for Strategic Planning  
Time line: 3-5 years |
Institutional Contact for Quality Initiative Proposal

Andrea Schokker
Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
500 Darland Administration Building
1049 University Drive
Duluth, Minnesota 55812-3042
aschokker@d.umn.edu
218-726-7103 phone
218-726-6535 fax