



Open Pathway Quality Initiative Proposal

Institutional Template

The enclosed Quality Initiative Proposal represents the work that the institution will undertake to fulfill the quality improvement requirements of the Open Pathway.


Signature of Institution's President or Chancellor

2/26/2020
Date

Joyce E. McConnell J.D., LL.M.

Printed/Typed Name and Title

Colorado State University

Name of Institution

Fort Collins, CO

City and State

The institution completes the Quality Initiative Proposal by responding to the questions in each category of the template. Proposals should be no more than 4,500 words. The institution may choose to submit a brief implementation plan or supplemental charts or graphs as appendices to the template. The Quality Initiative Proposal will be accepted beginning September 1 of Year 5. It is due no later than June 1 of Year 7.

Submit the proposal as a PDF file to hlcommission.org/upload. Select "Pathways/Quality Initiative" from the list of submission options to ensure the institution's materials are sent to the correct HLC staff member. Submission file names should utilize the following format: QIProposal[InstitutionName][State].pdf (e.g., QIProposalNoNameUniversityMN.pdf). The file name must include the institution's name (or an identifiable portion thereof) and state.

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.

Colorado State University (CSU) proposes implementation of Student Success Initiatives, Version 2: Access to Excellence (SSI-2) as our Quality Initiative (QI). SSI-2 planning occurred in 2017-18. Implementation began in 2018-19 and will continue through the next reaccreditation comprehensive visit in 2024. As explained in comprehensive detail below, SSI-2 is an array of initiatives aimed at increasing student engagement and deepening student learning with the byproduct of improving graduation rates and efficiency to graduation via a focus on equity. CSU is putting not just diversity and inclusion, but equity and social justice, at the core of our manifold student success initiatives. We understand excellence as a function of equity achieved.

Background

In 2008, Dr. Tony Frank stepped into the role of the 14th President of Colorado State University. During the decade of Frank's Presidency and as a result of his leadership, CSU implemented an ambitious student success plan. These initiatives worked for students by changing institutional structures and culture. The design and implementation of the Student Success Initiatives (SSI) Access to Success plan was guided throughout by values and vision as well as by rigorous data analysis and assessment. The results speak for themselves: six-year graduation rates increased from 64 to 71 percent and four-year graduation rates increased from 38 to 45 percent. The increase in the overall graduation rate is important; but equally important is the increased efficiency to graduation. Crucially, SSI helped eliminate four-year graduation rate disparities for racially minoritized students after controlling statistically for other demographics, including academic preparation.

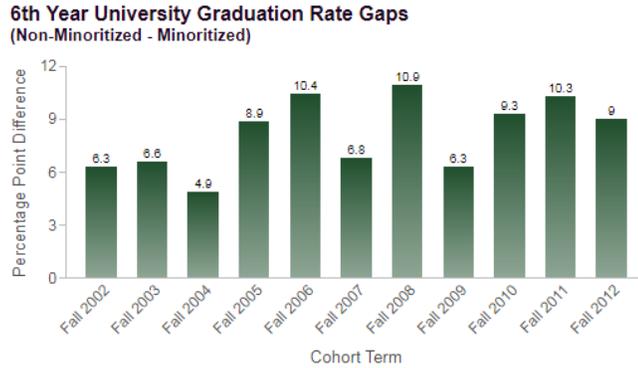
Current Context

Colorado State University is a Carnegie-classified Research-1 land-grant institution dedicated to meeting the educational needs of today's students while maintaining fidelity to a founding commitment to access and excellence. The university welcomed Joyce McConnell as its 15th President in July 2019, while also preparing to celebrate its founding sesquicentennial in 2020. Even under these auspicious circumstances, the institution is committed to maintaining a focus on essential student success work.

In fall 2019, CSU enrolled 34,166 total students, including 26,559 undergraduates. The new undergraduates entered with a median ACT composite score of 26, combined SAT of 1186, high school GPA of 3.69, and high school rank percentile of 70%. One in four CSU students is first-generation college; one in four self-identifies as racially minoritized; one in five is a Pell Grant recipient; and one in four is a transfer student.

Despite our progress in eliminating attainment disparities when controlling for prior academic preparation, we have not eliminated them absolutely (that is, without regard to such statistical controls). Current absolute attainment disparities between racially minoritized students and their peers are depicted in Chart 1. Similar absolute attainment disparities exist with respect to first-generation students and Pell Grant recipients. These disparities show that we have not achieved equity.

Chart 1.



Sufficiency of the Initiative’s Scope and Significance

2. Explain why the proposed initiative is relevant and significant for the institution.

Our proposed QI is relevant and significant for CSU, as it would be for any institution committed to student success.

Being Student Ready

Throughout its history, CSU has fulfilled its land-grant mission by providing access to the highest-quality educational experience. In the past ten years, CSU has increased the size of the incoming class by 20% while increasing the number of racially minoritized students in the class by 120%. The increasing diversity of the university community has benefited all its members. Yet to be truly student-ready, CSU must put equity at the center of its development. To assist students in reaching their fullest potential, CSU must support them in ways that are appropriate for their unique perspectives, diverse experiences, and myriad potentials. We must change to meet today’s students’ needs. To realize the goal of truly being a 21st-century student-ready university, CSU must create and institutionalize new ways of doing things to produce enduring and transformational cultural change.

Cost of Higher Education

In 2017, for the first time, more than half of all states relied more heavily on tuition than on educational appropriations. Colorado is no different. Decline in state funding has meant that a larger share of the cost of attendance is borne by students and their families. CSU is committed to keeping the cost of attendance as affordable as possible, in part by increasing targeted institutional aid. Although the original SSI was not initially self-funded, it did become so eventually. Beyond that, increases in tuition revenue from greater student retention allowed the institution to invest additional funds in the need-based financial aid budget. In fact, institutional aid has increased by more than 300% in the last ten years. Partly as a result of this increase, CSU graduates leave with student loan debt lower than the national average at public research institutions (<https://www.voluntarysystem.org/admin/analytics>). The SSI-2 QI will allow CSU to continue to reinvest in financial aid, particularly for students who are identified as most in need of financial assistance.

Colorado Commission on Higher Education

As required by Senate Bill 11-052, which was signed into law in 2011, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education developed a performance funding system for public institutions throughout the state. Each institution must provide evidence of meeting or exceeding defined performance goals. These goals include increasing graduation rates and closing attainment gaps. The original SSI helped CSU organize its efforts around student success. We anticipate that the proposed QI will provide similar helpful organizing structures as we go forward.

Colorado is also an active partner with Complete College America (CCA), a national nonprofit that works to increase the number of people with quality career certificates or college degrees and to close attainment gaps for traditionally under-represented populations (<https://highered.colorado.gov/Data/Research/Grants.html>). Our proposed QI incorporates CCA's heavily researched and proven effective major student success strategies: 15 completed credit hours each semester; completed foundational math in the first year; use of corequisite academic support; and an institutionalized momentum year for students.

Learning from Others and Serving as an Exemplar

CSU is engaged in a variety of mutually beneficial external partnerships that allow us to learn with and from other institutions. These relationships will facilitate our sharing of the proposed QI and expand its impact beyond CSU.

We are, for example, leading our cluster group in the Association of Public Land-grant Universities (APLU) Powered by Publics Initiative, in which we learn with and from peers in our geographical region. Additionally, we are partnering with urban-serving institutions across the nation through the Urban Serving University and APLU's Student Experience Project to identify and address social-psychological barriers in learning environments that impede student learning and, therefore, degree persistence and completion. CSU has also greatly benefited from our collaboration with the APLU Gates Foundation Adaptive Learning Platform via the National Association of System Heads' Taking Student Success to Scale Initiative. We also find research forums from the Education Advisory Board to be beneficial, in part because they help to ensure that we are well-informed of current student success experimentation and documented best practices.

Further, since 2014, CSU has hosted the [Reinvention Collaborative](#), a national consortium of R1 and R2 universities that promotes innovation and excellence in undergraduate education. The consortium cultivates ideas and practices that are as applicable for highly selective private institutions as they are for flagship and access-oriented public research universities. A wide range of CSU's student success initiatives have been presented and discussed at Reinvention Collaborative meetings and conferences, including those hosted at CSU.

Our proposed QI can be strengthened from the input of colleagues with comparable experience and expertise. Likewise, CSU can serve student success progress nationally by sharing our successes as well as our challenges.

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

We intend to focus on equity, knowing that an array of interconnected initiatives will positively impact all students, but will have a differentially positive impact for our students who identify as racially minoritized, first-generation, and/or Pell Grant recipients. By centering our approach to student success on equity and increased student engagement, we intend to increase our overall four- and six-year graduation rates and eliminate attainment disparities.

We plan to focus on equity by theorizing intersectionality and expanding pre-collegiate programs, learning communities, mentoring, and need-based financial aid with complex systems of inequity firmly in mind and empirically assessed. Inside the classroom, we will concentrate on peer and faculty mentoring, learning assistants, and a concerted effort to provide faculty with professional development focused on inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogy. These activities will position CSU faculty for success with 21st century CSU students (details of the plan are provided in section ten). Over time, SSI-2 will build on gains made in the original SSI to further reinforce structural and cultural change at the institution and beyond.

Clarity of the Initiative's Purpose

4. Describe the purposes and goals for the initiative.

The purpose of SSI-2 is to continue to increase student engagement and learning with the byproduct of increasing graduation rates and efficiency to graduation by focusing centrally on equity. SSI-2 is a comprehensive and integrated plan for student success with three ambitious overarching goals:

- Attain an 80% six-year graduation rate for the first-time, full-time entering cohort
- Attain a 60% four-year graduation rate for the first-time, full-time entering cohort
- Close equity gaps absolutely (without statistical control for other demographic variables)

5. Select up to three main topics that will be addressed by the initiative.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advising | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Retention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civic Engagement | <input type="checkbox"/> Online Learning | <input type="checkbox"/> Student Learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum | <input type="checkbox"/> Persistence and Completion | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Student Success |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching/Pedagogy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engagement | <input type="checkbox"/> Program Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Underserved Populations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Program Evaluation | <input type="checkbox"/> Workforce |
| <input type="checkbox"/> First-Year Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Improvement | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: Closing Attainment Gaps |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Education | | |

6. Describe how the institution will evaluate progress, make adjustments and determine what has been accomplished.

At our most recent comprehensive evaluation visit (2013), the HLC review team recognized CSU’s “noteworthy respect for data-driven inquiry” and our “robust tracking in place for student success metrics.” We continue to use data in both formative and summative assessment of our efforts. CSU monitors typical student success metrics, including rates of retention and graduation, DFW rates, course completion rates, credit hours attempted, probation rates, etc. Levels of analysis have been university-wide but also focused, such as recent and publicly available studies that address gaps in math achievement by demographic group; gaps in student achievement by residency status or by participation in learning communities, academic college and department disparities; and achievement gaps among honors program students. CSU also studies major-changing patterns, participation in co-curricular programs, and progress toward degree and curricular momentum issues, and we use quantitative and qualitative methods to better understand student self-perception and environmental experiences. The CSU Taking Stock survey, for example, which more than 90% of new residential students complete after four weeks at the university, alerts us to needs for early intervention.

Evidence of Commitment to and Capacity for Accomplishing the Initiative

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

Those who have worked conscientiously on planning and initial implementation of SSI-2 are aware that CSU is recognized for its commitment to student success and equity. In 2017, to offer one example, CSU was named a finalist for APLU’s prestigious Degree Completion Award. And, as

previously noted, CSU is the host of the Reinvention Collaborative, following Stony Brook University and the University of Miami as host institutions.

Implementation of SSI-2 is already underway. Staff and additional resources have been deployed to expand learning community participation during students' first year and to increase the sustainability of the Community for Excellence (a financial aid and mentoring program). Furthermore, a Student Success Manager position was recently created and filled to assist with coordination of the multiple facets of SSI-2. CSU is poised to effectively implement and deploy SSI-2 as our QI.

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

SSI-2 implementation, like the original SSI, will be led by the Provost's Advisory for Student Success (PASS). Membership includes the Provost, the Vice President for Student Affairs, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs, the Associate Vice President for Student Success, the Vice President for Diversity, the Vice Provost for Planning and Effectiveness, the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, the Vice President for Enrollment and Access, a member of the Associated Students of CSU (CSU's student government association), the Executive Director of the Reinvention Collaborative, the faculty Chair of the Committee for Teaching and Learning, and the Chair of Faculty Council.

Examples of specific groups or individuals whose expertise will be strategically leveraged include the Institute for Learning and Teaching, Financial Aid, Admissions, University Learning Communities, Faculty Council, Community for Excellence, Student Diversity Programs and Services, Council of Deans, Associate Deans, Access Center, Curriculum Committee, Collaborative for Student Achievement, and a representation of faculty from each of CSU's eight colleges. The CORE Team was established to ensure that best practices are shared across campus, to increase awareness of SSI-2 activities, and to implement and assess activities. Students will also provide critical input as to their needs, experiences, and perceptions.

9. List the human, financial, technological and other resources that the institution has committed to this initiative.

Student success has become part of CSU's identity, infusing faculty and staff roles such that decisions across the university are routinely made with student success goals in mind. The original SSI required a \$3.7 million base budget investment. This amount is a testimony to the extent of perceived need at the time as well as the depth of institutional commitment. Even during the Great Recession, CSU allocated base funds to advance SSI, and, given the steady progress toward our goals, did so wisely.

Budget allocations for SSI-2 are also substantial, with \$1.5M in new base funding already allocated through FY21 with the commitment of the President for additional subsequent funding. These figures suggest a profound commitment to institutional and cultural change. These funds are earmarked for the human, technological and structural resources necessary for us to reach our goals. The primary activities are detailed below and include resource allocation estimates.

Appropriateness of the Timeline for the Initiative

(The institution may include a brief implementation or action plan.)

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

While stand-alone initiatives can have a significant impact on attainment gaps and overall completion rates, national research and our local experience suggests that impact varies with how each strategy relates to and is integrated with a comprehensive overarching suite of initiatives. Therefore, our proposed strategies are intentionally interwoven to achieve coherence and mutually beneficial reinforcement.

Recommended strategies in SSI-2 are diverse and span both curricular and co-curricular components of the student learning experience at CSU. For our QI, we propose the specifics detailed below in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1.

Initiative	Timeline	Resources
Promoting Engaged Learning in the Critical First Four Weeks	2019-2024	Institution funds to provide small faculty participation stipends for bi-annual training engaging 50+ faculty, and ongoing work in student affairs in academic advising areas
Develop Readiness in Foundational Skills	2019-2023	Substantial institutional and college investment in curricular reform and the renovation of physical environments in the English and Math areas.
Scaling Up Proven Approaches- Expand Key Learning Communities, Community for Excellence, and the Academic Advancement Center to serve students of color and/or first generation and/or Pell-eligible students.	2019-2021	Institutional funds and indirect resources to add FTE and therefore program capacity
Identity and Inclusion in the Majors	2020-2022	Small scale institutional funds to be matched by college revenue to support student-facing programming
Faculty and Staff Professional Development	2019-2023	Institutional and academic department resources and leverage new NTTF promotion structure requiring service for engagement
Redesign general education curriculum (AUCC) with Intentional Transformation	2020-2022	Institutional funds for small-scale course buy-outs for faculty think-tank.
Affordability	2020-2024	Recalibrate existing funding streams from no-need to need based aid, institutional funds to support inclusive undergraduate fellows program, expand paid student employment/internships as high impact experiences with institutional funds and student fee dollars where/when supported by student government.

Table 2
Student Success Initiatives
Creating Equitable Educational Environments Inside and Outside the Classroom
Resulting in Increased Graduation Rates and the Elimination of Opportunity Gaps

Promoting Engaged Learning in the Critical First Four Weeks	Develop Readiness in Foundational Skills	Scaling Up Proven Approaches	Identity and Inclusion in the Majors	Faculty and Staff Professional Development	Redesign the AUCC with Intentional Transformation	Affordability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Intention •Develop in-class and out-of-class strategies that promote students' early success, with five areas of focus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Build and Encourage Relationships •Set Expectations/Motivate Students •Promote Active, Engaged Learning •Integrate Student Support into Learning Experiences •Ensure that Students Know Where They Stand •Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Faculty Training on First Four Weeks Teaching Strategies through TILT to promote Early Performance Feedback •Further engagement through follow-up in-service meetings •First Four Weeks hybrid best practices module through TILT •Start Strong Messaging to Students through Ram Orientation, Ram Welcome, Bridge, and Access programs •U-Turn and Individualized Follow-Up Strategies for Students •Academic Coaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Intention •Improve student engagement and success in first year Mathematics and Writing Composition Courses •Math Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Design website to integrate growth mindset language •Integrate math placement into Ram Ready website •Pilot Face-to-Face Math 117 1-credit course for students in the College of Natural Sciences in Fall 2019 to focus on success in PAce •Expand delivery of Math 101 and Math 107 •Restructure the Math Placement Exam (MPE) and evolve PAce center. •Writing Composition Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •"Writing at the Center" Supplemental Instruction •Hiring Writing Center Learning Assistants •Hiring a Writing Center Supplemental Instruction Director •CO 151 Supplemental Instruction (4-credits) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Intention •Increase success rates and decrease graduation gaps of first generation, limited-income, historically underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, and eligible undocumented students •Academic Advancement Center Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Create capacity to serve an additional 100 first generation, limited-income, and/or undocumented students •Apply for a TriO Student Support Services STEM grant •Community for Excellence (C4E) Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Increase C4E by 150 students over three years •Increase partner engagement •Serve students through graduation, mirroring the Academic Advancement Center model •Key Communities Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Increase Key Communities participation by 150 by Fall 2020 •Increase Key Plus participants by 60 students by Fall 2020 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Intention •Involve selected departments in devising strategies that promote major identity and inclusion, with a focus on underrepresented students •Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Implement Catalyst Learning Community and hire upper-division students as Learning Assistants and Undergraduate Research Assistants •Request for Proposal process for colleges to identify opportunities for reducing gaps •Create Department Action Teams to identify and implement initiatives •Bridge college work with departments and programs that develop relationships for students during their first few years (Key Communities, C4E, the cultural centers, etc.) •Connect transfer students' (coming in as rising juniors) experiences with their pre-transfer experiences •Explore students of color's sense of belonging in colleges with programming specific to sophomores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Intention •Better equip faculty and staff with awareness, strategies, and tools that make the greatest difference in learning- and support-focused interactions •Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Intergroup Relations Training for Faculty through a newly hired Equity Educator in TILT •Inclusive Pedagogy Training through a newly hired Equity Educator in TILT •Request for Proposals for implementable initiatives to combat racism as part of President McConnell's Race, Bias, and Equity Initiative •CDHE Equity Toolkit for Inclusive Teaching and Learning •TILT Teaching Effectiveness Framework •Inclusion and Social Justice Trainings offered through the Vice President for Diversity •Implement Tiered Model for Academic Success Coordinators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Intention •Provide an excellent educational opportunity to all admitted students, based in educational equity and CSU's Principles of Community •Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Become a student-ready campus to address equity at the heart of our access mission •Build High Impact Experiences into the Core Curriculum •Reorganize the AUCC and Undergraduate Paths through a Meta-Majors Taskforce •Explore a CSU common read program •Create first-Year Seminars for all first-year students •Use Complete College America Game-Changers and CSU Adapted Momentum Years strategies toward student success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Intention •Recalibrate funding streams to address the growing expense of a college education •Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Recalibrate funding streams to support lower (just above Pell) income students via new foundation 1% contribution for need-based aid strategically deployed for new students and continuing students as well as a completion grant program •Launch Provost's Inclusive Undergraduate Fellowship Program with 4-6 fellows •Explore strategic deployment of need-based aid. •Expand paid student employment/internships as high impact experiences.

Institutional Contact for Quality Initiative Proposal

Include the name(s) of the primary contact(s) for the Quality Initiative.

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