



## 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

Alysia Johnston

5/23/23

Date

Printed/Typed Name and Title

Fort Scott Community College

Name of Institution

Fort Scott, KS

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](https://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.

Fort Scott Community College (FSCC) began focusing on assessment processes when the faculty returned from HLC Assessment Academy in 2016. The assessment committee in conjunction with all faculty developed a multi-year, comprehensive general education assessment plan. Previously, assessment was occurring primarily at the course level, and lacked systematic, process-driven, institutional-wide involvement. Fort Scott Community College's Quality Initiative Proposal is focused on creating college wide assessment and continuous quality improvement. The proposed initiative involves implementing a holistic assessment plan at course, program, general education, institution, and co-curricular level while identifying the gaps and addressing them.

FSCC submitted the assurance argument in 2020 and met all the core components except for 4.B. which was met with concerns. The peer review team recommended that the institution be moved to the Standard Pathway. In response, the FSCC presented additional evidence and requested the Institutional Actions Council (IAC) to allow the college to stay on the Open Pathway by demonstrating a commitment to strengthen the assessment process. Immediately the college started working towards creating a formal holistic assessment plan that is useful and efficient. The holistic assessment plan provides a structure for the entire process and acts as a guide for assessment techniques and procedures at FSCC. Also included is an overview of assessment, a historical perspective of assessment progress and development, directions for setting benchmarks, methodology for data reporting, timelines for data collection, reporting structure and forms, how evidence is utilized, and the process for meaningful curricular and co-curricular improvements to student learning.

Assessment is a faculty-led process, coordinated by the FSCC Assessment Committee. The faculty are involved in collecting and evaluating course embedded assessments used to evaluate student performance on course and program level outcomes. The division chair and faculty engage in annual discussions to create action plans based on the findings and then complete the program outcome assessment report. Program outcomes are assessed over a three to five-year cycle, ensuring all outcomes have collected and utilized data for improving student learning. It is important to note that while the entire cycle is five years, data is collected and analyzed every semester. Faculty continues to develop methods to integrate assessment data into program review to drive curriculum changes.

The assessment committee works consistently to develop a plan that supports, integrates, and coordinates assessment efforts based on the peer review team's suggestions. Four general education outcomes were created based on the knowledge and skills a student should possess upon graduating with an Associate's in Science, Associate's in Arts, or Associate's in General Studies from FSCC. Separate program outcomes were identified for Associate's in Applied Science.

Institutional outcomes subcommittee and co-curricular outcomes subcommittee were created in fall 2021 to support the college-wide assessment effort. The institutional subcommittee is responsible for developing a plan for institutional outcomes assessment, which includes collecting data, analyzing and publishing results, and reporting or suggesting improvements to the assessment committee. The current

institutional outcomes (academic success and social responsibility) support the college's mission and are relevant to all our students irrespective of their degrees. Personal responsibility was initially developed as an institutional outcome; however, it was determined that social responsibility covered all items housed within the personal responsibility outcome. The institutional outcomes subcommittee continues collecting data on academic success while working on implementing a plan for assessing social responsibility. The plan consists of creating an in-house survey and developing a rubric to evaluate different social responsibility artifacts as the committee deems them pertinent to student learning. This initiative is another example of FSCC meeting student needs by streamlining the assessment process and practicing college-wide assessment.

Co-curricular programs/activities have been identified separately from extra-curricular activities. A co-curricular plan was created by the co-curricular subcommittee in September 2022. The plan defines co-curricular objectives and assists programs in developing measurable learning outcomes, supporting programs in collecting data and reporting results, identifying other programs which support the co-curricular experience, and adding co-curricular information to the website. The quality initiative will allow the subcommittee to focus on achieving these goals, ensuring continuous improvement in all areas of student learning inside and outside the classroom via our assessment processes.

FSCC has been making progress towards the holistic plan since receiving approval to move forward from IAC (fall 2020). The holistic assessment plan will address items such as ongoing assessment of student learning at course, program, institutional, and co-curricular levels. It will also serve as a guide for faculty and staff for implementing good assessment practices. The completion of the quality initiative project will make assessment more robust by closing the assessment loop and allowing FSCC to meet Core Criterion 4 B. The quality initiative will achieve a significant milestone within the context of the holistic assessment plan: continuous and comprehensive assessment at FSCC.

## **Sufficiency of the Initiative's Scope and Significance**

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

FSCC's mission, vision, and strategic plan directly impacts choosing assessment and student learning as the Quality Initiative project.

### **Mission**

Fort Scott Community College is an institution of higher learning with a long history of culture and diversity that provides affordable academic, technical, and occupational programs to meet student needs while fostering a mutually supportive relationship between the college and its communities.

### **Vision**

FSCC's vision for the future is to support "Students First, Community Always" through a central focus on teaching and learning; advancing strong, innovative programs and departments; maximizing and leveraging opportunities; initiating efficient and effective processes; and developing the region's workforce.

### **Strategic Plan Goals**

Goal 1: Foster relationships with the communities FSCC serves

Goal 2: Cultivate quality enhancements for education and learning

Goal 3: Promote student success

Goal 4: Fiscal responsibility

Goal 5: Promote strategies for employee success

As stated in the vision, FSCC focuses on teaching and learning with assessment being a primary avenue for the focus. Embedded within the strategic plan are items specifically focused on assessment. Increasing teaching effectiveness is the third strategy of goal two and utilizing the assessment process is the first tactic listed on achieving the goal. Similarly, the first strategy within goal two of the strategic plan is improving academic processes. One approach to achieving that piece of the strategic plan is “regular modification and updates to assessment website to reflect current information and findings,” which is in place to create transparency and a culture of accountability.

As indicated in the vision and the strategic plan, FSCC considers assessment processes vital to the health of the institution. The relevance of this proposal originated based on the feedback received from the peer review team. The team stated that FSCC had made strides and continued to make progress on the expectations outlined in core component 4.B. However, the team identified gaps in the assessment process, which led to the designation of the core component to be “met with concerns” on the final report.

The review team had concerns in multiple areas; the first lacked learning outcomes developed for individual degree programs. FSCC believed that specific terminology may have been an issue with this concern which was rectified related to ambiguity with the outcomes for the degrees the college offers: an Associate’s in Arts, Associate’s in Science, Associate’s in Applied Science, and an Associate’s in General Studies. The review team’s concerns related to discipline-specific outcomes were of higher relevance to the institution.

The concern in the team’s final report was that a holistic assessment plan was not provided. The team focused on the fact that a plan that guides assessment work at the institution would focus on assessment expectations, timelines, support systems, and ensuring all curricular and co-curricular departments would follow the same plan. The review team indicated that FSCC still had room for improvement on systematic data reporting, especially in terms of improvements made based on the data. Co-curricular assessment struggles were also outlined by the review team, stating that learning goals were essentially non-existent.

In 2016, FSCC participated in the Assessment Academy and created a timeline outlining the development of the assessment plan over the following eight years. The institution completed all items set forth in the first four years of the plan and the progress was reported as part of the assurance argument report in 2020. The peer review team suggested that assessment needed more attention and proposed a focused visit in November 2023. The institution requested a monitoring report to take the place of the recommended site visit in 2023 that would include an embedded report during the



comprehensive visit in 2025–2026. The college has been working on the holistic assessment plan that will be submitted along with the interim report due in November 2023.

The Quality Initiative Proposal would include the holistic plan and any modifications needed to the plan. The proposal also provides for outlining program level learning outcomes for all degrees, evidence of collecting data and utilizing it to improve student learning from a broad perspective, evidence of all programs reporting data, improvement to co-curricular learning outcomes and data that shows improvement.

FSCC started work on assessment after the Assessment Academy in 2016 and revitalized the process in 2020 after receiving feedback from the review team. The institution recognizes the impact that the assessment practices have on improving student learning. The success of students and improvement of student learning is paramount to the college. FSCC has already begun working on this initiative because of its relevance to student learning. By focusing the quality initiative on assessment of student learning, the college will continue to work towards attaining its mission, vision, and strategic goals.

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

This initiative will make assessment more robust by closing the assessment loop while helping us engage in the holistic process of the ongoing assessment of student learning. It will allow us to further meet the mission and vision of Fort Scott Community College by directly addressing tactics of the goals two and three of the strategic plan. Tactic 2.3.1 of the strategic plan states that the institution will “Utilize the assessment process to increase teaching effectiveness.” This leads to greater focus on teaching and learning allowing the college to maximize all efforts and processes to support students. Tactic 2.1.4 notes that “Regular modification and updates to the assessment website to reflect current information and findings” allows the college to be transparent and accountable to all stakeholders.

Core criterion 4.B. was met with concerns during FSCC’s year four review in the Open Pathway. A holistic plan was being implemented; however, it was limited and did not address the institutions assessment as a whole. The holistic plan is crucial to student learning, specifically their overall experience and success at FSCC. As past assessment efforts focused on course level outcomes, the overall experience was not considered, yet students’ experiences include much more than the learning which occurs at only the course level. The development of a holistic assessment plan is absolutely necessary, and the quality initiative will allow FSCC to institutionalize the plan to strengthen student learning for the future. This plan provides a structure for the entire assessment process and acts as a guide for assessment techniques and procedures at FSCC. The plan describes the process, measures, data collection methods, reporting tools, and documents as well as how evidence is utilized for college-wide assessment and planning.

The holistic assessment plan will have many benefits to the institution. The initiative will cultivate quality enhancements for education and learning by empowering instructors to map course level assessments with the program level outcomes and then to general educational outcomes and institutional level outcomes. Instructors will be able to use these assessments to identify and address the gaps in learning.

Closing the assessment process loop allows instructors to make decisions to improve curriculum and instructional techniques to better meet learning outcomes for students. For example, strengthening the assessment process at the course level will correlate to the program, general education, and institutional outcomes being strengthened as well. The assessment plan will allow instructors to determine how the correlation of different outcomes can lead to the overall success of students.

Approaching assessment holistically at FSCC includes identifying and implementing a co-curricular plan. FSCC defines co-curricular as “learning outside of the curriculum.” Our co-curricular plan is guided by three objectives: academic support, campus and community engagement, and personal growth and leadership. The co-curricular outcomes of the assessment plan address areas of the mission, which involves meeting student needs and maintaining a mutually supportive relationship with the communities FSCC serves. Some of the co-curricular programs directly assist students with their academic work, while others give them a chance to learn valuable life skills, and all of the co-curricular outcomes enhance the collegiate experience while mapping to the institutional outcomes.

Ultimately, the holistic assessment plan at FSCC will encourage students, instructors, and other stakeholders to focus on FSCC’s vision and mission for the future. The plan will increase the accountability of the institution and demonstrate meaningful student learning. The assessment process will continuously evolve and improve to meet student, stakeholder, and institutional goals.

## **Clarity of the Initiative’s Purpose**

### **4. Describe the purposes and goals for the initiative.**

The overarching goal for the initiative is to create a college-wide assessment plan to ensure continuous quality improvement throughout the institution for the betterment of student learning. FSCC’s mission, vision, and strategic plan all reflect the importance of assessment on student learning, and our holistic approach to assessment will ensure the college is striving to reach benchmarks.

The primary purpose of the quality initiative is to continue to create processes, procedures, and expectations that support continuous improvement of assessment practices at various levels. This includes course, program, general education, institutional, and co-curricular outcomes, which involves mapping course to program outcomes, reporting across all programs, and adjusting both curricular and co-curricular programs to improve student learning based on trend data.

The proposed initiative will strengthen the institution’s assessment practices by implementing evidence-based practices thereby advancing students’ overall educational experience. As part of the holistic assessment plan, the college plans to accomplish the following goals:

- Continue to update assessment practices.
- Continue to provide support and resources for designing and implementing effective assessment cycles.
- Complete curriculum mapping.
- Continue to implement co-curricular assessment.
- Integrate assessment data into program review to drive curriculum changes.

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

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|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advising              | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Retention                   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assessment | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Environment       | <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Planning          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civic Engagement      | <input type="checkbox"/> Online Learning            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Student Learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum            | <input type="checkbox"/> Persistence and Completion | <input 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 type="checkbox"/> Other:                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Education     |   |  |

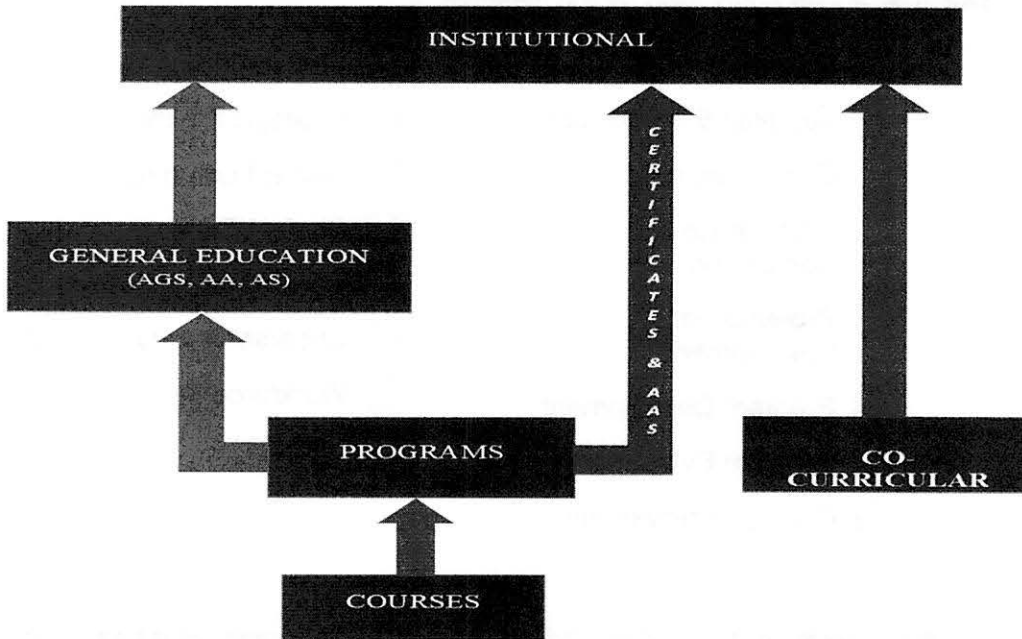
6. Describe how the institution will evaluate progress, make adjustments and determine what has been accomplished.

In developing our assessment processes, Fort Scott Community College (FSCC) has realized that our comprehensive plan must include the ability to adjust based on our progress. As the plan was created and revised, there have been several steps created to allow the institution to evaluate the progress and close the assessment loop.

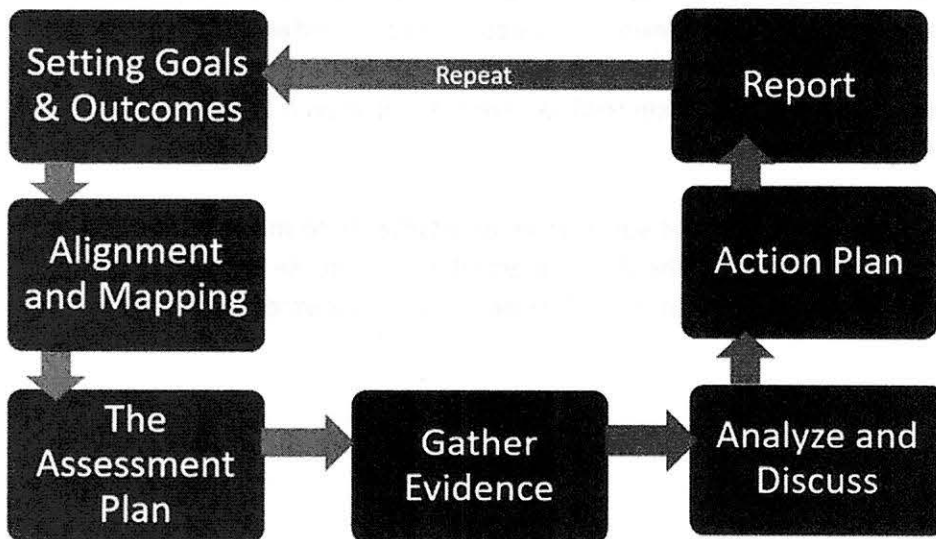
The annual assessment calendar was created based on input from faculty and staff on the assessment committee to assist with data reporting. The calendar outlines the responsibilities of faculty, division chairs, and the associate dean that works with assessment. Included on the calendar are dates for the data to be submitted, data to be reported back out to faculty, and dates for discussing the results at the department level. The calendar serves as an information tool for everyone involved and encourages continuous participation at each stage of assessment.

Starting at the course level, faculty uses formative and summative assessments to monitor and guide student learning throughout an academic program. The data collected at the course level provides information for program, general education, and Institutional student learning outcomes (as shown in the levels of assessment below).

#### Levels of Assessment



The assessment process at FSCC is designed as a continuous loop of assessment to help programs identify, understand, and address challenges. The process enables each program to evaluate its progress while identifying and implementing meaningful strategies. FSCC continues to collect and review assessment data annually to allow for adjustments to ensure we have a holistic assessment plan in place. The assessment cycle is shown below:





The assessment committee works in conjunction with the institutional and the co-curricular subcommittees to facilitate implementation of the holistic assessment plan. These committees serve as a resource for faculty, academic, and non-academic programs to assist with ongoing assessment practices on campus. The assessment committee creates the schedule and reviews the guidelines, policies, and template/forms to achieve the holistic assessment plan. A calendar is in place for timely reporting. The co-curricular subcommittee continuously evaluates the outcomes, benchmarks, and measures with input from co-curricular programs. The institutional outcomes subcommittee examines the institutional learning outcomes data focused on improving institutional quality and student success. The assessment committee evaluates results to determine if benchmarks have been adequately met. Action plans are developed when necessary for unmet benchmarks.

The co-curricular subcommittee will continue to work with the co-curricular program leaders to make the necessary modifications based on the evidence. Similar to the co-curricular subcommittee, the institutional outcomes subcommittee will continue to evaluate the current institutional outcomes to ensure that they are easy for students to understand, align with the mission and vision of the college, and have a quantifiable way of being measured. The subcommittees will provide monthly reports and recommendations to the assessment committee to ensure the institutional and co-curricular outcomes meet the goals of the institution's holistic assessment plan.

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

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

FSCC has highlighted the processes, procedures, and expectations needed to support creating college wide assessment practices with both our internal and external stakeholders. Our continued assessment activities and the assessment process and procedures are detailed under the academics tab on our website; <https://www.fortscott.edu/Assessment>, which is accessible to all stakeholders.

The Board of Trustees supports the focus on college wide assessment with approval of funding for the position of Associate Dean of Instruction and Institutional Effectiveness, whose office coordinates faculty assessment processes and funding for participation in the HLC Assessment Academy. The Board of Trustees is apprised of our continued focus on assessment practices through board presentations, updates, and information provided at board retreats.

The development of our comprehensive assessment plan is led and supported by faculty who strive to ensure all students acquire competence from their experiences in curricular, co-curricular and non-curricular programs. The FSCC Assessment Committee includes faculty from all department/programs, staff, and administrators tasked with developing and maintaining the ongoing cycle of assessment processes, procedures, and expectations supporting continuous improvement of assessment practices at all levels.

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

#### **FSCC Open Pathways Committee:**

- Alysia Johnston – President
- Vice President of Academic Affairs- Open Position
- Tom Havron – Vice President of Students and Foundation Director
- Sonia Gugnani - Associate Dean of Instruction and Institutional Effectiveness
- Susie Arvidson - Director of Library Services, Phi Theta Kappa Sponsor
- Marlene Braker - Accounting Clerk
- Ashley Keylon - Director of Advising/Retention
- Troy McCloughan - English Instructor
- Courtney Metcalf - Registrar and International Student Coordinator
- Jacob Reichard - Director of Institutional Research/Perkin's Grant Coordinator
- Sara Sutton - Agriculture Division Chairperson, Agriculture Instructor, Meats Judging Coach

FSCC Assessment Committee:

- Chair
  - Susie Arvidson - Director of Library Services, Phi Theta Kappa Sponsor
- Voting Members
  - Sara Sutton – Agriculture Division Chairperson, Agriculture Instructor, Meats Judging Coach
  - Kevin Thomure – Business and Social Science Division Chairperson, History Instructor
  - Savanna Ashmore - Math Instructor
  - Rachel Stauffer - Biology Instructor
  - Vanessa Poyner - Criminal Justice Instructor
  - Ashley Page - Communications Instructor
  - Maria Bahr - Fine Arts and Humanities Division Chairperson, English and Literature Instructor
  - Vickie Laderer - Allied Health Director
- Non-Voting Members
  - Vice President of Academic Affairs- Open Position
  - Sonia Gugnani - Associate Dean of Instruction and Institutional Effectiveness
  - Jacob Reichard - Director of Institutional Research/Perkin's Grant Coordinator

All FSCC Faculty

All FSCC Adjunct Faculty

Select FSCC Co-Curricular Program/Activity Leaders

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

Fort Scott Community College has identified individuals from various levels of the organization to lead and implement this initiative. These individuals make up FSCC's Open Pathways Committee and Assessment Committee and include employees from administration, faculty, and staff (See Question 8). Those working on this initiative serve as members of the designated committee continually. The Open Pathways Committee consists of individuals selected because of their role at FSCC and their tie to this

specific initiative. The Chair of the Assessment Committee must be a faculty member, and the voting members are made up of division chairs and instructors chosen specifically for this initiative. The non-voting members of the committee are the Vice President of Academic Affairs, Associate Dean of Instruction and Institutional Effectiveness, and Director of Institutional Research. Non-voting members are permanent, as this duty coincides directly with their regular job responsibilities at FSCC.

Since the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Associate Dean of Instruction and Institutional Effectiveness are responsible for oversight of assessment and accreditation, necessary funds for this initiative have been budgeted for and allocated to the instruction office. The college is committed to providing the necessary financial resources for this project including sending seven of the eleven Open Pathway Committee members to HLC's 2023 annual conference.

Currently, FSCC is utilizing Taskstream by Watermark for outcomes assessment and reporting. Enhanced Academic Computing (EAC) Visual Data is also being used to enhance the statistics and analysis received through Blackboard Assessment. FSCC does not anticipate the need for new technological resources; however, if future technological needs arise, the institution plans to support those needs financially. The college is committed to completing this initiative. Proof of commitment is seen in FSCC's dedication to providing the necessary human, financial, and technological resources necessary for success.

### **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.**

FSCC is developing a comprehensive assessment plan that outlines assessment procedures for courses, programs, institutions, and co-curricular activities. Faculty and staff are actively involved in the process of assessing the learning outcomes of students. While regularly updating the assessment process, FSCC is making great advancements toward the entire assessment plan.

As part of the assessment plan, FSCC will put into action efficient ways for enhancing student learning by reviewing findings for all outcomes and documenting the ongoing process, beginning at the institutional level. The college will continue to collect data for Academic Success and Social Responsibility and develop an action plan during academic year 2023-24. To better meet the needs of our students, the Capstone course is currently being revised as part of the strategic plan. The survey designed to measure students' perceptions of social responsibility is being finalized by the subcommittee and will be ready for pilot in the Capstone course in fall 2023. After examining the survey's findings, any necessary changes will be made, and the social responsibility survey will be used in additional courses.

In 2018, the institution began gathering data for general education outcomes in the area of mathematical, communication skills, and critical thinking skills. The data was collected and reviewed for two years for all three outcomes before a new plan was finalized for assessing communication skills in fall 2021. The plan for assessing technology and communication skills was implemented in academic year 2021-22. The assessment committee will continue to collect data on all general education

outcomes and reevaluate the methods for assessing mathematical and critical thinking skills in 2023-24. In addition, we will create action plans to address any unmet outcomes.

Prior to the creation of the formal co-curricular plan, co-curricular programs identified in phase one were reporting events held throughout the year. In September 2022, the updated co-curricular plan went into effect. As part of the plan, the subcommittee developed co-curricular objectives and is assisting programs in creating measurable outcomes, gathering information, and reporting results. In the fall of 2023, all phase one programs will have finished collecting data. In spring of 2024, programs will analyze the data and recalibrate the assessment plan. During the academic year 2024–2025, the plans for the programs in phase two will be developed and put into action.

### **Institutional Contact for Quality Initiative Proposal**

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

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