

Open Pathway Quality Initiative Report

Institutional Template

The institution uses the template below to complete its Quality Initiative Report. The institution may include a report it has prepared for other purposes if it addresses many of the questions below and replaces portions of the narrative in the template. This template may be used both for reports on initiatives that have been completed and for initiatives that will continue and for which this report serves as a milestone of accomplishments thus far. **The report should be no more than 6,000 words.**

Submission Instructions

The report must be submitted by June 1 of Year 9.

Submit the report as a PDF file at hlcommission.org/upload. Select “Pathways/Quality Initiatives” from the list of submission options to ensure the institution’s materials are sent to the correct HLC staff member. The file name of the report should follow this format: QIReport[InstitutionName] [State].pdf (e.g., QIProposalNoNameUniversityMN.pdf). The file name must include the institution’s name (or an identifiable portion thereof) and state.

Date:

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The enclosed Quality Initiative Report represents the work that the institution has undertaken to fulfill the quality improvement requirements of the Open Pathway.

Signature of Institution’s President or Chancellor

Date

Sara Sutton, Interim President

Printed/Typed Name and Title

Fort Scott Community College

Name of Institution

Fort Scott, KS

City and State

Report Categories

Overview of the Quality Initiative

1. Provide a one-page executive summary that describes the Quality Initiative, summarizes what was accomplished and explains any changes made to the initiative over the time period.

Fort Scott Community College (FSCC) has significantly evolved its assessment efforts as part of the Quality Initiative. Prior to 2020, the focus was primarily on course-level assessment. Since then, FSCC has embraced a comprehensive assessment process aimed at fostering college-wide improvement and continuous quality enhancement. This shift expanded the scope of assessment beyond the courses to include degrees and certificates.

The comprehensive process involves collecting data at multiple levels: course, program, general education, institutional, and co-curricular and implementing action plans based on trend data. Other components of this initiative include curriculum mapping and aligning courses with program outcomes, which require faculty to critically evaluate the tools used for measuring student learning. The plan also integrates assessment for dual credit and adjunct instruction, ensuring consistency across all delivery methods.

FSCC's holistic assessment plan encompasses historical data, benchmarks, timelines, and methodologies for reporting, creating a structured framework to inform improvements in student learning. A timeline (appendix A) was created to guide the implementation of the holistic assessment plan. Additionally, the use of the Noel Levitz survey provides valuable insights into student satisfaction, capturing a comprehensive view of the student experience. The data from this survey, combined with assessment results, help identify areas of improvement and propel decisions that are aligned with institutional goals.

Assessment is a faculty-led process that operates under the direction of the Assessment Committee. Faculty and staff actively participate in Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) meetings to stay current on general education outcomes and ensure alignment with statewide standards. To increase faculty involvement, the assessment committee has been expanded to include representation from all departments, alongside a designated assessment coordinator. Faculty receive comprehensive training during in-service sessions or departmental meetings, led by the assessment coordinator, to support the completion of mid-cycle and summative assessment reports. Adjunct and concurrent faculty receive dedicated training and support to review and analyze assessment data.

Scope and Impact of the Initiative

2. Explain in more detail what was accomplished in the Quality Initiative in relation to its purposes and goals. (If applicable, explain the initiative's hypotheses and findings.)

Fort Scott Community College developed a holistic assessment plan to help establish a structured and comprehensive approach to assessment. The Assessment Committee consisting of faculty from different departments was created to guide the process of assessment. As part of the institution-wide initiative, measurable learning outcomes were developed at the course, program, institutional, and co-curricular levels. These outcomes are assessed to evaluate student learning and inform programmatic improvements.

The faculty is actively engaged in creating assessment plans for their departments. It involves aligning course-level outcomes (CLOs) with program learning outcomes (PLOs), developing rubrics for consistent assessment, and systematically collecting and analyzing data within Blackboard. This alignment process ensures that data collected at the course level flows directly to program-level assessments including general education learning outcomes leading to accurate reporting, meaningful analysis, and continuous improvement across FSCC programs.

Every semester, faculty collects data for the course learning outcomes and completes a formative assessment report at the end of each year and summative report after a four-semester assessment cycle. Designated assessment days are allocated every semester for faculty to work on data collection and analysis. During these sessions, departments collaborate to analyze data and use it to guide decisions about course content, instructional strategies, and departmental curriculum. Faculty work together within their departments to complete assessment reports, which are stored in organization sites within Blackboard and are accessed for future reference.

In addition to course and program learning outcomes, FSCC has created general education, institutional, and co-curricular outcomes. Two subcommittees, Institutional and Co-Curricular, are responsible for collecting and presenting data on institutional and co-curricular outcomes, respectively, to the Assessment Committee. The Assessment Committee evaluates general education outcomes and develops action plans for continuous improvement.

Through this initiative, FSCC successfully implemented the holistic assessment plan. The addition of an assessment coordinator, a diverse committee, centralized reporting, and designated collaboration days built into the calendar has significantly strengthened the process. These elements ensure that all aspects of assessment are interconnected, creating a cohesive system to effectively "close the loop" and continuously enhance teaching and learning.

3. Evaluate the impact of the initiative, including any changes in processes, policies, technology, curricula, programs, student learning and success that are now in place in consequence of the initiative.

FSCC recognizes that the impact of assessment is vast, leading to a more structured and collaborative approach. By developing a holistic assessment plan, the institution ensures alignment across courses, programs, and institutional learning outcomes. Faculty and staff play a crucial role in this structured process, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and student success.

Every academic department now operates under a clearly defined assessment plan, facilitating course alignment with program and institutional learning outcomes. Faculty within each department collaborate to develop assessment plans that outline key processes, measures, data collection methods, reporting tools, and documentation. These plans ensure that evidence is effectively utilized to support college-wide assessment and strategic planning. Faculty remain actively engaged in implementing assessment tools, refining learning strategies, and enhancing student learning outcomes. Regular departmental meetings provide a space for faculty and department chairs to analyze assessment data from previous academic years, enabling them to discuss instructional strategies and implement formative assessments to enhance student learning. At the end of the four-semester assessment cycle, faculty conduct a summative evaluation of student performance data and develop an action plan for programmatic changes.

To further support these efforts, curriculum mapping templates are utilized to help faculty align individual courses with program learning objectives. Additionally, an assessment calendar has been established to define roles, responsibilities, and deadlines, promoting consistency and accountability. A designated assessment day at the end of each semester provides faculty dedicated time to review assessments and analyze trend data, leading to more informed decision-making and refined assessment schedules.

New faculty members undergo onboarding sessions that cover assessment practices, including assessment design, active learning strategies, and the use of Blackboard. Assessment data is also integrated into the program review process to evaluate program strengths, identify gaps, and develop actionable improvement plans for student learning.

To ensure transparency and accessibility, FSCC has launched an assessment webpage displaying assessment results. Regular updates and modifications to this website provide stakeholders with current information, reinforcing the college's commitment to accountability and continuous improvement.

4. Explain any tools, data or other information that resulted from the work of the initiative.

The improvements in reporting across all programs as part of the institution-wide assessment practices was the result of this initiative. A significant step in this process was the creation of the Assessment Coordinator position, which provides faculty with dedicated support in developing and implementing effective assessment strategies efficiently. Additionally, the Capstone course was revised to collect evidence of the student learning experience, enabling faculty to evaluate general learning outcomes more comprehensively. One significant insight gained from assessment data was the need to reassess student engagement in communication and technology skills, gathered from the Capstone course assessment data, particularly regarding performance on activities that students found less meaningful. Furthermore, we are collecting comparative course work data for all general education outcomes.

A major challenge faced by FSCC was the lack of a centralized location for housing assessment data, making it difficult to access and analyze data from previous years. To address this issue, the college invested in a learning management system for assessment and established organization sites in Blackboard, serving as centralized repositories for program data, results, action plans, and co-curricular assessments. This streamlined data accessibility, ensuring faculty and administrators could efficiently track student progress and program effectiveness.

In addition to these improvements, FSCC is in the process of implementing J1, a student information system designed to create efficiency and streamline processes for both students and employees. The degree audit feature will improve students' ability in selecting courses aligned with their academic goals while allowing them to track the status of their degree requirements. Furthermore, the Jenzabar Retention module will enable student support staff to customize retention efforts to the college's unique student body. With access to relevant information across departments, faculty and staff will be better equipped to provide comprehensive support, ultimately fostering student success through proactive prevention, enhanced risk assessment, and targeted interventions. These strategic initiatives reflect FSCC's commitment to continuous improvement and student achievement.

5. Describe the biggest challenges and opportunities encountered in implementing the initiative.

The implementation and commitment to the quality initiative presented both challenges and opportunities for Fort Scott Community College's continued growth and improvement. One of the most significant challenges was securing faculty buy-in for assessment initiatives. Many employees believed that the college's historical methods of assessment at the course level were sufficient and questioned the need for additional evaluation at programmatic, institutional, and co-curricular levels. This additional level of assessment appeared to add even more burden to the already full workload of employees, not to mention the time required to train and address the concerns of employees. Moreover, FSCC's commitment to applying assessment practices across all formats including face-to-face, online, hybrid, and concurrent courses posed challenges. Training instructors across different modalities required significant time and resources. Finally, the change in administration during the implementation of the initiative added further complexities. Despite these obstacles, FSCC leveraged these challenges as opportunities to redefine its assessment practices and foster a culture of continuous improvement.

As Fort Scott Community College discovered, though challenges may seem like obstacles, they offer opportunities for growth and transformation. The Quality Initiative Proposal provided a framework to address gaps in the college's holistic assessment plan. This plan is the result of coordinated efforts led by the assessment committee, which recognized the need for assessment at various levels while prioritizing employee engagement to avoid overwhelming workloads. Faculty members from various departments serve on the committee for two-year terms, rotating off to allow others the opportunity to develop expertise and contribute to the college's continuous improvement efforts. Together, they have worked closely with academic and CTE faculty to establish measurable program learning outcomes including aligning course-level outcomes to PLOs, designing effective rubrics, and implementing a systematic approach to data collection using Blackboard. To streamline this process, FSCC uses EAC visual data analytics program, an embedded reporting tool, which has significantly simplified the process of data collection by generating comprehensive course and program learning outcome reports, ensuring consistency and transparency in the assessment process.

Beyond course and program level evaluations, FSCC expanded its focus to include general education, institutional, and co-curricular outcomes. By mapping and demonstrating the connections between various levels of assessments, employees gained a clear understanding of how individual courses and programs align with and support broader institutional goals and the college's mission. To further strengthen these efforts, FSCC created a dedicated Assessment Coordinator position, represented by faculty. The coordinator provides direct support to employees by assisting with creating rubrics, mapping outcomes, running reports, and the timely completion of assessment reports. Additionally, the Assessment Committee continues to offer resources and ongoing training to ensure employees are familiar with best practices in assessment. With enhanced support from the assessment coordinator and the assessment committee, the employees have embraced the initiative, leading to collaborative efforts within departments and committees to address assessment challenges. This comprehensive and inclusive approach has fostered greater employee understanding, support, and endorsement of FSCC's assessments and Quality Initiative.

The implementation of the Quality Initiative Proposal has resulted in both immediate and long-term benefits for FSCC. The college empowered its faculty and staff to take ownership of the assessment process by providing sufficient support, training, and resources. It has enhanced transparency, increased faculty and staff engagement, and solidified a culture of accountability.

Commitment to and Engagement in the Quality Initiative

6. Describe the individuals and groups involved at stages throughout the initiative and their perceptions of its worth and impact.

Throughout the initiative, a diverse range of individuals and groups have been involved at various stages, each contributing to its progress and success. From the beginning, leadership including administrators and the Assessment Committee played a pivotal role in providing the vision and direction for the initiative. Recognizing the importance of a holistic assessment plan, they prioritized the development of a structure to address gaps in assessment across all levels of the institution. The Assessment Committee, comprised of faculty from different disciplines, acted as the primary driver of the initiative. Division chairs, who also served on the assessment committee, were strategically positioned to provide ongoing support for faculty within their respective departments, ensuring consistent engagement and guidance throughout the implementation process. An assessment coordinator was assigned to act as a liaison between the Assessment Committee and the faculty and staff. The coordinator played a dual role, providing practical, hands-on assistance to those conducting assessments and facilitating understanding of the initiative's holistic vision.

The assessment committee members perceived their role as an opportunity to improve assessment practices across the college. While the majority of them were concerned about the complexities of developing a comprehensive plan, their involvement allowed them to see firsthand the benefits of aligning course and program outcomes with general education and institutional goals. The Assessment Coordinator actions were crucial in garnering support of not only faculty, but also adjunct instructors and concurrent instructors as part of the college wide assessment plan. The coordinator provided hands-on assistance to those conducting the assessment while training for future assessment cycles.

Faculty, including full-time, adjunct, and concurrent instructors, are responsible for conducting assessments, aligning course-level outcomes with program and institutional outcomes, and contributing to data collection. At first, many faculty members were resistant, questioning the necessity of moving beyond course-level assessments and expressing concerns about the additional workload. Over time, with support from the Assessment Committee and the Assessment Coordinator, faculty began to see the value of the initiative. The clear visualization of how their efforts contributed to improving student learning at program, general education, and institutional level fostered a greater sense of ownership and understanding of the initiative's worth.

Co-curricular programs played a significant role in the holistic assessment plan. A subcommittee of co-curricular program leaders met monthly to refine tools, establish outcomes and benchmarks, and report progress. Assessment Committee representatives guided co-curricular programs in identifying meaningful outcomes, setting benchmarks, and designing effective assessment methods. These efforts were subsequently reviewed by the Assessment Committee to ensure alignment with the college's goals.

In the beginning, perceptions of the initiative varied widely, with some viewing it as a requirement from administration, and others as an opportunity for meaningful institutional improvement. As the initiative has progressed and demonstrated its ability to align assessment practices with the college mission, perceptions have begun to shift. Faculty and staff involved have started to see the initiative as a critical tool for improving student learning, fostering collaboration, and ensuring FSCC's long-term success.

7. Describe the most important points learned by those involved in the initiative.

FSCC has made a commitment to support student learning through continuous quality improvement and data driven decision making. Choosing college-wide assessment as part of the initiative has enhanced faculty's understanding of the value of assessment in improving both teaching and student success. By engaging in the assessment process, faculty have gained insights into how systematic evaluation of learning outcomes can inform instructional strategies, identify areas for improvement, and ultimately create a more effective and supportive learning environment for students.

One of the most significant outcomes of FSCC's assessment efforts has been the increased collaboration among instructors. Faculty engage in key discussions about course learning outcomes (CLOs) and program learning outcomes (PLOs), examining how these outcomes are taught and measured. In addition, data collected overtime helps with identifying areas of weaker student performance, allowing faculty to prioritize specific CLOs and PLOs that need attention.

Overtime, the focus of assessment has shifted from being a compliance-driven activity to a meaningful practice. The faculty has started to recognize the value of assessment as an essential tool for evaluating teaching effectiveness and improving student outcomes. Assessment is always at the forefront when planning classroom activities, instruction and curriculum development. Data gathered from assessments provides valuable insights into students' preparedness and helps determine whether learning outcomes are being met, particularly in sequential courses.

Resource Provision

8. Explain the human, financial, physical and technological resources that supported the initiative.

Assessment coordinator- The college committed financial and human resources by creating the faculty-led FSCC Assessment Coordinator position to streamline the assessment process. The Assessment Coordinator assists faculty in developing and implementing course outcomes rubrics aligned to program learning outcomes. Also, the Assessment Coordinator assists faculty in blueprinting exams to both CLOs and PLOs, so that assessment reports provide holistic data sets. The Assessment Coordinator works closely with the Vice-President of Academic Affairs, Assessment Committee, Academic Affairs, Curriculum Committee, and faculty to coordinate the college-wide assessment process for both academic, as well as career and technical education programs. The Assessment Coordinator teaches assessed courses to have a better understanding of the assessment process.

Director of Institutional Research- The Director of IR plays a key role in providing assessment data at the institutional level and more. The college has committed funding and personnel to purchase and implement an updated student information system (SIS) to inform and empower student success. This new SIS will be implemented during the summer of 2025 and will assist the Director of IR in providing key assessment data to inform faculty and instructional staff for program improvement and improved student outcomes.

EAC Visual Data- EAC Visual Data is a data analytics program used by the faculty, VPAA, and Assessment Coordinator to generate and analyze assessment data reports to inform course and program level assessments. The data is presented in graphs, reflecting both PLOs and CLOs per department. The reports are invaluable in providing aggregated PLO and disaggregated CLO data, so that instructors can measure student performance against the benchmark, identify student outcomes needing improvement, and narrate on student performance during the assessment cycle. Instructors can then develop action plans, implement those plans, and reassess outcomes to close the assessment loop. The data can also

empower instructors in assessing the efficacy of current Program Learning Outcomes for student achievement.

Division Chairs- Division Chairs play a key role in overseeing their divisional assessment process. They assist instructors in their division by acting as a resource, mentoring and providing assistance to instructors as they analyze assessment reports, identify outcomes for improvement, draft action plans, and draft narratives.

Institutional Effectiveness Support- The college has provided the resources for an Institutional Effectiveness position. This position focuses on analyzing processes and programs related to program reviews for continuous improvement to support the college's mission. The Institutional Effectiveness personnel work with both the Assessment Coordinator and Vice President of Academic Affairs to analyze program level data and processes to make data-informed decisions for improvement.

Assessment Workshops- Assessment workshops are presented by Assessment Committee members usually during in-service to inform faculty and other stakeholders on the assessment process. The workshops provide training in current assessment best practices and also provide training in using Blackboard rubrics and test blueprinting features for assessment data input.

HLC conference- FSCC assessment stakeholders and the FSCC assessment process have benefited from both in-person and virtual HLC Conference training. In 2016, Assessment Committee members and administrators attended an HLC Assessment Workshop in Chicago, IL, where they developed an assessment timeline to guide assessment improvement processes. Since then, faculty and staff have regularly participated in the annual HLC conference, as well as virtual assessment conferences and training. The conferences have provided invaluable information into best practices, enabling the committee to develop an effective, sustainable, and holistic assessment plan.

Plans for the Future (or Future Milestones of a Continuing Initiative)

9. Describe plans for ongoing work related to or as a result of the initiative.

As FSCC continues to refine its assessment practices, several key future milestones will be achieved to enhance student learning, institutional effectiveness, and overall program success.

- Continue utilizing assessment cycles to implement programmatic changes based on evidence, ensuring continuous academic growth.
- Fostering a culture of continuous improvement by incorporating assessment findings into program reviews, ultimately leading to stronger student outcomes and a more effective curriculum.
- Utilizing Blackboard as the centralized assessment data repository will ensure seamless access to historical data, improving trend analysis and long-term planning.
- Integrating degree audits to help provide clearer academic pathways, offering a more efficient and intuitive system for course selection and academic planning.
- Implementing Jenzabar Retention module to enhance student support services by enabling personalized interventions based on real-time risk assessment, improving retention and graduation rates.
- Implementing the practice of Academic Affairs Committee evaluating program reviews.

10. Describe any practices or artifacts from the initiative that other institutions might find meaningful or useful and please indicate if you would be willing to share this information.

One practice that became imperative to the initiative was the use of the Blackboard Learning Management System for assessment practices. Blackboard has played a vital role in not only generating program

learning reports but also serving as a centralized repository for storing assessment data. Over time, its use has expanded to house department, general education, co-curricular, and institutional assessment data, ensuring streamlined access and organization of critical assessment materials.

Two key tools have been instrumental in maintaining an organized and efficient assessment process:

- **Assessment Calendar:** Faculty, division chairs, and the instruction office utilize the Assessment Calendar as a structured reminder of assessment responsibilities and deadlines for the academic year. This calendar is distributed to each department and housed in each Blackboard organization site, ensuring accessibility and consistent reference throughout the year.
- **End-of-Year Assessment Day Checklist:** The End-of-Year Assessment Day Checklist serves as a structured guide for faculty on Assessment Day, held at the end of each academic year. This checklist ensures that faculty complete necessary assessment-related tasks, review collected data and prepare for future improvements based on their findings.

Through these initiatives, FSCC continues to enhance its assessment processes, strengthen academic programs, and prioritize student success.

Appendix A

	Assessment Timeline
2016	Attended HLC Assessment Conference in Chicago, IL; FSCC team identified resources for and obstacles to assessment and created 8-year timeline.
2017	Assessment professional development/training session led by assessment committee with all faculty on assessment best practices and review of Bloom's Taxonomy. Breakout sessions with assessment committee members working with faculty groups to begin establishing measurable course and program learning outcomes, institutional outcomes, as well as benchmarks.
2018	The college began data collection for general education outcomes on mathematical, communication, and critical thinking skills. Continued developing measurable academic and CTEC course and program learning outcomes with mapping/alignments. Worked to establish common assessment terminology.
2019	Ongoing process of developing benchmarks for course and program outcomes. Started collecting and storing data in a centralized location.
2020	Developed assessment presence publicly on the FSCC Assessment web page. Revised the program review process to begin integrating assessment data and narrative into program review to develop action plans and inform curriculum changes.
2021	Created an Institutional Subcommittee to work on identifying and assessing institutional outcomes. Revised general education outcomes and the plan for assessing technology and communication skills (General Education Outcomes). Established "assessment days" in the calendar for departments/programs to analyze and use data for improved SLOs and PLOs. Created program reporting form (summative assessment). Co-curricular assessment subcommittee created to work on co-curricular assessment.
2022	Developed, educated and provided training to faculty on best assessment practices including assessment mentoring checklist and slide deck for onboarding new faculty to the assessment process, mid cycle assessment templates and program outcomes assessment Report; set assessment cycle at 4 semesters to allow for anomalies. Developed assessment calendar detailing monthly assessment tasks for faculty, Division Chairs, and Associate Deans and created a year-end assessment checklist.

	Piloted the assessment plan for technology and communication skills by utilizing common rubrics and establishing interrater reliability. Initiated the use of EAC Visual Data tool for collecting, aggregating, analyzing, and reporting assessment data for course and program level outcomes. Collected and reported on Institutional outcomes. Collected and reported on Co-curricular programs: Library and PTK. Submitted the quality initiative proposal focused on assessment.
2023	Continue to utilize EAC Visual Data tool for collecting, aggregating, analyzing, and reporting assessment data. Created Organization Sites in Blackboard to house course, program and Co-curricular data. General Education outcomes are published in the catalog. Appointed a faculty member as an Assessment Coordinator. Collected and reported on Co-curricular programs: Library, TRiO, Advising, Student Success Center (SSC) and PTK.
2024	Complete curriculum mapping. Submit quality initiative report focused on assessment. Continue to engage in better assessment practices.
2025	Continue to update assessment practices. Identify and address the gaps in the assessment process. Continue to utilize assessment data for informing curriculum changes and integrating in program reviews.