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June 20, 2024

Dr. Lori Gonzalez  
President  
Ohio University  
Cutler Hall  
Athens, Ohio 45701

Dear President Gonzalez,

This letter is accompanied by the Quality Initiative Report (QIR) Review form completed by a peer review panel. Ohio University's QIR showed genuine effort and has been accepted by the Commission. The attached reviewer evaluation contains a rationale for this outcome.

Peer reviewers evaluate all the QIRs based on the genuine effort of the institution, the seriousness of the undertaking, the significance of scope and impact of the work, the genuineness of the commitment to the initiative, and adequate resource provision.

If you have questions about the QIR reviewer information, please contact either Kathy Bijak ([kbijak@hlcommission.org](mailto:kbijak@hlcommission.org)) or Pat Newton-Curran ([pnewton@hlcommission.org](mailto:pnewton@hlcommission.org)).

***Higher Learning Commission***

## Open Pathway Quality Initiative Report

### Panel Review and Recommendation Form

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#### *Review Process*

The Quality Initiative panel review process evaluates the institution's effort in undertaking the Quality Initiative Proposal approved by HLC. The Quality Initiative process encourages institutions to take risks, innovate, take on a tough challenge, or pursue a yet unproven strategy or hypothesis. Thus, failure of an initiative to achieve its goals is acceptable. An institution may learn much from such failure. What is not acceptable is failure of the institution to pursue the initiative with genuine effort. Genuineness of effort, not success of the initiative, constitutes the focus of the Quality Initiative review and serves as its sole point of evaluation.

#### *Submission Instructions*

Submit the final report as a Word document to HLC at [hlcommission.org/upload](https://hlcommission.org/upload). Select "Pathways/Quality Initiatives" from the list of submission options to ensure the report is sent to the correct HLC staff member. The file name for the report should follow this format: QI Report Review <Name of Institution>.

**Name of Institution:** Ohio University

**State:** Ohio

**Institutional ID:** 1589

**Reviewers (names, titles, institutions):** Dr. Michelle Malott, Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Indiana University East

Dr. Irene Kovala, Maricopa Community College District, Glendale Community College, Glendale, Arizona

**Date:** June 17, 2024

### I. Quality Initiative Review

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- The institution demonstrated its seriousness of the undertaking.
- The institution demonstrated that the initiative had scope and impact.
- The institution demonstrated a commitment to and engagement in the initiative.

The institution demonstrated adequate resource provision.

## II. Recommendation

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The panel confirms genuine effort on the part of the institution.

The panel cannot confirm genuine effort on the part of the institution.

## III. Rationale (required)

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Ohio University's commitment and genuine effort towards their Quality Initiative is evident through several key aspects: the extensive scope and impact of the initiative, a demonstrated dedication to the project's success, and the allocation of resources to achieve the project's objectives.

The Ohio University's Quality Initiative, focused on the development of the OHIO Graduation Plan (OGP), as an addition to the OHIO Guarantee+ program. The report documents the substantial effort to create the OGP in an effort to enhance student success. Initiated in January 2020, the program was designed to improve educational experiences and career preparation for students through a structured plan encompassing curricular and co-curricular experiences. The initiative initially launched with a pilot involving 28 academic programs and subsequently expanded to encompass 215 programs on the Athens campus and 60 programs on other regional campuses. The comprehensive nature of this implementation demonstrates a significant institutional effort to positively impact a large student body.

The institution's commitment is further reflected in its responsive and adaptive approach throughout the project. The creation of the Center for Advising, Career, and Experiential Learning (ACE) is a example of this dedication. The ACE was established to provide continuous support for students who opt in to the OGP, while also refining processes to ensure they are effectively meeting student needs. These processes are reviewed and modified annually based on stakeholder feedback.

Ohio University also demonstrated adaptability and commitment in the face of challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the shift to remote learning and working, fluctuations in enrollment of first-time students, and a changing general education curriculum, the project did not languish. The institution re-evaluated needs and commitments as the project progressed and adjusted accordingly.

The report provided evidence of the project's impact with an steady increase in the number of students opting in to the OGP over the last three years, as well as an increase in the number of students in each cohort who have remained on schedule with their plan through successive semesters. Ohio University also believes that the increase in Fall to Fall retention of the 2022 cohort was due in part to the implementation of this program. It will be interesting to see if the 2023 cohort retention rate demonstrates a continued increase. The project also resulted in a shift in the culture of advising about holds and when advising occurs during a semester, as well as increased collaboration among academic colleges and the ACE staff to support students when they changed majors.

The success of the project is also attributable to the significant resources allocated by the institution. Key staff members, including those from the registrar's office and information technology teams, played crucial roles from the project's inception. These teams dedicated substantial time and resources to develop customized technology within the student information system, ensuring the seamless integration and functionality of the OGP. The institution also moved to a professional advising model and created

positions to oversee the OGP, such a vice provost for student success and five executive directors with the Center for Advising, Career, and Experiential Learning.

Furthermore, the involvement of faculty across academic departments was essential. Faculty members contributed to the development of specific templates for academic programs and provided continuous feedback, ensuring the OGP was effectively tailored to meet diverse student needs. The active engagement of college deans and assistant deans in providing feedback and aligning internal practices with the OGP further underscores the institution's comprehensive resource commitment.

In summary, Ohio University's extensive scope of the OHIO Graduation Plan, its demonstrated commitment through responsive adaptation and stakeholder involvement, and the provision of substantial resources collectively illustrate the genuine effort and dedication of the institution to this project. These efforts are designed to significantly enhance student success and ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the implemented strategies.