HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500
Chicago, IL 60604-1411
312.263.0456 | 800.621.7440
Fax: 312.263.7462 | hlcommission.org

October 12, 2022

Dr. Kerri Schuiling
President
Northern Michigan University
1401 Presque Isle Avenue
Marquette, Michigan 49855-5301

Dear President Schuiling:

This letter is accompanied by the Quality Initiative Proposal (QIP) Review form completed by a peer review panel. Northern Michigan University's QIP is approved.

Within the QIP Review form, you will find comments from the panel for your consideration as you proceed with your Quality Initiative. The panel reviewed the QIP for four areas:

- Sufficiency of initiative's scope and significance
- Clarity of initiative's purpose
- Evidence of commitment to and capacity for accomplishing the initiative
- Appropriateness of the timeline for the initiative

If you have questions about the panel's review, please contact either Kathy Bijak (kbijak@hlcommission.org) or Pat Newton-Curran (pnewton@hlcommission.org). For any questions about your Quality Initiative, contact Dr. Stephanie Brzuzy sbrzuzy@hlcommission.org.

The Higher Learning Commission

Open Pathway Quality Initiative Proposal Review Form

Date of Review: 10/10/22

Name of Institution: Northern Michigan University State: MI

Institutional ID: 1354

Reviewers (names, titles, institutions): Kim Jacobs-Beck, Ph.D., Professor of Engish, Assessment Coordinator, University of Cincinnati Clermont College; H Lynn Bradman, Instructor, Metropolitan Community College - Omaha

Review Categories and Findings

1. **Sufficiency of the Initiative's Scope and Significance**
    - Potential for significant impact on the institution and its academic quality.
    - Alignment with the institution's mission and vision.
    - Connection with the institution's planning processes.
    - Evidence of significance and relevance at this time.

Finding:

☒ The Quality Initiative Proposal demonstrates acceptable scope and significance.

☐ The Quality Initiative Proposal does not demonstrate acceptable scope and significance.

Rationale and Comments: (Provide 2–3 statements justifying the finding and recommending minor modifications, if applicable. Provide any comments, such as highlighting strong points, raising minor concerns or cautions, or identifying questions.)

At a time of leadership change, Northern Michigan University has implemented an interim strategic plan and will use the Quality Initiative Project to develop a new strategic planning process. Clearly, strategic planning is a comprehensive process that, if done well, involves significant contributions from all constituencies. Given the change in leadership, the board wants to provide the new president (not yet hired) with a clear strategic planning process. This process aligns with the institutions mission and goals, will aid and connect with current planning processes across the institution. Strategic planning is most significant for an institution and the project seems timely and desired as the institution move forward.

2. **Clarity of the Initiative's Purpose**
    - Clear purposes and goals reflective of the scope and significance of the initiative.
    - Defined milestones and intended goals.

- Clear processes for evaluating progress.

Finding:

☒ The Quality Initiative Proposal demonstrates clarity of purpose.

☐ The Quality Initiative Proposal does not demonstrate clarity of purpose.

Rationale and Comments:

The purpose and goals of the project are clear: to provide a new direction for the university and to offer the new president a strong guidance from the institution. The project will be completed by the end of the 2022-2023 academic year, in line with the hiring of the new president and other high-level leadership.

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

   - Commitment of senior leadership.
   - Commitment and involvement of key people and groups.
   - Sufficiency of the human, financial, technological, and other resources.
   - Defined plan for integrating the initiative into the ongoing work of the institution and sustaining its results.
   - Clear understanding of and capacity to address potential obstacles.

Finding:

☒ The Quality Initiative Proposal demonstrates evidence of commitment and capacity.

☐ The Quality Initiative Proposal does not demonstrate evidence of commitment and capacity.

Rationale and Comments:

The Board of Trustees, interim president, and other high-level administrators are driving this process. It is clear that developing a new strategic planning process has become the highest priority for the university, along with hiring of executive leadership. The plan intends to involve faculty, staff, students, local employers, and the community in the process. It is expected that senior leadership and other key people and teams (interim and beyond) will continue with the commitment toward achievement of the initiative's goals. The university has sufficient human and other resources to accomplish the tasks. Because this project utilizes a continuous improvement model, the recursive nature of it should ensure sustainability for future years/cycles.

4. **Appropriateness of the Timeline for the Initiative**

   - Consistency with intended purposes and goals.
   - Alignment with the implementation of other institutional priorities.
   - Reasonable implementation plan for the time period.

Finding:

☒ The Quality Initiative Proposal demonstrates an appropriate timeline.

☐ The Quality Initiative Proposal does not demonstrate an appropriate timeline.

Rationale and Comments:

This initiative relies on the planning and implementation of an interim strategic plan to be replaced by a full strategic plan which will be in place with new senior administration and ongoing priorities and institutional mission and vision. The process is supported by the Board of Governors, Vice Presidents and Provost, Institutional Effectiveness, and is highly integrative in that many stakeholders have been and are currently involved in the process. The timeline is appropriate to the university's need to hire a new president. though it may be rushed because of that self-imposed deadline. The University notes some concern about getting faculty involvement in the develop of the new planning process, which could impede progress of this aggressive timeline. However, given the work accomplished to date seems to be attainable.

General Observations and Recommended Modifications

Panel members may provide considerations and suggested modifications that the institution should note related to its proposed Quality Initiative.

Conclusion

☒ Approve the proposed Quality Initiative with or without recommended minor modifications. No further review required.

☐ Request resubmission of the proposed Quality Initiative.

Rationale and Expectations if Requesting Resubmission