



FORM

## Open Pathway Quality Initiative Proposal

### *Institutional Template*

The enclosed Quality Initiative proposal represents the work that the institution will undertake to fulfill the Improvement Process of the Open Pathway.

*Signature of Institution's President or Chancellor*

12/14/15  
Date

Daniel Bradley

*Printed/Typed Name and Title*

Indiana State University

*Name of Institution*

Terre Haute, Indiana

*City and State*

The institution completes the Quality Initiative proposal by responding to the questions in each category of the template. The institution may choose to include a brief implementation plan that addresses many of the questions below and replaces portions of the outline. Proposals should be no more than 4,500 words. The Quality Initiative Proposal is due no later than August 31 of Year 7 (and will be accepted beginning September 1 of Year 5). Submit the proposal as a PDF file to [pathways@hlcommission.org](mailto:pathways@hlcommission.org) with a file name that follows this format: QI Report No Name University MN. 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.

Indiana State University's (ISU) proposed quality initiative, entitled Curricular Transformation to Decrease Time to Degree and Increase Student Learning, seeks to expand upon a number of curricular initiatives that have occurred on campus in the last few years. Specifically, we propose to engage in an institution-wide curricular transformation project. The project builds upon previous work to trim degree and major credit hours and continues our ongoing efforts to eliminate barriers to graduation.

The curricular transformation project that we propose for our Quality Initiative is a core strategy for enhancing student success. Complete College America and the Lumina Foundation have served as a national voice regarding the process and progress of developing quality college graduates. Complete College America's guidance for meta pathways, math alignment to majors, whole programs of study, and the Degree Qualifications Profile provide a broad framework for ISU's proposed QI project. These elements will enhance the efforts underway or completed to date. As discussed below, ISU has utilized many of the lessons from these organizations and seeks to continue to build upon these opportunities as well.

## Sufficiency of the Initiative's Scope and Significance

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

### Context

ISU is a regional state institution of almost 14,000 students, 11,581 of whom are undergraduates. Founded as a Normal School in 1865, it served a teacher preparation mission for much of its history. In the 1960s, like many other regional state universities, it grew to become a comprehensive college and then a University. ISU, as a function of a mission, grew to include other professional schools, an expanded College of Arts and Sciences, and graduate programs.

Today, ISU consists of six academic colleges (two with embedded schools). The university offers more than 100 majors and awards degrees from the bachelors level to the doctorate level. Among its unique features, the institution has comparatively smaller class sizes than many other public four-year institutions with only a handful of classrooms that hold up to around 150 students. Sixty-four percent of classes have 30 or fewer students.

In the past five years, as enrollments have increased, ISU is serving a growing number of historically underrepresented and/or marginalized students, particularly those that are low-income, minority, and/or first-generation students. At present, approximately 50% of undergraduates are low income (Pell eligible), 50% are first generation, and 18% are African American. The African-American students represent the highest proportion of the student body compared to other institutions in the state, with more aggregate numbers than the two state flagships that each have three times the overall enrollment. ISU also has the highest proportion, and nearly the highest aggregate number, of 21st Century Scholars of any institution in Indiana. Twenty-first Century scholarships provide access to college for many low-income student and is the primary access for this student group.

The state of Indiana has recently instituted a performance-based funding model that has had noted impact on its institutions. Public colleges and universities have an annual reduction in their base budget and receive a reallocation back linked to six specific metrics of performance. The six metrics are, in weighting size order:

Overall Degree Completion – 30%

On-Time Graduate Rate – 25%

At-risk degree completion – 15%

Student Persistence – 15%

High-Impact Degree Completion – 10%

Institutionally Defined Metric – 5%

This funding formula has resulted in a net reduction in the ISU budget each of the three years that it has been in place, in large part because of the degree completion metrics and lags between retention gains and completion rate impact. Therefore, it is especially important that retention and persistence rates increase in order to realize positive net performance funding.

In addition, the state of Indiana has also now linked its two state need-based aid programs to student milestone credit hour achievement. The 21st Century Scholar Program and the Frank O'Bannon aid programs now require 30 hours to be completed by the end of the freshmen year, and completion of 60 credit hours by the end of the sophomore year. These benchmarks must be met in order for students to maintain full aid. In 2015-16, the requirement of 90 credit hours by the end of the junior year will also be in place. This policy shift has resulted in gains in the proportion of state need-based aid recipients who achieve the benchmarks, yet it has also placed a growing number of these students at academic risk because of cumulative GPA performance. Therefore, this issue reinforces the need to ensure a growing percentage of students are able to make clear progress to degree completion.

### Scope & Significance

According to ISU's Mission Statement: Indiana State University combines a tradition of strong undergraduate and graduate education with a focus on community and public service. We integrate teaching, research, and creative activity in an engaging, challenging, and supportive learning environment to prepare productive citizens for Indiana and the world.

ISU's Vision Statement reads: Inspired by a shared commitment to improving our communities, Indiana State University will be known nationally for academic, cultural, and research opportunities designed to ensure the success of its people and their work.

The proposed curricular transformation quality initiative aligns with a number of mission and vision elements, most notably the focus on teaching, the quality of the learning environment, the commitment to improving our community, and ISU is known nationally for the success of those who work and learn here. The proposed quality initiative is also a university-wide, multi-year initiative designed to touch every academic college within the institution.

Since its inception in 2009, ISU's Pathway's to Success Strategic Plan has had increasing enrollment and student success as one of its primary goals. Recognizing that students are the institution's most valuable asset, the University has moved aggressively to adopt a variety of recruitment, enrollment, retention, completion, and post-college achievement-related programs and activities. Since 2009, this effort has resulted in a 52% increase in new freshmen enrollment and a 25% increase in overall student headcount, one of the fastest growth rates in the state. Furthermore, in the past four years, the overall freshmen retention rate increased by 6.4% with even higher gains realized among our low income and minority student populations. These gains have helped to close retention gaps among our student population.

Our sights are now laser focused on completion rates that have hovered around 20% in four-years and 40% in six years. These rates have been largely unchanged for at least 15 years despite cyclical economic swings, changes in student demographics, and varied policy and practice initiatives. We have chosen not to achieve retention and completion gains through changes in admission standards, however, an approach that a number of institutions, including some regional state universities, have implemented in recent years. Instead, we have sought to change what we do in the belief that postsecondary options are narrowing for the exact student constituency our state and nation most needs to receive a quality education. Simply put, we adhere to an inclusion mission, one where we choose to enroll well-prepared students as well as

those who underperformed in high school but evidence the capacity for degree completion at the college level. We believe that when afforded the right intrusive supports, coupled with high standards and reinforcement of a belief in student capability to achieve to a high level through hard work, students can and do succeed.

#### Proposed Project in Context of Other Initiatives

This proposed project emerges from and builds upon the foundations of other activities focused on student completion and success:

- In Spring 2015, we began the process of course transformation within courses where students often underperform, fail, or drop.
- In the last three years, we have completed curricular transformations to reduce the size of the baccalaureate degree and course or hour intensive majors.
  - o Effective Fall 2013, by mandate of the Indiana Legislature, all degree programs could be no larger than 120 credit hours unless approved by the Indiana Commission of Higher Education. During the 2012-13 academic year, programs made the necessary changes.
  - o The following year (2013-14 academic year), faculty were charged by the ISU Board of Trustees to ensure that undergraduate majors would be fewer than 72 credit hours and all required major courses could be completed in a 6 semester sequence (to accommodate students who change or declare their major before the start of the sophomore year).
- In Fall 2012, ISU began a program called the Sycamore Graduation Guarantee which provided degree maps for students, mapped critical courses, promised to make sufficient seats available in those critical courses so as to not impede degree progress, and provided a yearly communication to inform the student if s/he is on-track or off-track for on-time degree completion.
- Beginning in Fall 2013, new legislation in Indiana required all state institutions to provide degree maps for students and utilize meta majors for advising and planning.

Despite these efforts, our 4-year and 6-year graduation rates have not changed. With the proposed curricular transformation project, we will build on these past and current accomplishments and take them further. Total credits earned at graduation have decreased slightly over a 4 year period (from 140.4 in 2011-12 to 137.1 in 2014-15) but still shows that many students are earning significantly more than 120 credit hours.

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

**As shown in the figure attached with the timeline, ISU's proposed project of Large Scale Programmatic Curriculum Transformation is composed of five key components: Math Pathways, Degree Structure Redesign, Competency-Focused Curriculum Revisions, Career Readiness Skills, and Community Engagement Outcomes. The latter two components are visually smaller in the figure, not because they are less important, but rather they are not part of this specific project and are addressed in previous or current projects.**

#### **Degree Structure Redesign**

**Purpose:** A process of degree structure redesign will provide immediate relief for many programs and students and open alternatives for the larger curricular design.

During the 2006-08 and 2007-08 academic years, ISU underwent a process called Program Prioritization whereby 48 programs were eliminated or suspended (graduate and undergraduate) and 12 new programs (graduate and undergraduate) were approved. In addition, many programs were revised, realigned, or integrated, and eight departments and two colleges were reorganized. One of the key ways this work was accomplished was through the development of concentrations within content majors. Under this process, majors that once stood alone became essentially subsets of another major. The use of concentrations has grown since 2006. The Fall 2015 catalog shows 82 distinct undergraduate majors. Thirteen of these majors require students to choose a concentration; and within these 13 majors, credit hours in the core area range from 0-50, and credit hours in the concentrations range from 9-57 credit hours. Six of the thirteen majors have a higher credit requirement in the concentration than in the core area of the major.

A degree structure redesign process would engage departments in an examination of these programs to determine if a lower credit, stand-alone major is possible (i.e. increase the credit hours in the core), thereby turning the concentration into a minor. This change would enable students who don't need the very specific learning objectives of a concentration to complete a major and finish a degree. Often, the high credit concentrations are specific to training for graduate school or a very specific licensure and certification. A minor could still achieve that goal, but it would provide an alternative path. Highly motivated and successful students would have the ability to complete more than one minor and be recognized for that. Presently, they are only able to complete one concentration.

The degree structure redesign would enable us to continue the ISU Board of Trustees goal to bring majors under 72 credits hours and provide students the ability to finish a major within 6 semesters. Students would have more options for degree completion.

### **Math Pathways**

**Purpose:** Align the math/quantitative literacy degree requirements to remove obstacles to progress and better predict needed student supports, course demand, and be able to support appropriate remediation if necessary.

We will build on the work of the Math Innovation Council , convened by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education. Since mathematics is a significant barrier to degree completion for many students, their recommendations, dated September 1, 2015, include ensuring that the mathematics required for students be tied to what is needed for their majors. To that end, programs will work with the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science to determine the gateway mathematics requirements for those programs. For many programs in the arts and humanities, the requirement may be a single mathematics course in quantitative literacy. For STEM fields, the gateway course would likely be calculus. For other areas, the gateway requirement may be a statistics course. We will put into place mechanisms to ensure that no students are placed in a College Algebra course unless it is needed for their specific program. This is particularly important because College Algebra has the highest DFW (drop/fail/withdraw) rate of any gateway mathematics course, and given that the only purpose for a College Algebra

course is to prepare students for calculus, College Algebra should not be a student's terminal mathematics experience in college.

### **Outcomes and Competency Based Curriculum Redesign**

**Purpose:** A rebuilding of curriculum eliminates barriers to graduation, identifies where student intervention and assistance can be targeted, and builds a logical, sequential degree path based on outcomes and competencies.

The most significant part of the institutional curriculum transformation project is the goal to redesign specific programs around learning outcomes and competency-focused goals. All programs have established student-learning outcomes either determined by the faculty, an accrediting body, or a combination of the two. Most programs have mapped these outcomes to the existing curriculum and where necessary, programs have added courses to the curriculum to cover additional outcomes. However, while faculty were diligent at meeting the 120 total credit hour requirements and the major size requirements, the time and resources were not available to fully examine the curriculum at its most base structure (student learning outcomes and competencies) and rebuild revised programs that better meet student learning needs, institutional goals, and that move students to completion.

Targeted programs will be engaged in the long, difficult process of examining and rebuilding their curriculum. The programs will incorporate the degree structure redesign, math pathways, and will include ISU's existing community engagement goals and the in-process development of career readiness skills/outcomes. We specifically will facilitate the development/refinement of outcomes (the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be attained), as well as a competency-focused approach in order to break the broad outcomes down to the specific levels of performance at the various points in the degree path.

Regardless of a specific theory or a curricular design framework that might be utilized, the curricular development process will involve the essential steps of identification of outcomes and levels of competencies, grouping/chunking of competencies into logical sequences where learning outcomes are clear at all points, noting necessary prior learning, assessing outcomes and competencies, and engaging learner. These "chunks" will be transformed into new courses and learning experiences for students. We recognize that faculty are often emotionally tied to their curriculum and courses and that this will be challenging, yet exciting work. For those programs that engage in this significant curricular change process, external curriculum development specialists and content experts will be available to guide faculty in the process.

### **Community Engagement and Experiential Learning Outcomes**

We will ensure that as programs progress through redesign (either through the degree restructure process or the outcomes-based redesign) experiential learning outcomes for students will remain an important focus.

### **Career Readiness Skills**

As the strategic planning process continues, we will ensure that programs incorporate career readiness skills created as part of the institutional strategic planning process and as recommended by program advisory boards. Working with industries, Career Services, and other stakeholders, programs will provide skills and knowledge about professional development to create a seamless transition from education to employment for students.

## Clarity of the Initiative's Purpose

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

Curricular transformation at ISU has as its core purpose to help advance the broader student retention and completion efforts at the University. These broader goals will be achieved by eliminating the academic barriers for students that exist for students within program sequencing and structures.

The specific goals for this Quality Initiative are as follows:

1. Develop an institutional degree structure that supports degree completion, e.g. majors that are more general in nature with specialization focused in optional minors versus required concentrations.
2. For every degree program, develop math pathways for every program and the support structure and courses to support these pathways.
3. Engage all degree programs in curricular examination that involves explication, grouping and sequencing of learning outcomes and competencies to create new structures for degrees and majors.

The deliverables for this Quality Initiative include the following:

1. A redesigned degree structure that facilitates student completion.
2. Redesigned programs in every college so that the majority of students in a college have access to a program that has been restructured based on learning outcomes and competencies.
3. A systematized means of conducting curriculum redesign that involves assessing, testing, piloting, refining, fully integrating, and regularly assessing for continual quality improvement of courses and for fit within curricula.
4. Improved student learning outcomes, and a 5% increase in majors that are on the path to on-time graduation (4 year) in redesigned programs. The project does not have a long enough timeline to measure the actual graduation rate.
5. A ten percent increase in math success rates, as measured by successful course completion of math requirements in majors.
6. A campus culture where student learning data and discussion of academic barriers informs the curricular review process.

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

Assessment of this initiative will occur through quantitative and qualitative, formative and summative approaches. With respect to qualitative, formative assessment, we will be studying the process of curricular redesign while teams are engaged in the transformation activities in order to understand how the process of restructuring programs based on outcomes and competencies is achieved, and in order to see the problems encountered by programs so we may alleviate problems for subsequent rounds. This work can then inform initiative refinement and future programs scheduled for transformation activities.

In regard to summative assessment, we will examine student progress towards degree completion, comparative statistics on student migration between programs, student math course completion data, and overall degree completion data (although student completion data will not be fully available during the project and will extend beyond the official calendar of the quality initiative).

### Potential Challenges

Quality Initiatives as described on the Higher Learning Commission website are, “intended to allow institutions to take risks, aim high, and if so be it, learn from only partial success or even failure.” Our proposed Quality Initiative is closely aligned with our broader retention and completion goals and strategy, will improve upon previous mandates to control program and degree length, and has institutional funding to support it going forward. It is, however, inherently risky. First, the programs that are in most need of redesign have been in existence for a long time and have had courses added, changed, and modified for decades. Faculty become comfortable with the programs with which they are familiar and may feel threatened in the redesign process. It will be a challenge to help faculty think creatively about redesigning the curriculum and commit to a long-term vision of using learning goals as a means of developing programs. Hence, true goal achievement with this initiative is dependent on more faculty and staff who link their success to student success, and who understand the relationship between curricula and success. Faculty must understand that the curricular needs are for students in the second and third decade of 2000, and they must appreciate how those needs differ from the programs of which they were a part in their undergraduate and graduate days.

Second, the initiative is risky because it is fundamentally about the teaching and learning environment that is the domain of the faculty. The institution will need to provide reward structures and appropriate recognition and support for the faculty who participate in the process. The faculty engaged in the intensive process of rebuilding new curriculum based on learning outcomes will need to be relieved of other institutional responsibilities so their time can be appropriately focused on the curriculum.

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

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



The institution, ISU Board of Trustees and President Bradley have a history of supporting initiatives that are directly related to student success. Most recently, through the ISU Pathways to Success Strategic Plan, President Bradley has committed to support the course transformation initiative for three years with \$250,000. For the curriculum transformation project, the project team created the proposal as part of the 2016 Strategic Planning group. The work of this open initiative supports a charge by the ISU Board of Trustees to eliminate obstacles to graduation. The academic deans have committed to develop curricular teams in each college to facilitate the process.

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

A core steering committee has been formed with faculty and staff representatives from college. The Student Government Association has committed to provide 2 or 3 undergraduate student representatives to the steering committee. The steering committee will oversee the project at all levels and the AVP for Academic Affairs will serve as the project director. At the University level, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee will work with the University Curriculum Committee, and each Dean will work with the academic college curriculum committees.

The components will utilize a variety of additional resources. The chairperson for the math department served on the Indiana Math Innovation Council and will lead the work on the Math Pathways portion of the project. The steering committee will lead the work on the degree structure redesign. Indiana State University will utilize external consultants with expertise in outcomes/competency based curriculum alongside external content experts to work with college and department-based faculty and student steams.

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

The University has committed to the human resources of the AVP for Academic Affairs and the Assessment Coordinator to this project. Additionally, by making this steering group a part of the strategic planning process, the steering committee has access to help shape other strategic planning elements to support this project (as we learn from the project process), as well as strategic planning dollars. The university has committed to provide funds for external consultants to assist with the process. If necessary, faculty fellows will be appointed to facilitate curriculum changes.

### **Appropriateness of the Timeline for the Initiative**

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

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

See attached

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

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

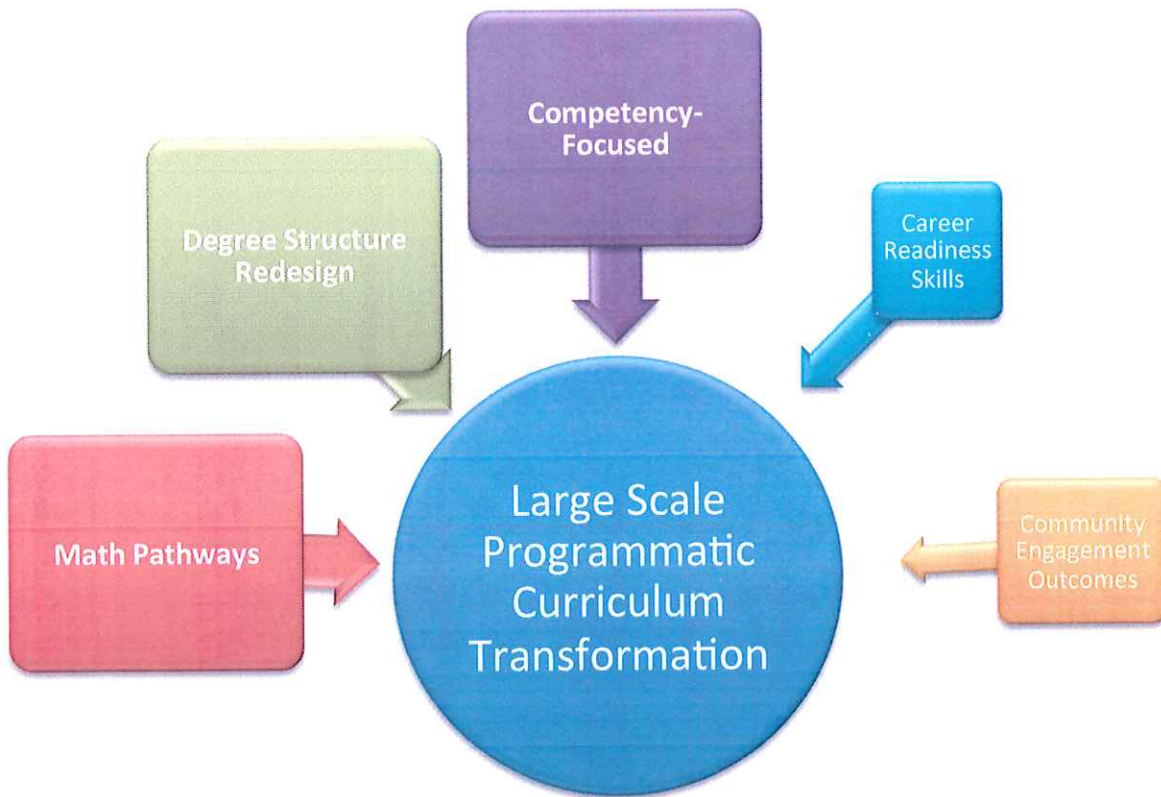
Name and Title: Susan Powers, AVP Academic Affairs

Phone: 812-237-8775

Email: susan.powers@indstate.edu

Institution: Indiana State University

**Indiana State University**  
**Curricular Transformation to Decrease Time to Degree and Increase Student Learning**



***Degree Structure Redesign***

*Purpose: A process of degree structure redesign will provide immediate relief for many programs and students and open alternatives for the larger curricular design.*

***Math Pathways***

*Purpose: Align the math/quantitative literacy degree requirements to remove obstacles to progress and better predict needed student supports, course demand, and be able to support appropriate remediation if necessary.*

### ***Outcomes and Competency Based Curriculum Redesign***

*Purpose: A rebuilding of curriculum eliminates barriers to graduation, identifies where student intervention and assistance can be targeted, and builds a logical, sequential degree path based on outcomes and competencies.*

### ***Community Engagement and Experiential Learning Outcomes***

We will ensure that as programs progress through redesign (either through the degree restructure process or the outcomes-based redesign) experiential learning outcomes for students will remain an important focus.

### ***Career Readiness Skills***

As the strategic planning process continues, we will ensure that programs incorporate career readiness skills created as part of the institutional strategic planning process and as recommended by program advisory boards. Working with industries, Career Services, and other stakeholders, programs will provide skills and knowledge about professional development to create a seamless transition from education to employment for students.

## Initiative Timeline

The Curricular Transformation initiative, once approved, is envisioned to roll out as follows:

	Degree Structure Redesign	Math Pathways	Career Readiness <sup>1</sup>	Curriculum Transformation
<b>Fall 2015</b>	Submit Quality Initiative Proposal to HCL for approval			
<b>Spring 2016</b>	Initiate redesigned degree structure through Faculty Senate Committees. Target of Fall 2017 catalog.	Launch Math Pathways workshops. Programs identify specific Math Pathway outcomes	Consult with Strategic Planning Group charged with examining Career Readiness	Identify 2 target programs for transformation. Identify external consultants and internal teams for these programs.
<b>Summer 2016</b>	Workshops for programs <sup>2</sup> needing curricular revisions	Programs revise curriculum and degree maps for Math Pathways		Intensive workshops for programs to breakdown and rebuild curriculum based on programmatic outcomes, Math Pathways, Career Readiness Skills and Community Engagement.
<b>Fall 2016</b>	Continued workshops for programs needing curriculum revisions	Continued program and degree map revision		Rebuilding of Programs based on summer workshops. Development of curriculum change proposals.
<b>Spring 2017</b>	All revisions approved	All revisions approved.		Identify 3 additional target programs for transformation. Identify external consultants and internal teams for these programs.
<b>Summer 2017</b>				Intensive workshops for programs to breakdown and rebuild curriculum based on programmatic outcomes, Math

<sup>1</sup> Not specifically an activity of the Quality Initiative; however we need to recognize the inclusion of these new outcomes in the curriculum transformation.

<sup>2</sup> Those programs NOT participating in the Curriculum Transformation at this time.

			Pathways, Career Readiness Skills and Community Engagement.
<b>Fall 2017</b>	New degree structure in place	Math Pathways fully implemented	Rebuilding of Programs based on summer workshops. Development of curriculum change proposals.
<b>Spring 2018</b>			Identify at least 2 additional target programs for transformation.
<b>Summer 2018</b>			Intensive workshops for programs to breakdown and rebuild curriculum based on programmatic outcomes, Math Pathways, Career Readiness Skills and Community Engagement.
<b>Fall 2018</b>	Submit Final Report to HLC		