



Open Pathway Quality Initiative Report

Institutional Template

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

Gregory P. Crawford

Signature of Institution's President or Chancellor

2/3/2023

Date

Gregory Crawford

Printed/Typed Name and Title

Miami University

Name of Institution

Oxford, Ohio

City and State

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 complete report should be no more than 6,000 words.

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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Report Categories

Overview of the Quality Initiative

1. Provide a one-page executive summary that describes the Quality Initiative, summarizes what

Miami University's Quality Initiative, "**Optimizing the Academic Program Portfolio**," focuses on shaping a high-quality portfolio of academic programs that meets the changing needs of students and employers and is aligned with Miami's mission, strategic priorities and HLC core components 4A (quality programs), 4C (student success) & 5C (systematic, integrated planning). It includes two major components:

- 1) **Boldly Creative**, a multi-year competitive process (from 2019-2021), was designed to generate and fund promising new academic programs and projects that meet the following criteria:
 - advance knowledge in fields considered most in demand throughout Ohio, the region, and the nation;
 - prepare students with the versatile skills and mindset to meet the needs of a dynamic workforce, with an emphasis on 21st century liberal education outcomes for success;
 - advance Miami's reputation for excellence and innovation;
 - develop/enhance partnerships from the government, non-profit, corporate, higher education and/or health care sectors; and
 - demonstrate a long-term sustainability plan that generates net new revenue by increasing enrollment beyond the residential capacity of the Oxford campus or from external sources.

Over a two-year span, projects were proposed by faculty and staff teams. Funded projects included over twenty-five new academic programs and five projects relating to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. For more information, see: <https://miamioh.edu/boldly-creative/>

- 2) Launched in 2020 and continuing until 2025, the **Academic Program Evaluation, Improvement & Prioritization (APEIP)** project addresses the "MiamiRISE" strategic plan recommendation to complete a one-time review of all academic programs at the undergraduate and graduate level while advancing these goals:
 - Create high quality and sustainable portfolio of academic programs;
 - Develop and support curricula (programs, courses) that advance student success outcomes;
 - Leverage the talents and expertise of faculty via equitable and purposeful workload assignments to enable fairness & strong teaching and research;
 - Ensure good stewardship of financial resources (via strong course enrollments, streamlined curricular requirements, cross-departmental collaborations).

The overall APEIP process was led by a committee with University Senate and faculty representation. Rather than deploy a top-down approach with university leadership dictating program outcomes, Miami elected to provide departments with a robust set of data and process guidelines so that the department faculty, in consultation with their deans, could engage in conversations about future directions for their academic programs and make informed decisions on outcomes. In addition to reviewing faculty workload policies, departments (in consultation with deans) evaluated all degree programs and majors as well as courses that were identified as impeding student success. They then crafted plans for improvement using assessment data. See: https://www.miamioh.edu/academic-affairs/admin-affairs/acad_prioritization/index.html

Knowledge gained from these two one-time, broad-based initiatives have informed the development of several ongoing curricular initiatives: **Miami Academic Program Incubator** (new concierge service to ensure a data-driven approach to new and revised programs), **Department Planning & Improvement Process** (redesigned academic program review procedure that focuses on continuous improvement), and **Miami Plan Innovation Laboratory** (new data-informed faculty development

program to support the transformation of gateway and other highly enrolled general education courses to promote success and liberal education outcomes). These three initiatives are designed to advance the overarching goal of maintaining an optimal portfolio of academic programs and courses that advance student success, are aligned with the university mission, and meet the fluctuating needs of employers and society.

Scope and Impact of the Initiative

2. Explain in more detail what was accomplished in the Quality Initiative in relation to its purposes

The Boldy Creative: Strategic Academic Initiatives Project was a direct response to Miami University's strategic plan, "MiamiRISE" which called for the University to innovate and thrive in a rapidly changing environment, invest in proactive solutions, and invigorate our process and culture to clear pathways for creative solutions.

From 2019-2021, teams of faculty submitted detailed proposals which included specific goals, broader impacts, target audience, description of academic program or project, budget and timeline. Proposals underwent a multi-level review process that included an initial review based on its anticipated financial performance followed by an evaluation by academic deans who made recommendations to the President and Provost. Proposals with "excellent" or "very strong" ratings were approved for funding, and since then, funding has been released in annual increments. Project leads submit annual progress reports, and continued funding has depended upon successfully achieving clearly articulated annual goals. Funding will continue for projects that are meeting outcomes until 2025-2026. See Appendix A for a list of funded projects and programs.

Launched in October 2019, the **Academic Prioritization, Evaluation & Improvement Process (APEIP)** was developed through a committee appointed through shared governance. Through intensive research and consultation, the committee developed the process guidelines which were vetted and approved by the academic deans in March 2020. As the plans were being generated, the committee chair provided ongoing updates to members of University Senate.

Key process steps are listed below:

- 1) Departments were provided robust data workbooks that included data relating to student and employer demand for the department's program(s), competitive intensity, application and information requests, enrollment trends (cohort head count, completions), student credit hours (by major, faculty, lower and upper levels), instructional cost per credit hour, section capacity and fill rates, courses with high DFW rates, time to degree by program, degrees awarded, faculty demographic data as well as course loads and research productivity of faculty.
- 2) Deans reviewed data, provided an initial rating for programs in each department and offered input on important issues for each department to consider.
- 3) A team of faculty consultants was trained on the data sources, and then, these team members met with chairs and departments to assist them in understanding and interpreting data so that more meaningful goals for the plans could be formed.
- 4) Departments identified key findings from the data analysis as well as strategic improvement goals for the programs and courses in the department. Deans provided feedback on analyses and goals.
- 5) Using input from deans as well as broad participation from the faculty in the department, departments developed curricular action plans. All plans followed a university-wide template and included three strategic goals, specific action steps for meeting goals, and measurable outputs for determining whether the goal has been reached. Each plan also included a timeline for reaching the outputs. Goals and action steps needed to be in the department's locus of control, and if the department offered one or more "courses of concern" (courses with high DFW rates), one of the goals needed to focus on the course(s). Departments were also asked to review research on equity and workload as well as relevant university policies relating to faculty work and to revise the department's current workload policy accordingly. See Appendix B for Sample Curricular Action Plans.
- 6) Departments could also opt not to submit a curricular action plan for a given program if the faculty in the department determined that the program was not viable and agreed to eliminate it.
- 7) The Office of the Provost offered virtual workshops for chairs which provided tips on developing action plans and revising workload policies.
- 8) Departments submitted revised workload policies as well as curricular action plans for programs that they wanted to continue. All curricular action plans advanced one or more of the following goals: (a) enhance enrollment; (b) promote student success; (c) streamline curriculum; (d) promote cost efficiencies; (e) generate revenue; and/or (f) enhance faculty development and support. After reviewing the plans, deans issued summative program ratings. The

Office of the Provost also reviewed all plans and offered narrative input for consideration. See Appendix C for an overall summary of curricular action plans and progress updates.

- 9) Departments submit annual progress reports (following a template) for up to five years (depending on their proposed timelines) for review and feedback from the dean and Office of Provost.

3. Evaluate the impact of the initiative, including any changes in processes, policies, technology,

Boldly Creative outcomes include:

- Over 15 new programs have been developed and approved, such as M.S. Nursing, Doctorate of Nursing Practice, M.S. Biomedical Science, M.M.S. Physician Associate, M.S. Business Analytics, M.S. Esport Management, M.S. Clinical Engineering, B.S. Robotics Engineering, B.S. Robotics Engineering Technology, M.S. Management, B.A. Data Analytics, M.S. Sports Analytics, B.S. Cybersecurity, and Masters in Entrepreneurship & Emerging Technology. Over ten existing programs have been revised so that they can be delivered online (as well as in-person), and over two dozen noncredit professional education programs and/or credit-bearing microcredentials have been developed.
- Several important projects have also been funded, including the creation of a Center for Analytics & Data Science, Center for Cybersecurity, Center for KICKGLASS Change (DEI center), and a new equity-minded student success initiative (that includes a new professional staff advising model, student success interventions, and intensive programming for underrepresented populations).

Key APEIP outcomes include:

- A total of 1156 courses were deleted from the University's catalog, while only 446 were added – resulting in Miami removing more than 700 courses from the catalogue since 2019.
- 34 of 260 programs have been voluntarily eliminated by the faculty of the program's home department(s).
- An additional 14 programs that had recently ceased admitting students were formally removed from the books.
- The following summative programs ratings were issued by deans:
 - continuous improvement with potential new resources (n=43, 16.5%);
 - continuous improvement with minor difficulties (n=120, 55.0%);
 - program restructuring with significant difficulties (n=49, 18.8%).
- Curricular action plans were developed for all programs that were not eliminated (total of 226 programs), and the first annual progress reports were submitted and feedback offered.
- Department workload policies now specify differential workloads for contingent faculty, teaching & clinical faculty and tenure-track/tenured faculty as well as criteria for course releases beyond generic references to 'research active' or 'significant service.'
- University policy relating to elimination of academic programs was revised to enable a more streamlined but inclusive procedure, and an updated version of the "Statement of Essential Teaching Practices" policy to set clear minimum standards of teaching excellence was approved by University Senate in spring 2022. See Appendix D for policies.

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

Boldly Creative's focus on data-informed development of new programs and APEIP's focus on data-informed curricular revision and streamlining have sparked the realization that these processes must continue to be enacted over the long run for Miami to remain relevant and competitive in today's shifting, complex higher education landscape. Three new initiatives have been put in place to promote in an ongoing manner many of the same goals of Boldly Creative and APEIP and to ensure high quality learning and successful curricula across the course, program and departmental levels.

- a) **Miami Plan Innovation Laboratory** is a new initiative recently launched in fall 2022. It provides support to faculty wishing to develop outstanding new general education courses and radically redesign large enrollment general education classes. The goals are to: (1) advance the higher order learning of students in the course; (2) promote or improve student success outcomes (retention, persistence, college completion) through high impact practices that are appropriate for the discipline and aligned with findings in the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning; (3) galvanize curricular and pedagogical experimentation and improvement; and (4) break down structural barriers to creating curricular improvements. Services include: consultations, course-related data and assistance with data interpretation,

referrals, opportunity to apply for funding; and guidance on navigating the university systems to achieve results. It is

- b) **Miami Academic Program Incubator (MAPI)** was launched in fall 2021 and is a support and consultation service for departments that aims to encourage, support and incentivize the rapid revitalization and creation of undergraduate and graduate programs that: advance the University mission; are aligned with faculty talents and expertise; meet student and market needs; and ensure that Miami offers a high-quality and cost-effective portfolio of academic programs.

Led by a steering team of university-level leaders & heads of curriculum committees, MAPI's services include: data & research (from internal and external sources); curriculum coaching; guidance on budget and opportunity to apply for seed funding (for up to 5 years); feedback on initial concept & preliminary budget; and research on future curricular trends which is shared with appropriate deans and chairs. See: <https://miamioh.edu/academic-affairs/admin-affairs/miami-academic-incubator-program/index.html>

Since its inception, MAPI has produced the following outcomes:

- Vetted 22 concept papers for new programs or significant revisions of existing programs. Following the review of the concept papers and data analysis and feedback from MAPI, six of the 22 projects were not advanced by the department or division. Five are being or have been developed into full proposals for formal approval, and the remainder are still under consideration by the department or division. (Note: We see the fact that some concepts were not brought to fruition as positive. Prior to MAPI it is likely that all 22 ideas would have been shaped into new programs, and many of those programs would likely not have succeeded, costing the University unnecessary resources and time.) See Appendix E for sample concept paper, evaluation rubric and feedback.
 - Developed Guidelines for Cross-Divisional & Cross-Departmental Programs to encourage course and program sharing. See Appendix F for a copy of the guidelines.
 - Developed a new Learning Management Project site and website to provide information to departments on developing new programs (including glossary of curricular terms, information on best practices in program design, contact information for all key curricular needs, guidance on marketing and budget).
 - Contracted with two external research consultation services, Gray Associates and EAB, to assist in market feasibility studies, program assessments, and future trends in higher education; secured a new “enroll predict” machine learning tool from Gray Associates to assist in more accurate enrollment predictions for individual programs
 - Engaged in ongoing research on promising trends in academic programs which helped to shape revisions of two programs (i.e., marketing and manufacturing engineering bachelor programs) and to develop ideas for new programs (e.g., masters in fintech, masters in counseling psychology, post baccalaureate certificate in speech pathology) which are now being considered
 - Streamlined the procedure for approval and launch of new programs.
- c) **Department Planning & Improvement (DPI)** is a new process for evaluating the entire department, including its curricula. A committee of University Senate conducted research in 2019-2020, developed a proposal for a new program and departmental review process which was approved by University Senate and the Board of Trustees in April and May 2022. The new process will phase in as the APEIP process concludes. A pilot focusing on 4-5 departments will be conducted in 2024-2025, and full implementation of the new process will begin in 2025-2026. See Appendix G for a copy of the approved model.

Key features of the new process include:

- Focus on continuous improvement (including comprehensive review plus biennial updates; consultant-evaluator team members rather than just evaluators)
- Collaboratively developed strategic goals (among department faculty, students, staff, other stakeholders, dean and Provost)
- Holistic scope (encompassing all aspects of department plus assessment of student learning and DEI considerations)
- 6-year cycle (~ 10 department visits per year) with a schedule developed in collaboration with deans and chairs

- Process customized for departments with professional accreditation reviews
- More robust support for process (e.g., consultation, departmental orientation, data workbooks).

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

This Quality Initiative Project responded, in part, to a set of recommendations in Miami’s strategic plan, MiamiRISE. Boldly Creative addressed the plan’s recommendation to catapult innovative new programs to respond to changing student needs and to position our University for success, and APEIP responded to the call to conduct a one-time review of all graduate and undergraduate degree programs and majors. Additionally, the plan called for the University to reform its liberal education plan to “better prepare students for success.”

Because of our recognition of the importance of these three recommendations, the initial planning processes for Boldly Creative, APEIP and transformation of the general education program were jumpstarted immediately upon the strategic plan’s approval in 2019. Within less than a year’s time, however, the COVID pandemic hit. Yet, rather than delay the planning and implementation process of these major curricular initiatives, the University elected to move forward on all of them. The reasoning was that these initiatives would strengthen our capacity for weathering the challenges brought on by the pandemic.

Moving forward with all three initiatives simultaneously and during this context brought about major challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, the combination of these initiatives has pushed us to make difficult and more purposeful and informed decisions as well as to think deeply and creatively about our curricular offerings and our faculty resources – actions that are critical for the lasting success of our institution and our capacity to prepare our students for lifelong personal and professional success. On the other hand, these three initiatives – combined with the abrupt shift to remote teaching as a result of the pandemic—taxed our faculty and staff in unprecedented ways and may have adversely impacted morale.

In hindsight, slowing down the implementation of these initiatives might have been a wise move. Nevertheless and very impressively, the faculty not only generated innovative Boldly Creative proposals, but they also developed thoughtful, data-driven curricular action plans and intentional workload policies for APEIP. And, a faculty committee generated and gained approval for an innovative, forward-thinking revised liberal education plan that includes new DEI components as well as a new “signature inquiry” component that features inquiry-based, high-impact, active and interdisciplinary learning.

Commitment to and Engagement in the Quality Initiative

6. Describe the individuals and groups involved at stages throughout the initiative and their

The President, Provost and Board of Trustees developed the original idea to set aside \$50 million for strategic academic priorities. The academic deans in conversation with the Provost and President developed the Boldly Creative process, including developing the RFP, criteria, approval procedure and process for annual updates and input. The Boldly Creative RFP was distributed to all members of the Miami community, and faculty and staff teams were encouraged to develop proposals.

The basic concept of APEIP grew out of the work of Miami’s strategic planning committee which was a committee that had broad faculty, staff and student representation across all academic and vice-presidential divisions. Following the approval of the strategic plan, a committee was formed to develop the principles and procedures to complete the one-time review of all academic programs. The committee included representation across all academic divisions and was chaired by Dr. Stacey Lowery Bretz, University Distinguished Professor of Chemistry. Draft plans were shared with deans and University Senate, and revisions were made based upon the input of those bodies.

Because of its far-reaching impact, Miami’s Quality Initiative Project has ultimately involved all faculty and department chairs as well as academic deans; and our ultimate goal is for the project to have lasting impact on our students. Every department submitted APEIP curricular action plans and workload policies as well as annual progress reports. Plans, policies and progress reports are vetted by deans and the Office of the Provost – both of whom have offered input (and continue to do so) on plans and progress updates for departmental consideration.

In 2021-2022, the University Senate’s Academic Program Review Committee presented a new model for academic program review called the “Department Planning & Improvement” that drew upon lessons gained from APEIP and Boldly Creative, interviews with key stakeholders (deans, chairs) as well as best practices in program review. A draft of the model was vetted widely with department chairs and academic deans who also shared it with faculty. Feedback was gathered, and a final version was then presented to and approved by the academic deans, University Senate and the Board of Trustees in May 2022.

The proposal for the Miami Academic Program Incubator was developed and shared with academic deans, department chairs as well as University Senate for input and revision. Once the proposal was finalized, a steering team which consists of university-level directors with curricular expertise (associate provost, dean of Graduate School, University Registrar, admission directors, chairs of university curricular committees, director of online learning) was formed and began meeting in fall 2021. MAPI maintains a website and learning management site and offers regular updates to academic deans and occasionally reports to University Senate on its work.

The Miami Plan Innovation Laboratory emerged in our Liberal Education Council which is a committee of University Senate out of a need to ensure that support was provided to faculty to develop exciting proposals for our new general education program. See Appendix H for proposal.

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

Many valuable lessons have been gained through this Quality Initiative Project, including:

- The renewed recognition that Miami faculty are deeply committed to high quality academic programs, student learning and student success. It is important to celebrate and recognize their talent and dedication. Moreover, we need to trust the capacity of faculty to create thoughtful academic programs provided they have adequate information and support.
- In terms of the Boldly Creative process, it is important that the RFP and process invites proposals from teams of faculty across the University, rather than only focusing on the usual areas (e.g., science, technology, engineering).
- It is also important for future success to leverage data purposefully. Because faculty do not have the tools to make accurate enrollment predictions, it is imperative that the University find ways to provide appropriate information on the market trends and feasibility of given programs so that decisions about new programs are informed.
- Any program review process – and particularly one as comprehensive as APEIP—spawns anxiety and fear among faculty. We found that we needed to continuously ensure that we were maintaining inclusive processes and decision making and transparent communication. Templates, clear guidelines, consultations, data as well as opportunities for departments to customize their plans are critical for success. Departments will not make meaningful change unless they have a strong sense of agency over the future of their programs.
- It is important when conducting a major project such as APEIP to maintain a steady timeline but it is equally important to allow some time for consultation and support. Although all faculty share some common goals and traits, wide variation in terminology, threshold concepts, and values exists across disciplines and departments. The importance of taking time to figure out how to make the processes work in different contexts and how to make each department see possibilities for positive change cannot be overstated.
- While it is critical to empower departments to craft their own plans, it is also equally important that the dean and Provost offer constructive input along the way so that all parties have a good understanding of one another and can agree upon general aims and tactics.

Resource Provision

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

In 2019, \$50 million were set aside for Miami’s Boldly Creative initiative to galvanize a new generation of academic excellence, enhancing the University’s nationally recognized undergraduate teaching, learning and research with a sharpened focus on innovation and creativity. Thus far, Miami has expended \$20 million for Boldly Creative programs and

projects; remaining funds are being deployed for other strategic academic priorities such as the Miami Academic Program Incubator.

To support the goals of APEIP, MAPI, and DPI, Miami signed contracts with two external research consulting firms: EAB and Gray Associates. Through these agreements, Miami has access to several critical tools and resources:

Gray Associates:

- **PES+ Markets Dashboard:** combines public and proprietary data sources, sophisticated crosswalks, and robust business intelligence (BI) software to track market demand for academic programs and predict enrollment. Data is compiled at the census tract level so institutions can pull data for their specific geographic markets. Custom scoring capabilities let institutions assign weights to every metric so programs can be evaluated in the context of unique priorities. Users can screen hundreds of programs at a time or drill down on individual programs for in-depth analysis.
- **Enroll Predict Tool** is a software platform that uses machine learning to make predictions about future enrollments of existing programs

EAB:

- **Portfolio Health Check** that reviews the entire academic program portfolio and offers insights into over- and under-performing programs
- **Market Opportunity Scan** that offers possible new program ideas to enable us to focus limited time and resources on promising ideas
- **Program Feasibility Study** that provides data and recommendations on new program ideas
- **360° Program Assessment** which conducts a deep dive analysis into a specific program that can be used for program revision and improvement

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.

See descriptions above for the Department Planning & Improvement (DPI) process, Miami Academic Program Incubator and Miami Plan Innovation Laboratory which will be ongoing initiatives that were informed by the Quality Initiative Project.

10. Describe any practices or artifacts from the initiative that other institutions might find meaningful

Carolyn Haynes, Senior Associate Provost, and Stacey Lowery Bretz, University Distinguished Professor, gave a well-attended and well-received presentation at the April 2022 HLC Annual Conference on the Quality Initiative Project components (Boldly Creative, APEIP) in which we shared our processes, outcomes and challenges. Attendees seemed most interested in learning specific details of the APEIP process, including the data that was included in the workbooks. They also were interested in learning more about the logistics of the Academic Program Incubator. We are happy to share ideas as requested.