

June 12, 2024

Dr. James T. Minor  
Chancellor  
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville  
Campus Box 1151  
Edwardsville, Illinois 62026-1151

Dear Chancellor Minor,

This letter is accompanied by the Quality Initiative Report (QIR) Review form completed by a peer review panel Southern Illinois University Edwardsville'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:** Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

**State:** Illinois

**Institutional ID:** 1157

**Reviewers (names, titles, institutions):**

Dr. Joyce Hardy, Professor of Biology, Chadron State College, Nebraska

Dr. Margaret Healy, Professor Emerita, University of North Dakota

**Date:** June 11, 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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Southern Illinois University Edwardsville sought institutional feedback and used data to identify a targeted quality improvement process focusing on supporting success of Black students. The University approached this in a holistic fashion, identifying efforts to support student engagement and learning as well as assessing institutional knowledge and awareness of diversity and inclusion. Five specific goals were identified, then-current strategies were analyzed for effectiveness, and mechanisms to expand support to a broader population were identified and implemented.

While the institution moved through substantial changes in leadership and other committed initiatives (such as a strategic plan development), the continued commitment and progress is evident through the resource allocation, the implementation of additional initiatives, the engagement of a broad University constituency, and the improvement in student success and retention. The report documents increased persistence and success rates of various populations of students, partnering with external agencies to form authentic engaged learning experiences (as with the Missouri Botanical Garden), and faculty training that related to their role in student interactions in and out of the classroom. Overall, year to year retention of African American students and other diverse students has increased. Several of the programs focused on student retention were reconceptualized and/or expanded to impact more students. Faculty and staff participated in new professional development initiatives. Finally, a cohort of 18 new faculty were hired through a Faculty Strategic Hiring Initiative.

The institution reports that it has experienced a culture change that is reflected in their new strategic plan and the Equity Plan they submitted to Illinois Board of Higher Education. The report outlines future plans for the five goals outlined in the Initiative Plan. Identification of reasonable and logical 'next steps' are specified, which will build upon and further expand the efforts of this initiative. Additionally, the institution recognizes and commits to the need for centralized implementation, intentional and holistic support that is meaningful for the students, cross-institutional engagement of faculty and staff, and data-informed decisions.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville presents evidence to support their genuine commitment to the quality initiative focused on improving Black student retention and graduation successes.