



Linking Foundations of Excellence® and Reaffirmation of Accreditation in Higher Learning Commission Institutions

Foundations of Excellence® is a voluntary self study and improvement planning process focused on the first college year or transfer experience. Since 2003-04, over 240 institutions have participated in the Foundations of Excellence (FoE) in the First College Year or Transfer Focus self-study process. Of these institutions, 98 are in the North Central region and are accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The FoE/HLC institutions include 69 PEAQ and 29 AQIP participants. The Higher Learning Commission makes it possible to link the Foundations of Excellence self study and action planning with the reaffirmation of accreditation for institutions in its AQIP, PEAQ, and now Open Pathways processes.

PEAQ and Foundations of Excellence (FoE)

History with PEAQ

In 2005, the Higher Learning Commission developed a joint project with the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education that allowed institutions in the Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (PEAQ) accreditation process to use Foundations of Excellence as the basis for a Special Emphasis self study. The option of a Special Emphasis self study allowed PEAQ institutions to focus on an area of critical importance to the institutional mission in the self study. The Special Emphasis became the focus of the campus improvement and HLC consultation part of the self study and accreditation review. Six FoE/HLC institutions pursued this option. Each of these institutions had a successful re-accreditation visit; the last one occurred in 2010-11.

PEAQ Institutions with Special Emphasis Self-Studies		
FoE Institution	State	FoE Participant
Midland Lutheran College	NE	2005-06
Missouri Southern State University	MO	2005-06
New Mexico State University	NM	2005-06
Itasca Community College	MN	2007-08
Eastern Wyoming College	WY	2008-09
University of Northern Iowa	IA	2008-09

Option with Open Pathway

Starting in 2012 eligible PEAQ institutions began making a transition to the Open Pathway, a new process for reaffirmation of accreditation.

Institutions pursuing the Open Pathway will undertake a Quality Initiative between years 5 and 9 of the 10-year cycle. One option in selecting a Quality Initiative is to choose a Commission-endorsed program, such as the Foundations of Excellence. The FoE option is appropriate for an institution that wishes to improve its approach to the first college year or to student transfer.

AQIP and Foundations of Excellence

The Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) is structured around quality improvement principles. AQIP institutions produce a Systems Portfolio addressing nine categories and continually engage in improvement through Action Projects. Some of the 29 FoE/AQIP institutions were admitted to AQIP after their FoE participation. Wilber Wright College aligned the Foundational Dimensions® with the nine categories of the Systems Portfolio as a part of its initial portfolio development. To date, 16 of the 29 institutions have made some connection between their FoE work and one or more AQIP Action Projects (a total of 30 Action Projects). The relationship between the FoE and AQIP projects varies. For two of the early FoE institutions, Missouri Western State University and Ohio University, FoE was a component of a larger AQIP Action Project. Two recent participants, Western Iowa Technical Community College and Northwest Missouri State University, selected FoE as an approach to accomplishing their AQIP Action Project goal of analyzing and refining their first-year experience. The most common approach to connecting the two processes has been to use implementation of FoE action plan recommendations as the basis of AQIP Action Projects. Institutions that have made this connection are listed in the following table.

Institutions Using FoE as Basis for AQIP Action Projects		
FoE Institution	State	FoE Institution
Pulaski Technical College	AR	2006-07
Sheridan College (Northern Wyoming Community College District)	WY	2006-07
Zane State College	OH	2006-07
College of Lake County	IL	2007-08
Milwaukee Area Technical College	WI	2007-08
Owens Community College	OH	2007-08
Western New Mexico University	NM	2007-08
City College of Chicago-Wilber Wright College	IL	2008-09
Northwood University	MI	2008-09 FY 2010-11 TF
Lincoln Land Community College	IL	2009-10
Western Iowa Tech Community College	IA	2009-10
Vincennes University	IN	2009-10
Northwest Missouri State University	MO	2010-11
St. Cloud Technical and Community College	MN	2010-11

For a listing of the Action Project titles, contact Betsy Griffin, griffin@njngi.org. The HLC AQIP Action Project Directory provides a detailed description of the projects.