June 2, 2015

Dr. Dene Thomas
President
Fort Lewis College
1000 Rim Drive
Durango, CO 81601-3999

Dear President Thomas:

Attached is the Quality Initiative Report (QIR) Review evaluation information. Fort Lewis College’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) or Pat Newton-Curran (pnewton@hlcommission.org).

Higher Learning Commission
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.

Name of Institution: Fort Lewis College

State: Colorado

Institutional ID: 1052

Reviewers (name, title, institution): Dr. Patricia Okker, Senior Associate Provost, University of Missouri and Dr. Thomas S. Wilson, Associate Professor of Business, Franciscan University of Steubenville

Date: May 26, 2015

I. Quality Initiative Review

__X__ The institution demonstrated that the initiative had scope and impact.

__X__ The institution demonstrated a commitment to and engagement in the initiative.

__X__ The institution demonstrated adequate resource provision.

II. Recommendation

__X__ 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)

Fort Lewis College has requested that a letter of consultation be supplied to them regarding their final report of their completed initiative. This report is designed to serve as that letter of consultation in compliance with their request.
Fort Lewis College embarked on a program to address a perceived problem within the college dealing with the area of student advising among other matters. While recognizing that this was a problem area, it also seems that the initiative may have been in response to a Colorado law requiring that all public institutions to offer a four-year graduation agreement to all of its students. This was an ambitious project as the four year rate for previous freshman cohorts was less than 20%. Based upon the perceived problem Fort Lewis College undertook an ambitious project to increase the four year graduation rate for its students. The College needs to be commended for developing such a project and we sincerely believe that it provide a benefit to the students and the college. We also recognize that there are several factors that deserve special attention regarding the project.

Fort Lewis College is to be commended in requiring the students to take an active role in the completion of their undergraduate degree.

Fort Lewis is to be commended for stressing the fifteen hour requirement per semester which will lead to graduation in a four year period. It has already shown a 10% increase in the number of retained freshmen.

The development and publication of Curriculum Maps outlining the requirements should be commended as students are aware of the courses that the need to progress toward graduation. In addition the maps will also give the advising staff the information they need to give quality advising information to students. It should also aid in the having fewer academic advising changes made in order to allow students to graduate.

The development of Professional advisors should lead to fewer problems in insuring that students will progress and have an opportunity to graduate within the four year window.

The tracking of student progress will also aid the college in again insuring that the students will have an opportunity to graduate within the four year time window.

Fort Lewis College appears to have designated appropriate resources, both financial and personnel, to achieve success with this initiative. In addition it appears that the personnel involved have bought into the QI. Ultimate success will depend largely upon the students who we hope will buy into the initiative and well as continue with the buy in.

Since student buy in is important Fort Lewis College needs to have a continual assessment of student involvement in the program. Since the percentage of the four year graduation rate for a prior five year period is known, the success of the initiative should be easily measurable.

In addition, we feel that the student use of the Curriculum Maps will have to be assessed on a regular basis. While the college can publish these maps it will still be up to the students to follow these maps.

Another concern we have offering of courses over the academic year. While published in advance, we believe that the teaching of the course offerings, especially in summer classes, will have to be assessed in order to see how well the Fort Lewis College is meeting its own goals in this area.

There is a broad involvement in this initiative including students, faculty and administrators, which we believe will insure success in this initiative.

Fort Lewis College should be commended in the selection development of its QI. We believe that there is great opportunity of success for the QI. We would like to see the assessment of the QI in the future.