

HLC Approves SIUE's Quality Initiative Proposal: QI Focuses on Black Students' Retention and Graduation Rates

by Doug McIlhaga
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EDWARDSVILLE – The Higher Learning Commission (HLC), has approved Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's Quality Initiative (QI) Proposal. SIUE's QI is an institutional change effort focused on improving retention and graduation rates of Black students, and will launch during the fall 2021 term.

As part of HLC accreditation requirements for universities, SIUE is required to identify and implement a large-scale quality initiative between years five and nine of the decennial accreditation cycle. A QI may be designed to begin and be completed during this time, or an institution may continue a project that is already in progress or achieve a key milestone in the work of a longer initiative. The QI is intended to allow institutions to take risks, aim high and learn from partial success or failure.

"I am grateful for the feedback and ideas that we received from the campus community. Their suggestions, the recommendations of the Anti-Racism Task Force, and the work

of our QI leadership team, which included Courtney Boddie, Geoffrey Edwards, Jessica Harris, Elza Ibroscheva and Matthew Schunke, informed this effort,” said Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Denise Cobb, PhD. “Our Quality Initiative invites all members of SIUE’s community to participate in the work of transforming our campus and ensuring that Black students have opportunities and supports to thrive.

“All Anti-Racism Task Force action items that directly align with this focus will be rolled into the QI and create even greater accountability. The Chancellor has dedicated at least \$500,000 in the QI to advance these goals, and we will build on the efforts already underway.”

The University’s QI purpose is to acknowledge structural racism as a predictor of educational and career outcomes among Black students, and to build a multi-level program designed to enhance their daily experiences by reducing incidence, prevalence, and impact of minority stress and cultural trauma in students’ lives both within and outside SIUE. The interventions designed for this QI will directly address students, and indirectly address faculty and staff concerns as they to eliminate obstacles currently impeding the academic progress of Black students.

The QI’s goals are:

Support Black students along the educational pipeline by developing a pathway for their enrollment at SIUE

Improve retention and graduation rates of Black students by achieving annual increases in retention, and by increasing the six-year graduation rate

Develop and nurture pathways to graduate and professional school and/or employment for Black students graduating from SIUE

Provide ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion education, training and resources, through various modalities, to support self-awareness and professional development

Enhance efforts to recruit and retain Black faculty and staff

For more information, visit SIUE’s QI website at siue.edu/accreditation/hlc-quality-initiative.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville provides students with a high-quality, affordable education that prepares them for successful careers and lives of purpose to shape a changing world. Built on the foundation of a broad-based liberal education, and enhanced by hands-on research and real-world experiences, the academic preparation SIUE students receive equips them to thrive in the global marketplace and make our communities better places to live. Situated on 2,660 acres of beautiful woodland atop

the bluffs overlooking the natural beauty of the Mississippi River's rich bottomland and only a short drive from downtown St. Louis, the SIUE campus is home to a diverse student body of nearly 13,000.