



## Open Pathway Quality Initiative Proposal

### Institutional Template

---

The enclosed Quality Initiative Proposal represents the work that the institution will undertake to fulfill the quality improvement requirements of the Open Pathway.

November 22, 2022

*Signature of Institution's President or Chancellor*

*Date*

Joe Gow, Chancellor

*Printed/Typed Name and Title*

University of Wisconsin - La Crosse

*Name of Institution*

La Crosse, Wisconsin

*City and State*

The institution completes the Quality Initiative Proposal by responding to the questions in each category of the template. Proposals should be no more than 4,500 words. The institution may choose to submit a brief implementation plan or supplemental charts or graphs as appendices to the template. The Quality Initiative Proposal will be accepted beginning September 1 of Year 5. It is due no later than June 1 of Year 7.

Submit the proposal as a PDF file to [hlcommission.org/upload](http://hlcommission.org/upload). Select "Pathways/Quality Initiative" from the list of submission options to ensure the institution's materials are sent to the correct HLC staff member. Submission file names should utilize the following format: QIProposal[InstitutionName][State].pdf (e.g., QIProposalNoNameUniversityMN.pdf). The file name must include the institution's name (or an identifiable portion thereof) and state.

### Overview of the Quality Initiative

1. Provide a title and brief description of the Quality Initiative. Explain whether the initiative will begin and be completed during the Quality Initiative period or if it is part of work already in progress or will achieve a key milestone in the work of a longer initiative.

UWL's proposed 2023-2026 Quality Initiative is a comprehensive public health approach to promoting mental health entitled "*Minds Matter: Public Health Approaches to Student Mental Health.*" The central goal of the initiative is enhancing student success through increased attention to a healthy campus environment. The proposed Quality Initiative builds on current aspects of campus life and resources; however, there are specific goals associated with the time scope of the 3-year initiative.

## **Sufficiency of the Initiative's Scope and Significance**

2. Explain why the proposed initiative is relevant and significant for the institution.

UWL is choosing to focus on students' mental health for several key reasons.

- National, state, and campus level increases in students reporting mental health concerns, increases in requests for services and notable increases in requests for academic accommodations based on mental health needs.
- Rising mental health concerns exacerbated by COVID-19.
- An established relationship between academic success (e.g., persistence, retention, grades, and graduation) and mental well-being.
- An ability to enhance UWL's commitment to student success and build on components of UWL's Strategic Plan "Sustaining Excellence." The initiative dovetails with the goals of two of the key pillars of the plan – Advancing Transformative Education and Achieving Excellence through Equity & Diversity.
- As one of the 13 campuses of the University of Wisconsin System, this initiative will reflect and intertwine with UW System's Framework for Student Well-being that advances a unified approach to mental health.

3. Explain the intended impact of the initiative on the institution and its academic quality.

UWL is a high-quality institution with a population of ~10,500, strong retention rate (~85%) and a 73% six-year graduation rate. In the past several years, we have positively moved the needle on the quality of student advising and the diversity of our student body. Furthermore, we have maintained our enrollment and the academic profile of our students. The campus has indicated mental health and emotional wellness as a key aspect in retaining our high-quality students and to improve their experiencing of their individual courses and their co-curriculars as they progress through their college careers. Local, regional, and national data all directly support the role of mental well-being in student success.

## **Clarity of the Initiative's Purpose**

4. Describe the purposes and goals for the initiative.

### **Overarching Goals of the UWL Initiative**

- To enhance the campus environment to support and improve the overall mental health of students.

- To coordinate and enhance current university activities associated with mental health for students (student orgs, residence life, curriculum, etc.)
- To involve the larger campus community in conversations regarding appropriate expectations in terms of the role of an institution of higher learning and mental health.
- To clarify the role of faculty and staff in responding to student mental health challenges from both a student and faculty/staff perspective.
- To relate the mind/body focus of UWL and current research to the initiative.

## Foundation of the UWL Initiative

UWL will build from each tier of the UW System Framework for Student Well-being and will focus particularly on Tier 3: Creating Healthy environments in addressing student mental health.

Figure 1. University of Wisconsin System Framework for Student Well-being

# Framework for Student Well-being

A comprehensive public health framework composed of the following three tiers guide the work of the Student Behavioral Health Initiative:



The UW System initiative builds on the JED Foundation’s (JED) public health approach to mental health in higher education and other multilayer approaches.

Comprehensive community-based approaches to campus well-being take a public health approach and provide tiered foci regarding mental health (e.g., Atkins & Frazer, 2011). When addressing prevention, there is an emphasis on proactive approaches. **Universal** prevention programs (e.g., Tier 3) have a focus on preventing disorders from developing by targeting the entire population to reduce risk factors and build protective factors for all students. And there is a focus on preventing distress/subclinical disorders and harmful behaviors (e.g., heavy episodic drinking). The less universal tier is more selective or **targeted** (e.g., Tier 2 - to prevent disorders from developing in a person or group at higher risk of developing mental health disorders). An example of a Tier 2 aspect is UWL’s Student Life’s reach out to friends of a student who has recently died from suicide. Finally, within the prevention model, there is an **individualized** tier (Tier 1) with attention to intervention and response.

UWL has made strong strides in providing Tier 1 and Tier 2 responses for students over the past several years by adding counselors, triage strategies, online platforms, and individualized and group care. With the advent of COVID and basic services in place, the university now needs to focus on more preventative and promotion aspects as indicated in Tier 3 of public health models regarding mental well-being. Although the focus of the initiative will be on student well-being, a universal approach may also yield improved well-being for faculty and staff by clarifying expectations and potentially improving the overall climate on campus.

**Expected features of UWL’s initiative unique to our campus.**

- UWL has foundational action items regarding mental health promotion associated with a 2016 campus-wide plan developed in relation to mental health.
- A focus on designing classroom approaches that promote instructor roles of designing and discussing academic challenges and achievements as building blocks of well-being. The role of instructors in scaffolding academic success for a healthy climate for learning with a focus on building academic success and achievement as building blocks of wellness.
- Purposeful role of students in the initiative – through student governance mechanisms, but also student organizations such as the UWL chapter of “Active Minds.” Students will be involved in the development of the initiative and courses will be utilized as incubators for ideas (marketing, social norming, public health promotion, etc.).
- Special collaboration with the Division of Diversity & Inclusion regarding mental health awareness and services of diverse student populations.
- A focus on evidence-based community-level initiatives that have worked at other campuses (UW-Madison’s Healthy Minds App).
- UWL’s motto is—Mens Corpusque (Latin for "mind and body"). UWL faculty and staff are dedicated to the whole education of students, giving them an outstanding academic education, along with an appreciation for physical and emotional well-being.

**5. Select up to three main topics that will be addressed by the initiative.**

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advising            | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership                      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Retention       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Learning Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Planning         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civic Engagement    | <input type="checkbox"/> Online Learning                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Student Learning           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum          | <input type="checkbox"/> Persistence and Completion      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Student Success |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity           | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development        | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching/Pedagogy          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engagement          | <input type="checkbox"/> Program Development             | <input type="checkbox"/> Underserved Populations    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Program Evaluation              | <input type="checkbox"/> Workforce                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> First-Year Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Improvement             | <input type="checkbox"/> Other:                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Education   |  |   |

**6. Describe how the institution will evaluate progress, make adjustments and determine what has been accomplished.**

UWL is involved in several large-scale surveys that will be used to establish a baseline and be monitored during the initiative. Each asks questions geared toward student perception of mental well-being and services related to mental well-being. In addition, more targeted assessments will occur.

- **NSSE** – The National Survey of Student Engagement (first-year and seniors – assessed on a three-year cycle). Latest data = 2020
- **Residence Life Survey** – Annual to all residence life students.

- **Campus Climate Survey** – 2020 – campus level data (will be reassessed – likely in 2023)
- More targeted assessments such as pre/post Kognito (online mental health awareness) training (or other trainings); pre/post counseling experiences; pre/post suicide training; Navigate quick polls; American College Health Association Survey (UWL gets a campus report every 3 years – last one 2021).
- Focus groups with students throughout the process.

## Evidence of Commitment to and Capacity for Accomplishing the Initiative

### 7. Describe the level of support for the initiative by internal or external stakeholders.

The proposal has been vetted with senior leadership and with multiple governance groups. Of particular note, the campus' Joint Planning and Budget Committee, which is representative of all governance groups including students, provided feedback regarding the proposal.

### 8. Identify the groups and individuals that will lead or be directly involved in implementing the initiative.

Steering Committee:

Co-chairs: Betsy Morgan, Provost (Division of Academic Affairs)

Crystal Champion, interim Director of Counseling and Testing (Division of Student Affairs)

Patrick Heise, Residence Life (Division of Student Affairs)

Issy Beach, Wellness Coordinator (Division of Student Affairs)

Michele Petit, Faculty in Public Health (Division of Academic Affairs)

Catherine Kolkmeier, Executive Director of the Health Science Consortium (Community liaison)

Tara Nelson, Center for Transformative Justice (Division of Diversity & Inclusion)

Anika Shortreed, Student and President of student club "Active Minds"

### 9. List the human, financial, technological and other resources that the institution has committed to this initiative.

In addition to the human capital associated with the steering committee, multiple associated groups are partners for this initiative. Of particular note, UWL's communications team is working closely with the steering committee on the website and social media presence. In addition, the Center for Advancing of Teaching and Learning is a partner for faculty professional development regarding classroom climates. Finally, UWL is a heavily residential campus with 97% of our first-year students and almost 30% of continuing students living on campus in residence halls. Consequently, the programing for residents and training of staff is a key component of the initiative.

## Appropriateness of the Timeline for the Initiative

*(The institution may include a brief implementation or action plan.)*

### 10. Describe the primary activities of the initiative and timeline for implementing them.

Date	Event	Comment
------	-------	---------

Spring 2022	Vetting of “Minds Matter” proposal with senior leadership and governance groups.	Campus shows strong support and enthusiasm for the initiative.
Fall 2022	Steering Committee completes mapping of UWL initiatives associated with mental health. Initial meetings with student groups commence.	Start work on the review of website resources for students and for faculty/staff. Narrowing to a single “source” for resource list and expansion of links to this list.  Attention to social media re: students and the counseling center.  Build preliminary landing page for instructors.
Spring 2023	Metrics identified associated with goals.	
Fall 2023 – Spring 2024	Primary focus on a campaign associated with awareness of resources for students and for faculty/staff.  Training for front line staff such as departmental administrative assistants in responding to individuals in crisis.	Systematic integration of resource awareness in courses and co-curricular aspects.
Fall 2024- Spring 2025	Identification of ways to promote campus-wide healthy environments.	
Fall 2025 – Spring 2026	TBA based on aspects of needs indicated by the work of years 1 and 2 – likely a focus on specific groups of students more at risk for mental health concerns.	

## Institutional Contact for Quality Initiative Proposal

Include the name(s) of the primary contact(s) for the Quality Initiative.

Name and Title: Betsy Morgan, Provost

Phone: 608-785-8042

Email: [bmorgan@uwlax.edu](mailto:bmorgan@uwlax.edu)