



July 11, 2017

Daniel Taylor, President
Future Generations Graduate School
390 Road Less Traveled
Franklin, WV 26807

Dear President Taylor:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (“HLC” or “the Commission”) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning Future Generations Graduate School (“the Graduate School” or “the institution”). During its meeting on June 29, 2017, the Board removed the sanction of Notice from the Graduate School. This action is effective as of the date the action was taken. The Board determined that the removal of the sanction was warranted based on evidence provided by the Graduate School, including the Notice Report; the report of the visiting team; the staff analysis of the sanction; and the Graduate School’s responses to these reports.

The Board maintained the Graduate School on the Standard Pathway with its next comprehensive evaluation (Year 4) to take place in 2018-19. The Board required that the Graduate School submit an embedded monitoring report addressing the following:

- Academic rigor (Core Component 3.A), documenting that the changes made in the admissions process, curriculum, curricular delivery and other changes have strengthened the program's scholarly approaches, resulting in the matriculation of students capable of graduate-level work and demonstrating through the Graduate School's new assessment system that student learning outcomes are being met at levels of academic rigor appropriate for a graduate degree-granting institution. Included in the Assurance Filing will be a detailed summary analysis relative to assessment results for the Class of 2017, including random samples of the range of scholarship demonstrated in work completed by students. Should an additional cohort begin during the 2017 year, the Assurance Filing should also include assessment of this group of students, demonstrating the Graduate School’s continuing attention to academic rigor;
- Program review (Core Component 4.A), documenting that the newly adopted program review model, despite being adapted from a different field, is yielding appropriate improvements in the Graduate School’s academic program;
- Assessment (Core Component 4.B), providing evidence that the Graduate School has sustained a viable model for assessment of student learning that yields benefits for curricular improvements regardless of the modality in which program(s) are offered; and
- Integrity and Governance (Core Components 2.A and 5.B), providing evidence that the Graduate School’s key corporate and business decisions are made with a clear and defined framework for understanding their implications for regulatory and accreditation oversight.

Additionally, the Board acknowledged the request of the Graduate School to be known henceforth as “Future Generations University” and does not object contingent upon written confirmation from the institution that the Graduate School’s desire to change its name is not incidental to any transaction now under contemplation that would require prior HLC review as required by HLC policy.

The Board based its action on the following findings made with regard to the Graduate School:

The Graduate School meets Criterion Two, Core Component 2.A, “the institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff,” and Criterion Five, Core Component 5.B, “the institution’s governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission,” but with concerns because the Graduate School, in undertaking (and then reversing) without authorization from HLC a transaction that required prior approval from HLC, demonstrated the lack of any defined internal framework or personnel expertise for effective oversight regarding the potential implications of its business and corporate decisions for its regulatory and accreditation associations.

The Graduate School meets Criterion Three, Core Component 3.A, “the institution’s degree programs are appropriate to higher education,” but with concerns because:

- Interviews with enrolled students representing two cohorts to identify key concepts or theory learned left reviewers doubtful of the extent of the Graduate School’s progress with respect to academic rigor;
- The Graduate School’s External Advisory Council has not met as a group since September 2014, has only provided one-on-one sporadic counsel since that time, and does not appear to include sufficient membership from current academic leaders familiar with graduate education; and
- While the Graduate School has provided additional documentation articulating further efforts to enhance academic rigor, such efforts have not been vetted through the mechanism of peer review, nor have they been demonstrated as effective by reference to student learning outcomes.

The Graduate School meets Criterion Four, Core Component 4.A, “the institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs,” but with concerns because the recent adoption (and adaptation) of a model of program review borrowed from a different field without evidence of the effectiveness of that model to yield sound recommendations for improvement for the Graduate School’s program form a reasonable basis for Commission follow-up in this area.

The Graduate School meets Criterion Four, Core Component 4.B, “the institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning,” but with concerns because:

- After two years on Notice, the Graduate School could only produce evidence of a newly implemented assessment system and artifacts collected during the first term of the current cohort;
- Evidence is not yet available that the Graduate School has institutionalized the new assessment model on an ongoing basis; and
- Given the Graduate School’s strong interest in adopting a competency-based approach, building and sustaining a strong model of assessment of student learning is critical.

The Graduate School has demonstrated that it now meets without concerns Criterion Three, Core Component 3.C, “the institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services,” because:

- The Graduate School has instituted shared governance of its academic programs and curricular matters with the establishment of a Dean's Council to lead the process and ensure that a culture of shared governance is sustained; and
- The Graduate School has adopted policies designed to guide its new shared governance model, including with respect to faculty evaluation and faculty development.

The Graduate School is otherwise in compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation.

At this time, the Commission will reassign the Graduate School from its liaison Dr. Anthea Sweeney to Dr. Eric Martin. Please be assured that Dr. Sweeney will work with Dr. Martin to ensure a smooth transition.

The Board action resulted in changes to the affiliation of the School. These changes are reflected on the Institutional Status and Requirements Report. Some of the information on that document, such as the dates of the last and next comprehensive evaluation visits, will be posted to the HLC website.

Information is provided to members of the public and to other constituents in several ways. Commission policy INST.G.10.010, Management of Commission Information, anticipates that HLC will release action letters to members of the public. The Commission will do so by posting this action letter to its website. Also, the enclosed Public Disclosure Notice will be posted to HLC's website not more than 24 hours after this letter is sent to you.

In addition, Commission policy COMM.A.10.010, Commission Public Notices and Statements, requires that HLC prepare a summary of actions to be sent to appropriate state and federal agencies and accrediting associations and published on its website. The summary will include HLC Board action regarding the Graduate School.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I thank you and your associates for your cooperation. If you have questions about any of the information in this letter, please contact Dr. Martin.

Sincerely,



Barbara Gellman-Danley
President

Enclosure: Public Disclosure Notice

cc: Chair of the Board of Trustees, Future Generations Graduate School
Dan Wessner, Professor, Future Generations Graduate School
Evaluation team chair
Paul Hill, Chancellor, West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission
Eric Martin, Vice President and Chief of Staff, Higher Learning Commission
Anthea Sweeney, Vice President for Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning Commission
Karen Peterson Solinski, Executive Vice President for Legal and Governmental Affairs,
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