

February 27, 2023

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Ginny Favede
President
Wheeling University
316 Washington Ave
Wheeling, West Virginia 26003

Dear President Favede:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning Wheeling University (“the Institution”). This action is effective as of the date the Board acted, February 23, 2023. In taking this action, the Board considered materials from the most recent comprehensive evaluation, including, but not limited to: the Assurance Filing the institution submitted, the report from the comprehensive evaluation team, the report of the Institutional Actions Council (IAC) Hearing Committee, and the institutional responses to these reports.

Summary of the Action: The Board determined that the Institution is no longer out of compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation and removed the Institution from Probation and assigned interim monitoring. This action also resulted in a reaffirmation of the Institution’s accreditation. The Institution meets Core Components 3.C, 4.A, 4.B, 5.B, and 5.C with concerns. The Institution is required to submit an embedded report with its next Assurance Filing, as outlined below, on Core Components 3.C, 4.A, 4.B, 5.B and 5.C.

Substantive Change: HLC policy¹ states an institution removed from Probation shall be subject to additional requirements for substantive change for three (3) years following the removal of Probation.²

Notification Program: HLC policy³ states that the Institution remains ineligible for the Notification Program for Additional Locations until it has completed ten (10) years in good standing as required for access.

¹ INST.E.20.010, Probation.

² INST.F.20.040, Substantive Change.

³ INST.E.20.010, Probation.

Board Rationale

The Board based its action on the following findings made with regard to the Institution as well as the entire record before the Board:

Wheeling University now meets without concerns Criterion Two, Core Component 2.C, “the governing board of the institution is autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution in compliance with board policies and to ensure the institution’s integrity,” for the following reason:

- Institution’s Board Binder, Board orientation materials, and other Board documents, as reviewed by an external consultant, indicate that the Institution has taken appropriate steps to train and educate the Board on its responsibilities, as well as to prepare the Board to address the Institution’s most pressing issues.

The Institution meets, but with concerns Criterion Three, Core Component 3.C, “the institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services,” for the following reason:

- Although the Institution has achieved a measure of success in diversifying its student body (approximately 35%), diversity among the Institution's faculty and staff lags significantly.
- The Institution plans to increase international enrollment, but lacks both specific plans and strategies for doing so, as well as lacks specific plans related to diversifying the faculty and staff to support these students.

The Institution meets, but with concerns, Criterion Four, Core Component 4.A, “the institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings,” for the following reason:

- Program reviews were suspended at the Institution as part of its declaration of financial exigency. Although the Institution has provided a two-year schedule within which to review all programs, the review process is just being reengaged.

The Institution continues to meet, but with concerns, Criterion Four, Core Component 4.B, “the institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students,” for the following reasons:

- Although the Institution has rudimentary plans regarding cocurricular assessment, the implementation of these plans is in the early stages. This Institution is still developing an understanding of what will be required to fully implement comprehensive assessment practices in this area.
- The Institution lacks regular, systematic processes for the inclusion and use of assessment results in the planning and budgeting process.

The Institution now meets without concerns Criterion Four, Core Component 4.C, “the institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs,” for the following reasons:

- The Institution has done considerable work to establish ambitious but achievable plans, goals, and benchmarks for its retention and persistence efforts.
- Early feedback and institutional data show signs of success with the Institution reporting modest but positive increases in critical metrics, including fall-to-fall retention, semester-to-semester persistence, and the six-year graduation rate.

The Institution now meets Criterion Five, Core Component 5.A “through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, the institution’s leadership demonstrates that it is effective and enables the institution to fulfill its mission,” for the following reasons:

- On September 1, 2020, HLC's revised Criteria for Accreditation went into effect.
- The basis for the Not Met finding as to Core Component 5.A at the time of the assignment of Probation was for reasons now set forth under Core Component 5.B, as explained below.

The Institution meets, but with concerns, Criterion Five, Core Component 5.B “the institution’s resource base supports its educational offerings and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future,” for the following reasons:

- While the Institution has demonstrated progress in growing enrollment, current enrollment continues to be insufficient to meet the Institution's fiscal needs.
- The Institution has demonstrated a pattern of using unrealistic projections of enrollment growth in its enrollment and fiscal planning. However, the Institution has recently sought to address this by retaining a consulting firm to assist the Institution on enrollment management.
- The Institution is using external consultants to assist in the training of advancement personnel to improve performance in this area.

The Institution meets, but with concerns, Criterion Five, Core Component 5.C “the institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement,” for the following reasons:

- The Institution is currently outsourcing part of the traditional responsibilities of a CFO to an international accounting network while it plans and conducts a search for its new CFO.
- This consultancy has enabled the Institution to execute new processes, including a real-time budget adjustment of 15% as was needed to address the

fall enrollment shortfall.

- The Institution needs to build its capacity to make similar and ongoing improvements under the leadership of its own staff.

The Institution no longer requires monitoring related to Federal Compliance Requirement: Title-IV Program Responsibilities for the following reason:

- There is no evidence that the Institution has ongoing issues related to compliance with all Title IV Program responsibilities.

The Institution no longer requires monitoring related to Federal Compliance Requirement: Standing with State and Other Accrediting Agencies for the following reason:

- The Institution's representations of its relationships with other accreditors are accurate.
- The Institution's status of "deferred" with ACBSP is not a negative action but merely documents the need to postpone a scheduled visit due to pandemic-related disruption.

The Board of Trustees of the Higher Learning Commission has determined based on the preceding findings and evidence in the record the Institution has demonstrated that it is otherwise in compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation, Assumed Practices and Federal Compliance requirements.

Next Steps in the HLC Review Process

Embedded Report: The Board required that the Institution submit an embedded report with its next Assurance Filing regarding Core Components 3.C, 4.A, 4.B, 5.B and 5.C.

Comprehensive Evaluation: The Institution has been placed on the Standard Pathway with its next comprehensive evaluation for reaffirmation of accreditation in 2026-27.

HLC Disclosure Obligations

The Board action resulted in changes that will be reflected in the Institution's Statement of Accreditation Status as well as the Institutional Status and Requirements Report. The Statement of Accreditation Status, including the dates of the last and next comprehensive evaluation visits, will be posted to the HLC website.

In accordance with HLC policy,⁴ information about this action is provided to members of the public and to other constituents in several ways. This Action Letter and the enclosed Public Disclosure Notice will be posted to HLC's website not more than one business day after this letter is sent to the Institution. Additionally, a summary of Board actions will be sent to appropriate

⁴ COMMA.10.010, Notice of Accreditation Actions, HLC Public Notices and Public Statements

state and federal agencies and accrediting associations. This summary also will be published on HLC's website. The summary will include this HLC action regarding the Institution.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank you in advance for your cooperation. If you have questions about any of the information in this letter, please contact your HLC Staff Liaison, Dr. John Marr.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Gellman-Danley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barbara Gellman-Danley
President

Enc: Public Disclosure Notice

Cc: Chair of the Board of Trustees, Wheeling University
Jacqueline McGlade, Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, Wheeling University
Evaluation Team Chair
IAC Hearing Committee Chair
John Marr, Vice President of Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning Commission
Anthea Sweeney, Vice President of Legal and Regulatory Affairs, Higher Learning
Commission
Sarah Armstrong Tucker, Chancellor, West Virginia Higher Education Policy
Commission