



March 9, 2017

Lee Lambert, Chancellor
Pima County Community College District
4905C E. Broadway Blvd.
Tucson, AZ 85709

Dear Chancellor Lambert:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (“HLC” or “the Commission”) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning Pima County Community College District (“the College” or “the institution”). During its meeting on February 23, 2017, the Board removed the sanction of Notice from the College. 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 College, including the Notice Report, the report of the visiting team, the staff analysis of the sanction, and the College’s responses to these reports.

The Board maintained the College on the Standard Pathway with its next comprehensive evaluation (Year 4) in 2018-19. The Board required that the College submit an embedded Interim Report for its next comprehensive evaluation on the following topics:

- Goals and activities implemented by the new staff charged with oversight of assessment activities;
- Evidence that planning goals are being achieved;
- The establishment and continuation of a defined planning structure and process;
- Evidence of further development in linking budgeting to strategic planning;
- Evidence of the approval and implementation of the education and facilities master plan; and
- Data demonstrating the effectiveness of the Developmental Education Redesign and how the Redesign has contributed to increased persistence, retention, and completion rates.

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

The College meets Criterion Three, Core Component 3.D, “the institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching,” but with concerns for the following reasons:

- The College continued work on the Development Education Redesign by creating a Council charged with implementation of the plan related to developmental education;

- Students are now directed to a clearly defined process, which utilizes multiple measures to assess students' abilities for placement purposes and intentional academic advising;
- Faculty and counselors report that an Early Alert System is now in use and effective;
- Developmental math and writing courses are current, and faculty across the division are provided with resources to support continued professional development in this area;
- However, the plan remains in the implementation stage and its effectiveness has not yet been evaluated; and
- The Core Component is met with concerns due to the lack of data demonstrating effectiveness.

The College 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 for the following reasons:

- While the College has developed a more robust reporting system that provides actionable data to guide course redevelopment and has launched faculty workshops to improve understanding of assessment strategies and tactics, two critical assessment positions have recently been filled;
- The Director of Assessment and Research Analyst positions are critical in moving the College towards its long-term commitment to sustaining an effective assessment program; and
- The College made progress in several areas, but it has not demonstrated that goals and measurable activities are clearly outlined and being conducted.

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

- The College has engaged in multiple planning processes over the past two years, including the adoption of a strategic plan in 2014-2017;
- An administrative restructuring to consolidate campus president positions and reorganize oversight of the six campuses began but some phases have not yet been completed;
- Due to enrollment declines and elimination of all state funding, the College went through a series of budget reductions, but additional severe reductions are necessary. A consolidation of programs at campuses was under consideration at the time of the team review;
- However, evidence of establishment of an effective planning structure and process was not yet available; achievement of goals and key performance indicators remains a challenging activity for the College;
- Evidence of approval and implementation of an education and facilities master plan is needed; and
- The Core Component is met with concerns due to the lack of data demonstrating effectiveness.

The College has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission's concerns related to Criterion One, Core Component 1.A, "the institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations," for the following reasons:

- The College community participated in a mission development process with several elements approved by the Board of Governors in 2015;
- In its efforts to link the mission to planning, the College engaged faculty, administrators, students, community members and local high school administrators and teachers to provide feedback to potential Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and the Board of Governors approved the indicators in 2016; and
- The Strategic Plan update report showed unit plans with KPIs and data, along with linkages to specific strategic goals.

The College has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission's concerns related to 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," for the following reasons:

- Policies and procedures for the Board of Governors and employees have been defined and adopted; evidence of training and implementation exists;
- Human Resources was restructured with new administrative personnel assuming leadership in 2015; goals and metrics are used to measure the effectiveness of changes to policies and procedures;
- Engagement with the Association of Community College Trustees to update the Board of Governors bylaws has continued since 2013; the College continues to follow the three-year review cycle that was implemented in 2013 with the next review nearing completion at the time of the team visit;
- The Board of Governors has developed and follows a defined ongoing training protocol;
- The Office of Dispute Resolution continues to serve as a clearinghouse for complaints, grievances and allegations of misconduct; the evaluation team documented metrics to measure effectiveness and a strong data collection process; and
- An infrastructure for guiding ethical purchasing processes is in place and functioning as outlined in policies.

The College has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission's concerns related to Criterion Three, Core Component 3.A, "the institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education," for the following reasons:

- College Discipline Area Committees (CDACs) review student learning outcomes for each course on a regular basis; the committees are working to develop Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and capstone experiences for each program;

- The College has developed a process for reviewing and maintaining syllabi to ensure courses have proper and specific learning goals; faculty and students indicated the process helped to provide consistency across courses; and
- Dual enrollment and adjunct faculty are provided with pre-populated templates that consist of the correct learning outcomes.

The College has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission's concerns related to 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 reasons:

- Though student enrollment has declined and the number of faculty has decreased, the College was able to demonstrate an improved student to faculty ratio from 27:1 to 25:1; and
- The majority of adjunct faculty teach in the dual enrollment program, and full-time faculty have priority over adjuncts if they desire overload classes.

The College has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission's concerns related to Criterion Four, Core Component 4.A, "the institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs," for the following reasons:

- The College now tracks program completion rates through the development of a graduate dashboard; institutional and external data are used to calculate various factors on the dashboard;
- The College is still working to meet its stated goals of increasing program completion for every year; and
- Efforts to track transfer students and student success across programs as an element of program review are limited and will need additional institutional attention.

The College has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission's concerns related to Criterion Four, Core Component 4.C, "the institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs," for the following reasons:

- The College demonstrated a commitment to developing goals and using data to make decisions related to student success (e.g., persistence, completion, job placement);
- A selective admissions process was implemented for 23 programs where compliance issues might limit retention or completion; and
- Program review and improvement plans for 32 areas were reviewed by the team; the College demonstrated a commitment to ongoing efforts to use data to make decisions that would improve the student experience across the entire length of the program.

The College has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission's concerns related to 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,” for the following reasons:

- The team witnessed a demonstrated commitment to a shared governance system that allows faculty, staff and students to participate; the Board of Governors continues to improve its efforts to follow the agreed-upon structure, with additional commitment necessary in order for the College leadership to manage the day-to-day affairs of the district;
- Evidence of training regarding governance policies and practice was evident across the College; and
- While some community groups continue to express concerns, business leaders and the mayor indicated that recent changes were on target, and the College was meeting community needs.

The College has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission’s concerns related to Criterion Five, Core Component 5.D, “the institution works systematically to improve its performance,” for the following reasons:

- Efforts started in the beginning of the 2014-2017 strategic planning cycle continue, and planning has evolved from individual campuses to cross-district unit efforts in order to align with administrative re-organization;
- Data-informed decision making is occurring across units, with assessment of student learning improving after the redevelopment of data gathering and usage; and
- The College can identify budgeting changes linked to institutional effectiveness processes.

The Board action resulted in changes to the affiliation of the College. 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.

At this time, the Commission will reassign the School from its liaison Vice President Karen Solomon to Vice President Linnea Stenson. Please be assured that Dr. Solomon will work with Dr. Stenson to create a smooth transition.

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 College.

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. Stenson.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,



Barbara Gellman-Danley
President

Enclosure: Public Disclosure Notice

cc: Chair of the Board of Trustees, Pima County Community College District
Bruce Moses, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Accreditation and Quality Improvement,
Pima County Community College District
Eileen Klein, President, Arizona Board of Regents
Evaluation team chair
Karen Solomon, Vice President for Accreditation Relations and Director of the Standard
Pathway, Higher Learning Commission
Linnea Stenson, Vice President for Accreditation Relations and Director of the AQIP
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Karen Peterson Solinski, Executive Vice President for Legal and Governmental Affairs,
Higher Learning Commission