November 17, 2016

Diane Vertin, President
Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College
13466 W. Trepania Rd.
Hayward, WI 54843

Dear President Vertin:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (“HLC” or “the Commission”) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College (“the College” or “the institution”). At its meeting on November 3, 2016, the Board voted to remove the sanction of Probation from the College. This action is effective as of the date action was taken. The Board determined that removal of the sanction was warranted based on materials from the College’s most recent comprehensive evaluation including, but not limited to: the Assurance Filing the College submitted, the report from the comprehensive evaluation team, the report of the Institutional Actions Council (“IAC”) Hearing Committee, the institution’s responses to these reports, and other materials relevant to the evaluation.

The Board required that the College host a focused evaluation no later than September 1, 2018 demonstrating further progress on the following areas, but with emphasis on finance and retention issues:

Core Component 4.A - The College should provide evidence that it has made continued progress with its academic program review process in terms of developing program-level measurable indicators and involving faculty members broadly in the process.

Core Component 4.B - The College should provide evidence of a faculty-driven and fully executed process that demonstrates analysis of outcomes by the faculty with corresponding data-informed changes made at the course, program, and institutional levels.

Core Component 4.C - The College must demonstrate an understanding of why enrolled students leave and what the factors are that lead students to persist. The institution should provide evidence that it has created metrics that work to close the achievement gaps for students in different types of programs (academic v. career) and location (main campus v. outreach centers). Further, it should identify and publish lists of student development, service learning, career counseling, and co-curricular activities that are found to promote retention and degree completion. Finally, it will show evidence of an improved number and quality of wrap-around services for students and increase the number of community partnerships.

Core Component 5.A - The College should provide evidence that the internal control issues have been addressed. Given the qualified, but inexperienced, new staff, the College should provide evidence of college-wide professional development to enhance the staff’s ability to perform job functions. The College should also provide documentation that the faculty credentialing process has been embedded in its processes, along with evidence of a comprehensive enrollment and retention plan, evidence that a budget monitoring system has
been implemented, and evidence that a viable and transparent solution has been provided to departments with the necessary analysis to ensure budgets are met.

Core Component 5.C - The College should provide evidence of continued progress with its strategic planning process in integrating its financial, budgeting, and other resources in alignment with its long-term mission and priorities.

Core Component 5.D - The College should provide evidence of a consistent process for college-wide data-informed decision making, and evidence that the implementation of the strategic plan is tied to key performance indicators.

The Board placed the College on the Standard Pathway and required that it host its next comprehensive evaluation for Reaffirmation of Accreditation in 2020-21.

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

The College has demonstrated progress in addressing the Commission’s concerns related to Criterion Five, Core Component 5.C, “the institution engages in systematic and integrated planning,” but still meets this Core Component with concerns for the following reasons:

- Although the College has begun to establish a systematic and integrated planning process, such efforts are in the early stages of development; and
- These efforts have yet to be transformed into operational and tactical action planning or fully linked with finance and budgeting.

The College meets Core Component 4.A, “the institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs,” but with concerns because although the College had made tremendous progress in laying out the program review process, and its implementation, concerns remain with regard to generating measurable indicators to assess the success of College graduates and implementing any meaningful changes needed to the curriculum.

The College meets Core Component 4.B, “the institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning,” but with concerns because faculty involvement in assessment is still in its infancy, and the number of full-time faculty members available to be part of this process outside of their teaching assignments may not be sufficient to move assessment forward as a sustainable process capable of yielding sufficient data-driven changes at the course, program and institutional levels.

The College meets 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,” but with concerns because the College lacks a systematic and integrated approach to improving persistence, retention and completion although plans appear to be rapidly moving forward.

The College meets Core Component 5.A, “the institution’s resource base supports its current educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future” but with concerns because the small number of relatively inexperienced employees in the business operations area, however well qualified, is of concern in relation to ensuring the adequacy of internal controls needed to protect the College’s assets.
The College meets Core Component 5.D, “the institution works systematically to improve its performance,” but with concerns because although the College has demonstrated a clear commitment to assessment and improvement, the College is still in the early stages of establishing a systematic approach to improving its performance.

The College otherwise meets the Criteria for Accreditation and the federal compliance requirements.

At this time, the Commission will reassign the College from its liaison Dr. Anthea Sweeney, Vice President for Accreditation Relations, to Dr. Thomas Bordenkircher, Vice President for Accreditation Relations. Please be assured that Dr. Sweeney will work with Dr. Bordenkircher to create a smooth transition.

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.

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.

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. Please contact Dr. Bordenkircher if you have questions about any of the information in this letter.

Sincerely,

Barbara Gellman-Danley
President

Enclosure: Public Disclosure Notice

cc: Chair of the Board of Trustees, Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College
Thomas Antell, Assessment Coordinator, Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College
Thomas Bordenkircher, Vice President for Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning Commission
Anthea Sweeney, Vice President for Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning Commission
Karen Peterson Solinski, Executive Vice President for Legal and Governmental Affairs, Higher Learning Commission
Herman Bounds, Accreditation and State Liaison, Office of Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education