



November 20, 2019

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dr. George Knox, Interim President  
Independence Community College  
1057 W. College Ave.  
Independence, KS 67301

Dear President Knox:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning Independence Community College (“the Institution”). This action is effective as of the date the Board acted, November 7, 2019. In taking this action, the Board considered materials from the recent Notice visit, including, but not limited to: the Notice report the Institution submitted, the report from the Notice visit 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 at risk of noncompliance with the Criteria for Accreditation and removed the Institution from Notice.

### **Board Rationale**

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

The institution now meets without concerns 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:

- The Institution has taken significant steps to enhance reporting and processing of complaints through the implementation of the Maxient system, a software solution that provides a best practice for the reporting, management and tracking of student complaints.
- The Institution has hired a consultant to assist with compliance and has provided training for Title IX investigators and others on campus. The Human Resources Director, who has compliance experience, is working with the consultant.
- The composition of the Institution's Judicial Committee has been revised to limit potential conflict of interest issues and a conflict of interest statement has been created to govern its conduct.

- The Safety Committee has become a standing committee and has worked to expand the emergency management plan and to provide necessary training.

The Institution now meets without concerns Criterion Three, Core Component 3.D, “the institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching,” for the following reasons:

- The Technology Committee has created a technology plan that addresses key infrastructure issues and is viewed as a multi-year project.
- The Institution has addressed security issues related to access to sensitive data in the administrative systems. New policies are in place regarding such access.
- The Institution recently hired a new chief financial officer who has revamped the budget and budgeting process and has identified ways to address some of the prioritized needs.

The Institution now meets without concerns Criterion Four, Core Component 4.A, “the institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs,” for the following reason:

- A program review process that was implemented in 2017-18 is now a consistent and regular part of ICC’s academic oversight. The process was revised for fall 2019 and includes the use of data to inform program assessments and recommendations.

The Institution now meets without concerns Criterion Four, Core Component 4.B, “the institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning,” for the following reasons:

- Data from the program review process, including assessment data, are being utilized to make programmatic changes.
- Findings based on data are now being connected to budgetary decisions and strategic initiatives.

The Institution now meets without concerns 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 Institution is now utilizing institutional data in building its recruitment and retention plan.
- To facilitate student persistence, the Institution created the Navigator process, which helps students progress in achieving their educational goals.
- Benchmarks and key data points have been established for the persistence and completion agenda and the Institution is utilizing good survey instruments, Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) and Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), to gather indirect measures of student success.

The Institution now meets without concerns 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:

- ICC has made progress in the area of governance and administrative structure to support the accomplishment of its strategic goals. Key changes include the addition of a faculty senate and student government leadership group.
- Additional progress has been achieved under the leadership of an interim president who has restructured the Institution and clarified reporting channels to better meet institutional needs.
- The Institution was able to allocate money for employee raises for FY2020, which is intended to reinforce the perceived value of employees.
- Athletics has been administratively separated from Student Services to address previous issues.
- The Board has worked to become more aware of key issues and to remain engaged in what is happening on the campus.

The Institution now meets without concerns Criterion Five, Core Component 5.C, “the institution engages in systematic and integrated planning,” for the following reasons:

- The Institution has worked to create a systematic planning process that integrates strategic planning with operational plans and budgeting.
- The new strategic plan will be made widely available, will have monthly Board updates and will be revised as needed to reflect current priorities. A strategic planning committee was implemented to report through the Assessment Committee, which will help maintain continuity among efforts.

The Institution now meets without concerns Criterion Five, Core Component 5.D, “the institution works systematically to improve its performance,” for the following reasons:

- ICC has developed a strategic planning process that allows for the development of key institutional priorities and can be used to connect operational plans and related goals. The new strategic plan will provide greater flexibility and connection for the Institution.
- The program review process is fully functioning and now has a direct link to budget planning.
- The Institution has made progress toward using relevant data to consistently and systematically inform short- and long-term planning efforts.

The Institution has demonstrated that it is otherwise in compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation, Assumed Practices, and Federal Compliance Requirements and is no longer at risk of noncompliance with the Criteria for Accreditation, and thus should be removed from Notice.

### **Next Steps in the HLC Review Process**

**Comprehensive Evaluation:** The Board maintained the Institution on the Standard Pathway with its next comprehensive evaluation (Year 4) in 2021-22.

### 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,<sup>1</sup> 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 24 hours after this letter is sent to the Institution. Additionally, a summary of Board actions will be sent to appropriate 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,



Barbara Gellman-Danley  
President

Enc: Public Disclosure Notice

Cc: Chair of the Board of Trustees, Independence Community College  
Cordell Jordan, Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer, Independence  
Community College  
Evaluation Team Chair  
IAC Hearing Committee Chair  
Karla Wiscombe, Director of Academic Affairs, Kansas Board of Regents  
John Marr, Vice President for Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning Commission  
Anthea Sweeney, Vice President for Legal and Governmental Affairs, Higher Learning  
Commission

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<sup>1</sup> INST.G.10.010, Management of Commission Information; COMM.A.10.010, Commission Public Notices and Statements