



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

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November 7, 2022

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Anthony S. Niedwiecki, President and Dean
Mitchell Hamline School of Law
875 Summit Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55105

Dear President Niedwiecki:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning Mitchell Hamline School of Law (“the Institution”). This action is effective as of the date the Board acted, November 3, 2022. 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 Institution has been granted the status of Candidate for Accreditation. The term of candidacy is four years. The Institution must have an evaluation, known as a biennial evaluation to determine whether the Institution is making reasonable progress toward meeting accreditation requirements by the end of the Candidacy period. The Board action scheduled the Institution’s biennial evaluation for academic year 2023-24. The date of the comprehensive evaluation for initial accreditation will be identified in official HLC records as 2025-26, with the visit to occur in spring 2026.

The Institution is approved as candidate to offer Master’s and Doctoral programs.

It is also approved as a candidate to offer courses via distance education.

Provisional Plan: Federal regulations require that a candidate institution submit a Provisional Plan. Thus, HLC policy¹ requires that the Institution file a Provisional Plan with HLC for review and approval by the Institutional Actions Council according to HLC’s substantive change procedures. This Provisional Plan must comport with HLC’s requirements for Provisional Plans. The Institution must submit its Provisional Plan within 90 calendar days of this letter.

¹ FDCR.B.10.010, Commission Approval of Institutional Teach-Out Arrangements.

Institutional Disclosure: The Institution must accurately disclose its status as Candidacy, including displaying HLC's Mark of Accreditation Status on its website.² While Candidacy represents membership with the Higher Learning Commission, it is not accredited status. If the Institution chooses to reference its Candidacy status in advertising and recruiting materials or other documents or locations, those disclosures must accurately describe the Institution's status as a Candidate for Accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission. Specific language to use is provided in HLC procedures. The Institution will accompany that reference with information on how to contact HLC. HLC reserves the right to issue a public statement correcting any incorrect or misleading information HLC determines that an Institution has publicized about its status.³

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:

Mitchell Hamline School of Law meets all the Eligibility Requirements, Assumed Practices, and Federal Compliance Requirements required of an institution seeking Candidacy status.

The Board of Trustees of the Higher Learning Commission determined based on the preceding findings and evidence in the record that the Institution has demonstrated that it has the capacity to meet the Criteria for Accreditation, including all Core Components, within the period of Candidacy.

Next Steps in the HLC Review Process

Updated Assurance Filing: The Institution must provide information to update the Assurance Filing assembled at the time the institution was evaluated for candidacy. The updated Assurance Filing will address specific areas of concern identified by the Candidacy visit team and provide information relevant to the Institution's continued progress toward meeting the Criteria for Accreditation. The Institution must also continue to demonstrate that it meets the Eligibility Requirements and Assumed Practices.

Biennial Evaluation: The Institution will host a biennial evaluation in 2023-24 to determine whether the institution is making sufficient progress toward meeting the Criteria for Accreditation and continues to meet all the Eligibility Requirements and Assumed Practices, and whether a recommendation to continue Candidacy may be made. The Biennial Evaluation will result in a recommendation to continue Candidacy or withdraw Candidacy, which will be reviewed by the Institutional Actions Council (IAC) and/or the Board of Trustees, depending on the recommendation.

² CRRT.A.10.010 Eligibility Requirements

³ FDCR.A.10.070, Public Information

Supplemental Information about Early Initial Accreditation

As a general matter, candidate institutions also have the opportunity to request to file an application for early initial accreditation – before the completion of the four-year candidacy term – and host an on-site comprehensive evaluation to determine whether they meet the requirements to become accredited. The Institution may request to seek early initial accreditation in 2023-24 provided that it has graduated or will graduate its first graduating class within thirty days of any Board action to award early initial accreditation. This evaluation may be in addition to, or instead of, the biennial evaluation. Regardless, the Institution is limited to one request for early initial accreditation during the four-year candidacy period. Following a comprehensive evaluation for Early Initial Accreditation, the Board has the discretion to continue the Institution in candidacy, instead of granting early initial accreditation, if a determination is made that one or more Core Components are Not Met or Met with Concerns, or if the Board otherwise determines that continuation of Candidacy is warranted.⁴ The Board may also withdraw Candidacy. If the Institution applies for early initial accreditation and is not successful in gaining accreditation, and the Board does not withdraw Candidacy, the Institution remains scheduled for its comprehensive evaluation for initial accreditation as stated above.

HLC Disclosure Obligations

The Board action resulted in changes that will be reflected in a Statement of Accreditation Status as well as an 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.

HLC policy⁵ requires that a summary of Board actions be sent to appropriate state and federal agencies and accrediting associations. It 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. Andrew Lootens-White.

Sincerely,



Barbara Gellman-Danley
President

⁴ INST.B.20.030, Accreditation

⁵ COMM.A.10.010, Notice of Accreditation Actions, HLC Public Notices and Public Statements

Cc: Chair of the Board of Trustees, Mitchell Hamline School of Law
Christine Szaj, Vice President of Institutional Management, Mitchell Hamline School of
Law
Evaluation Team Chair
IAC Hearing Committee Chair
Dennis Olson, Commissioner, Minnesota Office of Higher Education
Herman Bounds, Director, Accreditation Group, Office of Postsecondary Education, U.S.
Department of Education
Andrew Lootens-White, Vice President of Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning
Commission
Anthea Sweeney, Vice President of Legal and Regulatory Affairs, Higher Learning
Commission