



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

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November 15, 2018

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dr. Carlos Campo, President
Ashland University
401 College Ave.
Founders Hall 205
Ashland, OH 44805

Dear President Campo:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning Ashland University (“the Institution”). This action is effective as of the date the Board acted, November 1, 2018. 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 reaffirmed the accreditation of the Institution. The Institution meets Core Components 2.A, 4.B, 4.C, and 5.D with concerns. The Institution is required to submit an Interim Report no later than June 30, 2019, and host a Focused Visit no later than April 2020, as outlined below.

Board Rationale

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

The Institution meets 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,” but with concerns for the following reasons:

- No systematic process for monitoring and reviewing student complaints appeared to exist that aligned with HLC policy related to federal compliance requirements on the subject.
- The Institution follows inconsistent policies and procedures for institutional processes.
- There is a lack of consistency between policies related to the Ashland Theological Seminary, one of the Institution’s graduate divisions, and the Institution.
- Ineffective leadership and oversight allowed circumstances that caused the Institution to be cited by the state of Ohio for transcript manipulation.

The Institution 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:

- The Institution appears to lack a pattern of consistent evaluation of student learning outcomes.
- Due to the continual turnover in assessment leadership, evidence is lacking that learning assessment is systematized across all programs at the Institution.
- Institutional learning outcomes were adopted in 2016; therefore, there has not been sufficient time to analyze results for the improvement of student learning.
- Specific assessment measures, the frequency of data collection, the process of evaluation, and the personnel responsible for dissemination of data appear to be missing from the assessment plan for years 2018-2022.

The Institution meets 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,” but with concerns for the following reasons:

- Persistence and completion goals for subsets of non-traditional students, online students, and students in correctional facilities have not yet been set.
- There is little evidence that the completion and persistence data for traditional students is being used for program or curricular improvement.
- Evidence is lacking that the Institution can meet the proposed deadlines for identifying and reporting completion data for all subsets by fall of 2018 and that it can sustain those efforts into the near future.

The Institution meets Criterion Five, Core Component 5.D, “the institution works systematically to improve its performance,” but with concerns for the following reasons:

- The Institution has only recently developed an office to address the deficiencies in institutional data gathering, analysis, and reporting.
- Committee structures to address institutional issues of assessment, faculty workload, and faculty assessment are too new to provide evidence that the Institution is working systematically to improve performance.
- Processes are not in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the current institutional governance structure to ensure efficiency and efficacy.
- There are no processes for measuring the effectiveness of non-academic units across the campus as well as the activities of the Ashland Theological Seminary.

Next Steps in the HLC Review Process

Interim Report: The Board required that the Institution submit an Interim Report no later than June 30, 2019, regarding its student complaints policy and procedure.

Focused Visit: The Board required that the Institution host a Focused Visit regarding Core

Components 2.A, 4.B, 4.C, and 5.D no later than April 2020.

Comprehensive Evaluation: The Institution has been maintained on the Standard Pathway with its next comprehensive evaluation (Year 4) in 2022-23.

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.

HLC policy¹ 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. Thomas Bordenkircher.

Sincerely,



Barbara Gellman-Danley
President

Cc: Karen Groth, Director of Assessment and Accreditation, Ashland University
Evaluation Team Chair
IAC Hearing Committee Chair
Thomas Bordenkircher, Vice President for Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning
Commission
Anthea Sweeney, Vice President for Legal and Governmental Affairs, Higher Learning
Commission

¹ COMM.A.10.010, Commission Public Notices and Statements