VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Msgr. Stuart Swetland, President
Donnelly College
608 N. 18th St.
Kansas City, KS 66102

Dear President Swetland:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning Donnelly College (“the Institution”). This action is effective as of the date the Board acted, February 28, 2019. 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 determined that the Institution is no longer out of compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation and removed the Institution from Probation and assigned interim monitoring. The Institution meets Core Components 4.A, 4.B, and 5.C with concerns. The Institution is required to submit an interim report, as outlined below, no later than September 30, 2020.

Board Rationale

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

The Institution now meets without concerns 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:

• The Institution has put into place a revised process for faculty and staff evaluations across all programs. The revised process was a result of collaboration between the academic and student leadership teams and the faculty senate. The process was revised and implemented in 2017-2018.

• With the support of the Administration, the full-time faculty have formed an Adjunct Task Force to address opportunities to improve adjunct training, development, support and compensation.

• Classroom instructors are appropriately credentialed, including those at the
additional location and dual enrollment sites.

The Institution continues to meet Criterion Four, Core Component 4.A, “the institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs,” but with concerns for the following reasons:

- The Institution updated and has put into place a master calendar and process for program reviews extending several years into the future. The team confirmed that 50% of academic and co-curricular programs had completed reviews. To support this process, the Institution has developed a master syllabus template and instructional video on program review.
- The revised program review rubric evaluates how programs assess student learning, develop curricula, ensure quality of faculty and staff resources, and ensure alignment of programs to overarching strategic goals.
- The program review template contains maps that organize different layers of learning outcomes within program courses. However, the general education outcomes are not entirely mapped but are in progress. The Institution began the collection of program-level data in four programs in spring 2018. The institution still needs to map general education courses to program learning outcomes.

The Institution now 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:

- Since 2016, the Institution has engaged in a wholesale redesign of its assessment practices for its program and course student learning outcomes and performance indicators. The Institution’s methods and expectations are defined for faculty, including direct and indirect measures. Curricular and co-curricular programs have defined learning outcomes and are scheduled to participate in future program reviews.
- To date, the Institution’s efforts have focused largely on creating processes, forms and structures, but few actual results were provided except for the four programs undergoing review in 2018. Therefore, although the Institution is beginning to use the information gleaned from assessment to improve learning, only a few improvements had been made as a result of assessments.
- The Institution has participated in HLC’s Assessment Academy and has consulted standards set by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes to align with best practices in higher education.
- However, despite improvements to date, the impact of assessment of student learning is still in the early phase of being measured and insufficient time has elapsed for thorough collection of data and reflection on outcomes.

The Institution now meets Criterion Five, 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,” for the following reasons:

- The Institution’s Board of Directors Academic and Student Affairs Committee
minutes verify that the Institution has put strategies in place to reduce expenses and increase revenue. The strategies include eliminating a program, restructuring leadership positions, raising tuition, reducing energy costs, and outsourcing bookstore operations.

• The Board reported that while they continue to draw cash from the endowment, the draw amount continues to be reduced and is below the amount allotted at 2.7% in 2016. The 2017-2018 draw was less than expected at 1.94% due to successful fundraising.

• The Board reviewed and adopted a Campus Master Plan in 2017, which included renovation of facilities, facility maintenance, and technology infrastructure enhancements.

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

• The Institution has fully implemented a new institutional information management system that provides the identification of key performance metrics, a standardized process of data collection, and documentation for analysis and review of data. There is now a documented process for implementing changes.

• The Institution’s 2017-2022 strategic plan initiatives affirm priorities for student success with allocated institutional funds in the range of 61% of the budget. The strategic plan contains initiatives that are funded through their operational budget, grants and donations.

• However, the Institution has not yet demonstrated a connection between assessment of student learning and its planned budgets for 2019 or 2020, nor has it provided evidence in its planning documents that student outcome data is regularly analyzed and used to make improvements.

The Institution has demonstrated that it is otherwise in compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation, Assumed Practices and Federal Compliance requirements.

Next Steps in the HLC Review Process

Interim Report: The Board required that the Institution submit an interim report no later than September 30, 2020, regarding Core Components 4.A, 4.B, and 5.C as follows:

Core Component 4.A
Evidence that the process of mapping general education courses to program learning outcomes has been completed.

Core Component 4.B
Evidence demonstrating a full cycle of planning and budgeting that incorporates input from assessment of student learning and program reviews as further detailed in the team report.
Core Component 5.C
Evidence that student learning assessment is integrated into the budgeting and planning processes and is fully and effectively implemented.

Comprehensive Evaluation: The Institution has been placed on the Standard Pathway with its next comprehensive evaluation for reaffirmation of accreditation 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.

Information about this action is provided to members of the public and to other constituents in several ways. In accordance with HLC policy,1 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.

HLC policy2 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. Mary Vanis.

Sincerely,

Barbara Gellman-Danley
President

Enc: Public Disclosure Notice

Cc: Chair of the Board of Trustees, Donnelly College
Pedro Leite, Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, Donnelly College

1 INST.G.10.010, Management of Commission Information
2 COMM.A.10.010, Commission Public Notices and Statements
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