



June 30, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dr. Jon Bauer, President
East Central College
1964 Prairie Dell Rd.
Union, MO 63084

Dear President Bauer:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning East Central College (“the Institution”). This action is effective as of the date the Board acted, June 25, 2020. 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) 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. The Institution meets Core Components 4.B and 5.D with concerns. The Institution is required to submit embedded Interim Reports, as outlined below, with its next Assurance Filing.

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:

East Central College continues to meet, but with 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:

- The Institution currently collects data to determine student learning across programs.
- Data used in the assessment system is linked to student outcomes across programs.
- At the time of the 2017 site visit, the assessment system was in its infancy. The Institution’s assessment system is now on a five-year cycle, but it is still too new for faculty to use for systematic program improvement.
- The primary measure of co-curricular assessment at the Institution at this point is in the form of surveys and the institution lacks other forms of assessing co-curricular activities. The Institution is still transitioning co-curricular assessments to the new institutional student learning outcomes and the faculty are developing direct assessments in this area.

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’s strategic plan includes a goal of increasing student retention and completion.
- The Institution has developed a functioning Retention and Completion Plan Committee to examine and promote efforts to improve student success.
- The Institution uses a data dashboard, which includes historical as well as benchmark data as appropriate.
- An early alert system (Aviso Retention) has been adopted and provides predictive analytics with automatic alerts based on assigned protocols.
- The Institution has defined goals for student retention, persistence, and completion that are ambitious but attainable.
- An annual fact book produced by the Institutional Research department of the Institution provides a regular summary of relevant data.

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:

- The process of engagement at the Institution is open and inclusive, allowing for participation from all interested parties.
- The Institution's current strategic plan represents a collective expression of priorities and shows a willingness to continue to collaborate on the Institution's goals.
- Renewed attention has been placed on shared governance, for example through newly established standing meetings that include faculty leadership and student government representatives.
- The Shared Governance Council, established in 2018, includes representatives of each internal employee group who provide recommendations for considerations by institutional leadership.
- The Institution’s Board of Trustees reviews existing board policies and has included shared governance in that process, as well as in the process of adopting new board policies in the future.

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

- A new strategic plan, developed in 2018, engaged faculty, staff, students, community members, and trustees to develop a new mission, vision, values, and goals framework for the next five-year period.
- The Institution has a standing budget committee that reviews proposals from faculty and staff from across the Institution and evaluates these recommendations based on financial impact and strategic priorities.
- Faculty and staff continue to be engaged in the development and evaluation of goals within the institutional strategic plan.

- The Institution’s Board of Trustees solicits annual budget updates from program managers/chairs, which are used to project future needs for maintaining operations and future budget implications for planning.

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

- The Institution has an established departmental self-review process that is focused on internal improvement.
- The Institution has some current and potential key performance indicators necessary to develop and track outcomes for individual initiatives or program performance, but more formal development is necessary.
- The Institution has dashboards for publishing student data and provides timely and accurate student data reporting.
- The Institution has a suite of college-wide metrics that correspond to the major strategic strategies that were developed in 2018, which shows potential for impacting future stability and success.
- The Institution's efforts for systemic performance evaluation for both instructional and non-instructional programs have been developed but are still in their infancy.

The Institution has otherwise demonstrated that it is in compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation, Assumed Practices, and Federal Compliance Requirements and is not at risk of noncompliance with the Criteria, and thus should be removed from Notice.

Next Steps in the HLC Review Process

Embedded Interim Reports: The Board required that the Institution submit embedded Interim Reports with its next Assurance Filing regarding Core Components 4.B and 5.D.

Comprehensive Evaluation: The Board maintained the Institution maintained 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,¹ 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 one business day after this letter is sent to the

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

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. Thomas Bordenkircher.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Gellman-Danley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barbara Gellman-Danley
President

Enc: Public Disclosure Notice

Cc: Chair of the Board of Trustees, East Central College
Robyn Christine Walter, Vice President of Academic Affairs, East Central College
Evaluation Team Chair
Angelette Prichett, Director of Academic Programs and Initiatives, Missouri Department of
Higher Education
Thomas Bordenkircher, Vice President of Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning
Commission
Anthea Sweeney, Vice President of Legal and Regulatory Affairs, Higher Learning
Commission