



July 6, 2018

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dr. Steven Shirley, President  
Minot State University  
500 University Ave. W.  
Minot, ND 58707

Dear President Shirley:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning Minot State University (“the institution”). This action is effective as of the date the Board acted, June 28, 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 and assigned interim monitoring. The institution meets Core Components 2.A, 3.A, 4.B, and 5.C with concerns. The institution is required to host a focused visit, as outlined below, no later than June 30, 2020.

### **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:

- The institution’s reporting for institutional assessment of general education for the past four to six years is incomplete; and
- The institution must demonstrate that it understands the Obligations of Affiliation with the Higher Learning Commission by providing relevant documentation that is organized, complete and accessible when requested.

The institution meets Criterion Three, Core Component 3.A, “the institution’s degree programs are appropriate to higher education,” but with concerns for the following reasons:

- The institution's stages of program review vary according to the level and type of program and the on-campus process is incomplete for many programs;
- There was no evidence that existing programs are monitored for currency or for use of current and appropriate pedagogy;
- The assessment reporting process does not yet benefit from a thorough cycle of review that supports continuous improvement of the assessment process; and
- Processes to assure equality of course content, skill and knowledge acquisition and assessment of skills and knowledge between different modalities are inadequate.

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:

- Academic programs have established a process for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals, but feedback to units on improvement of their assessment plans and practices occurs informally and needs to be made more systematic and consistent across programs;
- The revision of the general education curriculum and assessment plan is complete but there is no assessment evidence under the new approach;
- Assessment results have been used in some cases to make curricular and other substantive changes to improve student learning, but they need continued development to make such use more widespread and consistent; and
- The institution has committed in its strategic plan to add co-curricular assessment to its existing program review process, but implementation and data collection have not yet occurred.

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 evidence that assessment data is used for planning to drive budget decisions is inconsistent; and
- There is no apparent direct link between the University Assessment Committee and the Strategic Planning and Budgeting Council.

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

**Focused Visit:** The Board required that the institution host a Focused Visit regarding Core Components 2.A, 3.A, 4.B, and 5.C no later than June 30, 2020. The Focused Visit will specifically address the following:

Core Component 2.A

- Evidence that the institution is able to produce all requested documentation in an accessible, complete, and organized manner when requested by the Higher Learning Commission.

#### Core Component 3.A

- Evidence that the institution has developed, implemented, and is monitoring a plan to assure that course level-outcomes are being met for all programs across all modalities;
- Evidence that the institution has developed and implemented policies and processes to ensure that the work, contact hours, and assessment practices for all courses taught in a compressed format are equivalent to their non-compressed counterparts;
- Copies of all syllabi for any and all courses offered through multiple modes of delivery, demonstrating that the scope and specified learning outcomes and activities for the courses are equivalent across modalities;
- Evidence that the institution has created and implemented a review process and accountability system to ensure that all syllabi comply with the expectations regarding equivalency across modality and format; and
- Evidence that the institution has continued the suspension of scheduling two-week compressed courses until the aforementioned policies and processes have been fully implemented.

#### Core Component 4.B

- A detailed assessment plan that includes learning outcomes and standardized assessment practices in co-curricular programming and activities; and
- The designation and establishment of a procedure in which all assessment data is reviewed, stored, and made available to constituent groups.

#### Core Component 5.C

- Documentation of two complete cycles of planning that provides clear evidence that the institution consistently and systematically links its planning, assessment of student learning, and budget prioritization processes; and
- Evidence that the institution has taken steps to establish an appropriate policy to assure that the process of planning is systemic and sustainable beyond current personnel.

**Comprehensive Evaluation:** The institution has been placed 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.

HLC policy<sup>1</sup> 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. Stephanie Brzuzy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Gellman-Danley".

Barbara Gellman-Danley  
President

Cc: Laurie Geller, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Minot State University  
Evaluation Team Chair  
IAC Hearing Committee Chair  
Stephanie Brzuzy, 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> COMM.A.10.010, Commission Public Notices and Statements