November 14, 2017

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Lionel Bordeaux, President
Sinte Gleska University
Box 105
Mission, SD 57555

Dear President Bordeaux:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (“HLC” or “the Commission”) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning Sinte Gleska University (“the University” or “the institution”). During its meeting on November 2-3, 2017, the Board removed the sanction of Notice from the University. This action is effective as of the date the action was taken. The Board determined that the removal of the sanction was warranted based on evidence provided by the University, including the Notice Report, the report of the visiting team, the staff analysis of the sanction, and the University’s responses to these reports.

The Board required that the University submit an Interim Monitoring Report no later than November 1, 2018, on the following topics:

- Core Component 2.A
  - An outline of the performance of the new Board policies and procedures manual, the self-evaluations of the board members, additional board training for all board members on the new policies and procedures manual, and the board evaluation of the President of the University.
- Core Component 3.A
  - All course syllabi, graduate and undergraduate, in the new course syllabi template to ensure that program outcomes and course-level objectives are aligned with Bloom’s Taxonomy based on the level of the course to address appropriate rigor for higher education.
- Core Component 3.C
  - Evidence that the institution is in alignment with the Commission policy on qualified faculty effective September 1, 2017.
- Core Component 4.A
  - Completed program reviews for 2016-17 and 2017-18, and a formal report of data on post-graduate success as part of annual data gathering on student outcomes.
- Core Component 4.B
  - Formal assessment reports from all majors, degree programs and undergraduate General Education, including Graduate programs. This report should demonstrate alignment between learning outcomes and measures of assessment, provide evidence
of data collection and analysis, and provide specific recommendations for improvement based on faculty review of the evidence.

- **Core Component 4.C**
  - Retention and persistence data for all the University’s student population, with particular focus on the collection of meaningful retention and persistence data on the Graduate student population. In addition to presentation of data, the report should include an analysis of the data and initial retention plans specifically targeted at the graduate populations.

- **Core Component 5.A**
  - Completed audits for FY 2017 and FY 2018 demonstrating improved financial management practices.

The Board maintained the University on the Standard Pathway with its next reaffirmation of accreditation in 2019-20.

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

The University has demonstrated that it 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 because:

- The University developed and passed a Board of Regents Policies and Procedures document in the month just prior to the team visit;
- While several of the policies appear to be appropriate, the board has not yet documented that training on the new policies and procedures has taken place; and
- Annual evaluation of the President of the University is being conducted by the Board of Regents.

The University has demonstrated that it meets Criterion Three, Core Component 3.A, “the institution’s degree programs are appropriate to higher education,” but with concerns because:

- A Curriculum Committee was established within four months of the team visit and is tasked with reviewing course syllabi, but the Committee’s ability to enforce recommendations for changes to the syllabi has not yet been demonstrated;
- Most syllabi were in the revision process with implementation in the infancy stage, though some syllabi appeared to be moving through the Curriculum Committee;
- Faculty are in the development phase of building course learning objectives and initial training has been offered; and
- Alignment of course learning objectives to program learning outcomes and Bloom’s Taxonomy still remains to be completed.

The University has demonstrated that it meets Criterion Three, Core Component 3.C, “the institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services,” but with concerns because:
• The University has not yet met expectations to employ qualified faculty in several departments, especially at the graduate level;
• Faculty holding terminal degrees are not present in two graduate-level program fields, Education and Human Services, and the University could not demonstrate plans to hire faculty for these programs; and
• No policies exist for determining how faculty will be evaluated as qualified for programs where tested experience will be the determining factor (e.g., Lakota Studies and vocational programs) to acknowledge whether potential faculty are skilled and proficient to teach the curriculum.

The University has demonstrated that it meets Criterion Four, Core Component 4.A, “the institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs,” but with concerns because:
• A plan for program review has been developed, but evidence of completed review is lacking across the University;
• Evidence of changes implemented from some program reviews was not evident to the visiting team;
• Processes to track students upon graduation require further development; and
• The University’s Nursing program remains on probation from the specialized accredditor, with limited expectations for a change of status due to low enrollments primarily based on challenges in low pre-admission student exam scores.

The University has demonstrated that it 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 because:
• In light of the syllabi review process, information regarding assessment of student learning will need to be gathered and analyzed;
• Syllabi still lack course-level objectives that align with program outcomes;
• Faculty indicate the need for professional development in order to learn more about the measurement of, and ways to implement, changes to improve student learning, whether professional development is focused on student learning styles or on institutional processes;
• Adjunct faculty need to be included in training and communication, as they are the primary group teaching for the University; and
• Assessment across all majors and degree programs (graduate and undergraduate) and undergraduate general education needs to demonstrate the ongoing cycle of data gathering, analysis, recommendations, and implementation of strategies.

The University has demonstrated that it 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 because:
• The University’s data management system needs ongoing attention in order to provide the data necessary for faculty to improve the teaching and learning process, and to support student success;
• Evidence of ongoing, consistent use of data to make informed decisions to improve retention and graduation rates is not yet evident; and
• The graduate student population is not regularly evaluated and supported, as evidenced by low retention and persistence rates.

The University has demonstrated that it 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,” but with concerns because:
• The University’s negative cash balance has improved due to a decrease in expenditures and new revenue sources;
• The University continues to struggle to implement and conduct appropriate cash management strategies;
• The Board of Regents is reviewing and approving financial reports from the Provost Leadership Team; and
• Information in the annual financial audit indicates that there are signs of internal improvement and improved oversight; however, while the number of findings continues to decline, the 2016 audit still indicates some findings in these areas.

The University has demonstrated that it meets Criterion Two, Core Component 2.C, “the governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity,” for the following reasons:
• The visiting team found evidence that the Board of Regents has autonomy from the Rosebud Tribal Council;
• The Board appears to be learning and understanding their duties and had recently completed Board training; and
• Ongoing interaction with the new Chief Financial Officer will assist the Board in becoming more engaged in the University’s strategic planning process.

The University has demonstrated that it meets Criterion Three, Core Component 3.B, “the institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs,” for the following reasons:
• Curriculum mapping is complete for most programs, though a few programs such as Lakota Studies and the certificate programs have not been completed;
• General education outcomes are being evaluated, with the first round completed; and
• The visiting team recognized that the process will be adapted and refined after each phase of the evaluation.

The University has demonstrated that it meets Criterion Three, Core Component 3.D, “the institution provides support for student learning and effective teaching,” for the following reasons:
• The University provides a significant level of support to assist students with transportation to campus, daycare and lunches during the week;
• A student lounge is available at one of the facilities and a new student union is under development at the main campus; and
In response to a student opinion survey, the University has improved advising services and updated technology that now allows students to follow their projected program of study to completion.

The University has demonstrated that it meets Criterion Three, Core Component 3.E, “the institution fulfills the claims it makes for an enriched educational environment,” for the following reasons:

- The University established a co-curriculum committee comprised of students and faculty;
- Learning outcomes focused on four Nation Building outcomes support co-curricular programming; and
- Students reported a greater sense of self-confidence and a broader network upon participating in activities.

The University has demonstrated that it meets Criterion Five, Core Component 5.C, “the institution engages in systematic and integrated planning,” for the following reasons:

- Evidence is available that supports strong community engagement with the annual planning process; and
- Meeting minutes indicate ongoing discussions regarding planning occurring at the administrative levels.

The University has demonstrated that it meets Criterion Five, Core Component 5.D, “the institution works systematically to improve its performance,” for the following reasons:

- The visiting team found evidence of improved performance across many areas of the University, including program review, assessment of student learning, cash management, planning and student success; and
- A culture of planning, analysis, implementation and evaluation is beginning to emerge, but a commitment to ongoing support and attention is necessary in order to successfully deliver high quality programs and services to students and constituents.

The Board action resulted in changes to the affiliation of the University. These changes are reflected on the Institutional Status and Requirements Report. Some of the information on that document, such as the dates of the last and next comprehensive evaluation visits, will be posted to the HLC website.

Information is provided to members of the public and to other constituents in several ways. Commission policy INST.G.10.010, Management of Commission Information, anticipates that HLC will release action letters to members of the public. The Commission will do so by posting this action letter to its website. Also, the enclosed Public Disclosure Notice will be posted to HLC’s website not more than 24 hours after this letter is sent to you.

In addition, Commission policy COMM.A.10.010, Commission Public Notices and Statements, requires that HLC prepare a summary of actions to be sent to appropriate state and federal agencies and accrediting associations and published on its website. The summary will include HLC Board action regarding the University.
On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I thank you and your associates for your cooperation. If you have questions about any of the information in this letter, please contact your HLC Staff Liaison, Dr. Karen Solomon.

Sincerely,

Barbara Gellman-Danley
President

Enclosure: Public Disclosure Notice

cc: Chair of the Board of Trustees, Sinte Gleska University
    Philip Baird, Provost, Sinte Gleska University
    Evaluation team chair
    Karen Solomon, Vice President for Accreditation Relations and Director of the Standard Pathway, Higher Learning Commission
    Karen Peterson Solinski, Executive Vice President for Legal and Governmental Affairs, Higher Learning Commission