



March 3, 2016

Dr. Reggies Wenyika, President  
Southwestern Christian University  
7210 NW 39th Expressway  
Bethany, OK 73008

Dear President Wenyika:

This letter is formal notification of action taken concerning Southwestern Christian University, (“the University”) by the Higher Learning Commission (“HLC” or “the Commission”) Board of Trustees (“the Board”). At its meeting on February 25, 2016, the Board reaffirmed the accreditation and removed the sanction of Notice from the University. The Board determined that the removal of the sanction was warranted based on evidence including the Notice Report, the report of the visiting team, the staff analysis of the sanction, the College’s response to these reports and other relevant materials. In addition, the Board maintained the placement of the University on the Standard Pathway. The Board required that the University host its next comprehensive evaluation in 2019-2020 as currently scheduled.

The Board required that the University file an interim report by January 1, 2017 covering the following issues:

- Core Component 4A:  
All program review reports completed for 2014-15 and 2015-16 as well as an update on program review reports still in progress. The program review schedule/cycle should also be included. A formal report of data on post-graduate success is required. The report should demonstrate a clear process for obtaining data on the immediate post-graduate placements and employment for all students;
- Core Component 4B:  
Formal assessment reports from all majors and degree programs as well as a report on General Education should be included. Assessment reports should demonstrate alignment between learning outcomes and measures of assessment, provide evidence of data collection and analysis, and provide faculty recommendations for improvement based on evidence collected; and
- Core Component 4C:  
Retention and persistence data should be provided that includes the major student populations, including online and adult populations. Initial retention plans and analysis targeted at adult and online (distance learning) populations are required.

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

The University has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission’s concerns related to Criterion One, Core Component 1.A, “the institution’s mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations” for the following reasons:

- the University's undergraduate and graduate programs are consistent with the mission to prepare men and women for lives of substance and service to others through a faith-centered, liberal education;
- Department chairs provided evidence that the strategic plan and planning processes shape the day-to-day work; and
- the University's budget for 2015-2016 includes opportunities to request funds supporting the strategic plan, and above-budget items have been allocated to technology, website, equipment and capital project priorities reflected in the strategic plan.

The University has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission's concerns related to 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 University has added nine new faculty members with full-time faculty responsibilities, thereby increasing the number of faculty by 43% and bringing the total faculty headcount to 30, with only five considered administrative faculty;
- the University has approved new policies related to faculty load and committee assignments, and faculty-to-student ratios that allow time for other responsibilities such as assessment of student learning outcomes and professional development; and
- the University has a budget for faculty development that, while modest, is regularly utilized.

The University has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission's concerns related to 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 University has worked to develop plans for almost all degrees and programs since the time it was placed on Notice, but several plans remain incomplete, including adult and online programs, and general education in particular, which is due for internal review in 2016;
- no formal systematic process for assessment reporting exists;
- while the University has collected data on student learning in several programs and plans are in place to implement assessment software, little evidence of the use of data currently exists; and
- the assessment process appears to be conflated with the process of program review.

The University has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission's concerns related to 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:

- the University's data shows a 36% six-year graduation rate for first-time freshmen, a 44% retention rate for the same population, and an athletic completion rate that falls below the institutional average;
- the University has hired a director of Enrollment Management, and based on analysis of the admissions process has raised the average entering ACT score, while reducing the acceptance rate from 67% to 48%;
- data reporting and gathering is being refined to examine issues affecting students who withdraw voluntarily separately from those who are unable to return; and
- while the University has made laudable efforts to focus on persistence, retention and completion, including the addition of related objectives in the strategic plan, those efforts have centered on traditional undergraduate students while largely ignoring adult and online populations.

The University has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission's concerns related to 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 University's faculty and staff are actively involved in the planning process and could tie planning priorities to decisions in their areas and across the institution; and
- the University is formalizing structures and procedures that encourage collaboration and involve faculty, staff and other constituents in decision-making.

The University has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission's concerns related to Criterion Five, Core Component 5.C, "the institution engages in systematic and integrated planning," for the following reasons:

- development of the 2015-2016 budget included specific opportunities to request funds supporting the strategic plan and above-budget funds were allocated to technology, website, equipment and capital project priorities identified in the plan;
- measurable goals were found in a variety of documents, although work remains in terms of adding quantifiable goals to the strategic plan and measuring progress toward those goals;
- the University provided evidence of strategic priorities resulting in tangible outcomes including faculty line allocation and hiring decisions, as well as new academic programs; and
- admissions criteria were strengthened in order to address low retention – a strategic priority – while taking into account the impact on the size of the incoming class.

In addition, while not a part of the Notice sanction, the Board has determined that the University meets with concerns Criterion Four, Core Component 4.A, "the institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of educational programs," for the following reasons:

- the University has developed a basic academic program review process on a three-year cycle that includes peer analysis for curriculum, an internal analysis of strengths and weaknesses of each program and a review of assessment processes;
- however, the University failed to produce sufficient evidence of completed reviews for the programs scheduled for such review in 2014-2015, although such work had been initiated for several programs; and
- there is little completed documentation of the review process, indicating incomplete implementation of program review at the University.

The University otherwise meets the Criteria for Accreditation, including the Core Components, as well as the federal compliance requirements.

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.

In addition, HLC policy INST.G.10.010, Management of Commission Information, anticipates that HLC will release action letters related to the removal of a sanction to members of the public. HLC will do so by posting this action letter to its website. Also, HLC 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.

At this time, the Commission will reassign the University from its liaison Dr. Anthea Sweeney to Dr. Stephanie Brzuzy. If you have any questions or concerns about the information in this letter, please contact Dr. Brzuzy. Please be assured that Dr. Brzuzy will work with Dr. Sweeney to create a smooth transition.

Information about notifying the public of this action is available at <http://www.hlcommission.org/HLC-Institutions/institutional-reporting-of-actions.html>. The University may choose to prepare a statement to its constituencies regarding this action; I ask that you copy Dr. Brzuzy on any such communication.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I thank you and your associates for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Barbara Gellman-Danley  
President

cc: Chair of the Board of Trustees, Southwestern Christian University  
Evaluation team members  
Dr. Gayle A Kearns, Dean of Arts & Sciences, ALO  
Dr. Anthea Sweeney, Vice President for Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning Commission  
Dr. Stephanie Brzuzy, Vice President for Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning Commission  
Karen L. Solinski, Executive Vice President for Legal and Governmental Affairs, Higher Learning Commission  
Herman Bounds, Accreditation and State Liaison, Office of Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education