

February 20, 2018

Dr. Mark Heckler
President
Valparaiso University
1700 Chapel Drive
Kretzmann Hall
Valparaiso, IN 46383-6493

Dear President Heckler:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning Valparaiso University by the Institutional Actions Council of the Higher Learning Commission at its meeting on February 13, 2018. The date of this action constitutes the effective date of the institution's new status with HLC.

Action with Interim Monitoring. IAC continued the accreditation of Valparaiso University with the next Reaffirmation of Accreditation in 2027-28. In conjunction with this action, IAC required the following interim monitoring.

Interim Report. Interim Report due 5/8/2020 on internal student complaints process that complies with federal compliance requirements.

Further, IAC voted to change the team's evaluation of Criterion 4B from "Met with Concerns" to "Met" with the following evidence:

The team presents a mixed view on the quality and comprehensiveness of Valparaiso University's assessment of student learning outcomes. On balance, IAC perceives the institution has made substantial progress in SLO assessment; is committed to a faculty-driven, bottoms-up approach that engages faculty while at the same time reducing the possibility of a uniform presentation of assessments; and meets Criterion 4B. Thus, IAC does not agree with the team's recommendation that Criterion 4B is "Met with Concerns."

Rationale: IAC reviewed the team's report and the institution's response to the team recommendation that Criterion 4B is "Met with Concerns." The team report presents a mixed view on the quality and comprehensiveness of the institution's assessment of student learning outcomes. For example, the team noted that the institution had participated in the HLC Assessment Academy and that during the Fall 2017 visit "descriptions were provided that demonstrate good practice and a continually maturing culture of assessment." The team went on to identify a number of practices, but then the team noted "However, during the review, a number of weaknesses were identified which suggest that the assessment process is not as effective as it should be." The team noted that the bulletin and program web-site's program-level learning objectives are not explicitly communicated and that, while "for the most part, programs are articulating measurable student learning objectives," there are still some objectives that are not measurable or that include more than a single student behavior, action, or disposition." The team further acknowledged that many programs use both direct and indirect measures to assess achievement, yet asserts that "many programs" have an over-reliance on indirect measures. The team noted there is a Committee on Assessment but had mixed views on the effectiveness of the Committee. The team was both critical about the lack of documentation about the Committee taking on a more proactive role in reviewing annual assessment reports and at the same time noted November 2017 Committee minutes and the webpage indicate a more proactive approach is being implemented.

IAC believes the President has provided a compelling argument that the team recommendation that Criterion 4B is “met with concerns” is stronger than is appropriate. Valparaiso University has a faculty-driven, bottoms up assessment process that takes place within a broad institutional assessment framework. A neat, uniform compilation of assessment results and reports is antithetical to this bottoms-up approach. While Valparaiso University’s assessment program is not perfect and will benefit from further refinements, IAC concurs with the institutional response that the institution meets Criterion 4B.

In two weeks, this action will be added to the *Institutional Status and Requirements (ISR) Report*, a resource for Accreditation Liaison Officers to review and manage information regarding the institution’s accreditation relationship. Accreditation Liaison Officers may request the ISR Report on HLC’s website at <http://www.hlcommission.org/Accreditation/institutional-status-and-requirements-report.html>.

Within the next 30 days, HLC will also publish information about this action on its website at <http://www.hlcommission.org/Student-Resources/recent-actions.html>.

If you have any questions about these documents after viewing them, please contact the institution’s staff liaison Anthea Sweeney. Your cooperation in this matter is appreciated.

Sincerely,



Barbara Gellman-Danley
President

CC: ALO