



Public Disclosure Notice on Ellis University
September 1, 2011

This public disclosure notice is provided by the Higher Learning Commission (“the Commission”) regarding Ellis University (“the University”). The Commission is a regional accrediting agency that accredits institutions of higher learning in the nineteen states of the North Central region.

Recent Accrediting Action

On April 9, 2011, the Board acted to withdraw accreditation from Ellis University (“the University”). The institution had an opportunity to appeal this action, and elected not to file an appeal. The Board action is final as of May 4, 2011; the action can no longer be appealed.

On May 20, 2011, the Board voted to set the effective date of the withdrawal on August 31, 2011, to allow students with no more than 13 credits still required in their academic program to take those credits over the summer and graduate from the University.

On August 31, 2011, the withdrawal action became effective.

The areas of non-compliance identified by the Board in the withdrawal action were the following:

- *Criterion One, “the institution operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students,” particularly Core Component 1.d, “the institution’s governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the institution to fulfill its mission” and Core Component 1.e, “the institution upholds and protects its integrity”;*
- *Criterion Two, “the institution’s allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities,” particularly Core Components 2.a, “the institution realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends”; 2.b, “the institution’s resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future” and 2.d, “all levels of planning align with the institution’s mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission”; and*
- *Criterion Three, “the institution provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission”, particularly, the University does not meet the following Core Components: Core Component 3.b, “the institution values and supports effective teaching,” and Core Component 3.d, “the institution’s learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.”*

The Board concluded that these Criteria were not met because of substantive and pervasive problems at the institution with administrative oversight, integrity, planning and budgeting, sufficiency of financial and human resources, and quality issues related to the oversight of teaching and learning.

Information for Current Students

Under Commission policy, an institution under denial or withdrawal of accreditation is required to submit a teach-out plan to the Commission for review and approval to ensure that students who want to complete their degree at an accredited institution, including regionally accredited institutions, have the opportunity to do so. The Board required that Ellis University file its teach-out plan with the Commission no later than May 2, 2011, and required that the University notify students by May 8, 2011, about the withdrawal action and the availability of a teach-out to be approved by the Commission.

The Board approved the institution's teach-out plan on May 20, 2011, and set an effective date of August 31, 2011, for the withdrawal of accreditation of the University. The approved plan allowed students who had no more than 13 credits still required in their academic program to take those credits from the University during the 2011 summer term and receive a degree while the University remained accredited by the Commission. The plan also provided for students to take their credits from Argosy University or Walden University, which are accredited by the Commission, and those institutions agreed to waive their normal academic residency requirements to allow Ellis University students to graduate at the end of the summer.

Comments from Ellis University

In the case of withdrawal of accreditation, the Commission offers the affected institution an opportunity to include official comments in this Notice. Ellis University provided the following comments:

Ellis University is disappointed with the Commission's actions, because it believes that it presented strong evidence that it satisfied all of the Commission's criteria and standards for accreditation. The University remains extremely proud of the quality of the educational services it provides to students; helping its students attain sophisticated learning through programs of high academic quality remains the institution's paramount goal.

Through its ongoing accreditation by the Distance Education and Training Council (www.detc.org), a US Department of Education recognized accrediting agency, Ellis University will continue to meet new and existing students' learning needs with high degrees of quality and integrity.

The Ellis University Board and legal counsel reviewed the narrow definition by which the Higher Learning Commission would entertain an appeal and determined instead to request an extension of HLC accreditation through the end of August. This extension would allow students who were within a semester of finishing their programs the opportunity to do so at Ellis University and receive regionally and nationally accredited degrees. The University is awaiting approval of this request through the Commission's approval processes.

Ellis University will also support its students who wish to transfer to another institution of higher learning, including several institutions with whom the University is making special arrangements to accept via transfer all or nearly all of students' earned credits.

Accreditation History

Ellis University was granted accreditation in May 2008 after a comprehensive visit in February 2008 to determine whether Ellis College of New York Institute of Technology (NYIT) met the requirements necessary to become a separately accredited institution as Ellis University. In July 2008 the Commission took initial steps to formally reconsider this grant of accreditation when it learned that Ellis University had no students of its own as required by Commission Eligibility Requirement #3. Due to a dispute between the parties that formed Ellis University, Cardean Learning Group (CLG), a for-profit corporation that provided technology to support the new institution, and NYIT, NYIT had not released Ellis College students to transfer to Ellis University and the University had not begun recruiting its own students, which were to have occurred prior to, or at the time of, the Commission's grant of accreditation. The parties settled their dispute in August 2008, and the University was able to enroll its own students.

The Commission halted the process leading towards reconsideration of accreditation but did schedule a focused visit in January of 2009 to evaluate other issues that emerged as the Commission looked into the issues related to enrollment of students; these questions raised concerns about the University's compliance with Criterion One (Mission and Integrity) and Criterion Two (Preparing for the Future). A January 2009 focused evaluation team found that there were questions regarding the relationship between Ellis University and CLG regarding the autonomy of the University and its ability to make its own decisions and thus recommended an additional focused evaluation in 2010 on this and other topics. The date of initial accreditation was reset to August 2008, which is the time that the institution came into compliance with Commission accreditation standards requiring enrolled students.

Following the January 2010 focused visit, on June 24, 2010, the Higher Learning Commission Board of Trustees ("the Board") issued the University a Show-Cause Order. The Board took this action after determining that the University may not have been in compliance at the time the order was issued with one or more Criteria for Accreditation and ordered the institution to Show-Cause as to why its accreditation should not be removed. The Show-Cause Order identified concerns including, but not limited to, governance and integrity (Criterion One) and resources (Criterion Two).

Show-Cause is a procedural order issued by the Commission that places the burden on the institution of proving it remains an entity that meets the Commission's accreditation standards. An institution that fails to demonstrate to the Commission during the period of the Order that it meets the Criteria for Accreditation, including all Core Components, faces withdrawal of accreditation. (A Show-Cause Order may not exceed one year after the issuance of the Order.) An institution under a Show-Cause Order from the Commission remains accredited.

Ellis University submitted a Show-Cause Report to the Commission in October 2010. The University hosted a Show-Cause Visit in December 2010 and participated in a Board Committee Hearing in February 2011. The Board took action to withdraw accreditation from the University on April 9, 2011. The withdrawal action became effective on August 31, 2011.

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