

November 6, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dr. LaTonia Collins Smith  
President  
Harris-Stowe State University  
3026 Laclede Avenue  
St. Louis, MO 63103

Dear President Collins Smith:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning Harris-Stowe State University (“the Institution”). This action is effective as of the date the Board acted, October 31, 2024. In taking this action, the Board considered materials from the recent Notice Visit, including, but not limited to: the Notice Report the Institution submitted, the report from the Notice Visit team, the report of the Institutional Actions Council (IAC) Meeting Committee, and the institutional responses to these reports.

**Summary of the Action:** The Board determined that the Institution is no longer at risk of noncompliance with the Criteria for Accreditation and removed the Institution from Notice. The Institution meets Core Component 4.B with concerns. The Institution is required to submit an embedded Interim Report with its next Assurance Filing, as outlined below.

**Board Rationale**

The Board based its action on the following findings made with regard to the Institution as well as the entire record before the Board:

Harris-Stowe State University (“the Institution”) now meets without concerns Criterion Two, Core Component 2.A, “the institution establishes and follows policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty and staff,” for the following reasons:

- The Institution filled several staff vacancies and has demonstrated the ability to develop a functioning, resourced budget and finance team.
- The FY23 audit was prepared ahead of schedule and the number of audit findings have reduced in the past two years.
- The Institution is addressing remaining issues to improve internal controls and the necessary separation of duties has been achieved.

The Institution now meets without concerns Criterion Four, Core Component 4.A, “the

institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings,” for the following reasons:

- The Institution has restructured its program review process and program review is coordinated to occur on an ongoing schedule.
- The Institution is utilizing a new template for uniform data collection and reporting.
- The Institution aligns program review data with its budgeting processes.

The Institution continues to meet with concerns Criterion Four, Core Component 4.B, “the institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students,” for the following reasons:

- The Institution has demonstrated efforts to improve assessment of student learning with improved systematic data collection and analysis.
- The Institution developed new positions that will support ongoing efforts to improve student learning.
- The Institution’s faculty are more actively involved than in the past in the Assessment and General Education committees.
- The Institution needs additional time to demonstrate that its strategies to improve learning have been successful by measuring outcomes of the changes that were instituted.

The Institution now meets without concerns Criterion Four, Core Component 4.C, “the institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs,” for the following reasons:

- The Institution has established specific, measurable goals to measure student success and has demonstrated ongoing review of the goals.
- The Institution used external funds to provide additional support student services and to offer career development.
- The Institution experienced improved retention, persistence and graduation rates.

The Institution now meets without concerns Criterion Five, Core Component 5.B, “the institution’s resource base supports its educational offerings and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future,” for the following reasons:

- The Institution improved its cash flow by approximately \$2.4 million annually.
- The number of audit findings at the Institution has significantly decreased due to better controls and processes brought on by having a fully staffed financial team.
- The Institution has aligned its strategic plan goals and budget.
- The Institution’s resource base has been strengthened such that it supports the Institution’s education program and student needs.

The Board of Trustees of the Higher Learning Commission has determined based on the preceding findings and evidence in the record that the Institution has otherwise demonstrated that it is in compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation, and is not at risk of noncompliance with the Criteria, and thus, should be removed from Notice.

### **Next Steps in the HLC Review Process**

**Interim Report:** The Board required that the Institution submit an embedded Interim Report with its next Assurance Filing regarding Core Component 4.B.<sup>1</sup>

**Comprehensive Evaluation:** The Board maintained the Institution on the Standard Pathway with its next comprehensive evaluation (Year 4) in 2026-27.

### **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.

In accordance with HLC policy,<sup>2</sup> information about this action is provided to members of the public and to other constituents in several ways. This Action Letter and the enclosed Public Disclosure Notice will be posted to HLC's website not more than one business day after this letter is sent to the Institution. Additionally, a summary of Board actions will be sent to appropriate state and federal agencies and accrediting associations. This summary 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. Karen Solomon.

Sincerely,



Barbara Gellman-Danley  
President

Enc: Public Disclosure Notice

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: Revisions to HLC's Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices will go into effect on September 1, 2025. Institutions will be evaluated against these revised HLC requirements for all reviews conducted after that date, including reviews related to previously assigned monitoring. Institutional reports submitted on or after September 1, 2025, or institutional reports or Assurance Arguments for visits that will take place on or after September 1, 2025, should be written to the revised version of the Criteria or Assumed Practices as applicable. More information, including a crosswalk between the current and revised versions of the Criteria, is available on HLC's website at <https://www.hlcommission.org/accreditation/policies/criteria/>.

<sup>2</sup> COMM.A.10.010, Notice of Accreditation Actions, HLC Public Notices and Public Statements

Cc: Chair of the Board of Trustees, Harris-Stowe State University  
Stacy Hollins, Interim Associate Provost for Academic Affairs and Dean, Harris-Stowe  
State University  
Evaluation Team Chair  
IAC Meeting Committee Chair  
Ben Boggs, Commissioner, Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce  
Development  
Karen J. Solomon, Vice President and Chief Transformation Officer, Higher Learning  
Commission  
Marla Morgen, Vice President and General Counsel, Higher Learning Commission