

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM: 6 – A

DATE: March 31, 2016

SUBJECT: HLC Placement of Western Dakota Technical Institute on Probation

In February of 2016, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) placed Western Dakota on probation. The HLC “probation” designation is a public status indicating lack of compliance with one or more of HLC’s Criteria for Accreditation. The probation designation arose from HLC concerns “related to assessment of student learning, persistence and completion rates, and institutional effectiveness.” Western Dakota remains accredited during the probation period.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Information only.

**Public Disclosure Notice on
Western Dakota Technical Institute**
Rapid City, South Dakota
Effective: February 25, 2016

Western Dakota Technical Institute (“the Institute”) in Rapid City, South Dakota, is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (“HLC”); it has been placed on Probation.

Understanding Probation

Probation is a public status signifying that an accredited institution is no longer in compliance with one or more of HLC’s Criteria for Accreditation. The period of Probation is not more than two years, commencing with the date that the Board placed the institution on Probation. During the Probation period, the institution remains accredited and it has the opportunity to remedy the concerns that led to the Probation sanction.

In most cases, because institutions on Probation remain accredited, other institutions of higher education will continue to accept the institution’s credits in transfer or for admission to a program at a higher degree level. However, students enrolled at an institution on Probation and interested in pursuing a higher degree or transferring should contact any institution they plan to attend in the future to confirm the institution’s admission and transfer policies.

Recent Board Action

On February 25, 2016, the Higher Learning Commission placed the Institute on Probation. HLC’s Board of Trustees took this action because of concerns related to assessment of student learning, persistence and completion rates, and institutional effectiveness. The Board based its action on findings from a Comprehensive Evaluation.

The Criteria for Accreditation and Core Components on which the Board based its action and with which the Institute was found to be non-compliant are Criterion Four, Core Component 4.B, “the institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning,” 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,” and Criterion Five, Core Component 5.D, “the institution works systematically to improve its performance”.

In addition, the following Criteria for Accreditation and Core Components were found to be met with concern: 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”, 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”, Criterion Two, Core Component 2.D, “the institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning”, 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”, Criterion Three, Core Component 3.C, “the institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services,” Criterion Four, Core Component 4.A, “the institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs”, 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”, and Criterion Five, Core Component 5.C, “the institution engages in systematic and integrated planning”.

Next Steps

The Institute is required to file a plan by June 1, 2016 outlining how it will demonstrate it meets the Assumed Practices regarding assessment data and institutional information systems identified in this action by the end of the Probation period.

The Institute is also required to file an Assurance Filing by July 2017 providing evidence that the Institute has resolved the concerns of the Board identified in the Probation action and evidence that the Institute meets the Criteria for Accreditation and Core Components.

The Institute will host a comprehensive evaluation by September 2017 to determine whether the concerns of the Board identified in its action have been resolved and the Criteria for Accreditation have been met. At its meeting in February 2018, the Board will review materials related to this evaluation and determine whether the Institute can be removed from Probation. If the Institute has not resolved the Board's concerns that led to the imposition of Probation and has not demonstrated that it is in compliance with all Criteria for Accreditation, other action may be appropriate.

About the Higher Learning Commission

The Higher Learning Commission accredits approximately 1,000 colleges and universities that have a home base in one of 19 states that stretch from West Virginia to Arizona. HLC is a private, nonprofit regional accrediting agency. HLC's mission is to assure and advance the quality of higher learning. It is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. The institutions HLC accredits include public, private not-for-profit, and proprietary institutions at degree levels from the associate's through the doctoral degree level and from small, specialized institutions through large research universities.

Students, parents, and others from the general public with questions regarding HLC's work should contact the Higher Learning Commission by email at info@hlcommission.org or by phone at 312-263-0456.

Posted: March 3, 2016