



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION BEGINS WORK ON QUALITY AWARENESS INITIATIVES TO INFORM LEARNERS TO BE SUCCESSFUL CONSUMERS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Undertaking to begin in fall 2019 with \$500,000 grant from Lumina Foundation

CHICAGO (August 28, 2019)—The Higher Learning Commission (HLC), an accrediting agency with a membership of almost 1,000 colleges and universities in a 19-state region, has secured funding to explore new quality assurance approaches that better account for the diversity of educational intentions of today’s students. The 16-month program, set to begin this fall, is funded by a \$500,000 grant by Lumina Foundation.

The program seeks to foster transparency in accreditation and demonstrate commitment to serving today’s changing student populations as well as expand availability of higher education credentials that better align with the needs and educational intents of those learners.

“The Higher Learning Commission is grateful for the continued support of Lumina Foundation. Our strategic directions align well, offering HLC the opportunity to contribute to the broader conversation as we evolve to continuously improve accreditation,” said HLC President Barbara Gellman-Danley, Ph.D.

The HLC proposal, submitted earlier this year to Lumina, aligns with the foundation’s commitment to increasing the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees, certificates and other credentials to 60 percent by 2025, something the foundation says is essential for meeting the nation’s growing need for talent.

“HLC and its member institutions will make significant contributions to the critical work of strengthening quality in the pursuit of more equitable outcomes for today’s students,” noted Debra Humphreys, Ph.D., vice president of strategic engagement who coordinates a body of work at the foundation related to quality and equity. “We are pleased to support this initiative as part of a portfolio of projects that builds on a vision of quality and equity that encompasses both institution-based curricular changes and systems reform from federal and state policymakers, accreditors and associations.”

Humphreys added that Lumina is particularly pleased to support HLC’s efforts to collaborate with colleagues and advance new approaches that produce more equitable outcomes and account better for who today’s students are and what they need from quality credentials.

With this initiative, HLC is focusing on several priorities for action in communicating and advancing the understanding of quality in higher education. Much of the work is designed to create tools and provide resources to be utilized by students. Among the highlights of the projects are:

“What Students Need to Know” Guide: HLC will develop a guide to inform students about accreditation and assist them in determining the best higher education opportunities for their individual intent.

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Teach-Out Handbook: Stakeholders will meet to develop a handbook on teach-outs that will provide awareness for students, institutions and affected agencies when an institution closes.

Business Roundtable: To gain insight into employer interest and attitudes related to higher education credentials, HLC will convene a roundtable of corporate leaders. The group will offer recommendations on accreditation standards and expectations of institutional transparency related to credentials and learner competencies.

Student Intent Review: HLC will hold stakeholder meetings to explore the impact of member institutions disaggregating data about their student populations based on student intent. Those meetings may also include higher education organizations around the United States.

Common Glossary Within the Triad: Earlier work on developing a common glossary of terms will expand to focus on establishing shared terminology, modes of data collection, and examination of policy implications as a way of uniformly looking at—and reporting—student intent.

Innovative Spaces: HLC will convene a group of stakeholders to develop a space in which innovations in higher education may be supported and tested in an effort to ensure the academic offerings are quality higher education.

***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 accrediting agency. It is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. Questions? Contact info@hlcommission.org or call 312.263.0456.*

***Lumina Foundation** is an independent, private foundation in Indianapolis that is committed to making opportunities for learning beyond high school available to all. The foundation emisions a system that is easy to navigate, delivers fair results, and meets the nation's need for talent through a broad range of credentials. Lumina's goal is to prepare people for informed citizenship and for success in a global economy.*

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