



DATE For Immediate Release: March 17, 2021

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### **The Higher Learning Commission Focuses New Lens on Differential Accreditation**

CHICAGO – The Higher Learning Commission (HLC), the largest historically-regional accreditor, is launching a project to pilot differential accreditation by institutional sector.

In developing this project, HLC recognizes the growing interest among some colleges and universities for quality indicators such as accreditation standards to be attentive to the interests, needs, aspirations and constraints of the sector in which an institution operates. The agency will look at performing more accreditation activities through multiple lenses.

According to HLC President Barbara Gellman-Danley, various tenets of both HLC’s last strategic plan, VISTA, and its newest, [EVOLVE](#), make it incumbent upon the agency to engage this topic comprehensively and in partnership with its members.

“At its core, differential accreditation will not simply recognize conceptually the diversity and differences among sectors, it will foreground the interests and needs of the various sectors when applying HLC’s requirements of accreditation,” said Gellman-Danley

HLC’s Eligibility Requirements, Criteria for Accreditation will remain consistent for all member institutions.

“All member institutions will continue to be required to meet the Criteria for Accreditation,” she said. “However, we want to look at each institution from their perspective and core values.”

HLC will leverage advisory groups to advance this project in an effort to engage a breadth of appropriate stakeholders. Initial plans are to gather college and university presidents from a diverse range of settings and institution types. HLC also will conduct listening sessions from institutional members at its April annual conference.

The project will then engage member institutions from different sectors to take part in advisory councils and respond to member surveys. Eventually the pilot will be tested through implementation in fall 2022 at the earliest.

*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](mailto:info@hlcommission.org) or call 312.263.0456.*

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