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HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION MOVES TO CONSIDERING APPLICATIONS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

CHICAGO — The Higher Learning Commission (HLC), the largest historically-regional accreditor, takes the first step toward considering applications from colleges and universities across the United States. Today the HLC Board of Trustees initially approved changes to its Bylaws and policies to expand its geographic area for accreditation to include the entire United States.

“The public is demanding a heightened level of quality assurance,” notes Barbara Gellman-Danley, President, HLC. “HLC is committed to providing thought leadership, while being agile and adaptive within the changing higher education landscape. HLC has the power to advocate, educate, create partnerships, and convene stakeholders. HLC offers extensive continuing education on quality assurance topics, in-depth training for a large Peer Corps, an outstanding national conference and extensive interaction with and among institutions.”

HLC is a membership organization reflecting the diversity of institutional types within higher education. Currently members come from a 19-state region, with additional locations in nearly all states in the country. HLC’s consideration of this change came after the July 1, 2020, enactment of federal regulations stating that the U.S. Department of Education would no longer limit accreditors’ geographic scope to a region.

“HLC’s Board recognizes the need to provide a strong voice for quality assurance in the dynamically changing world of higher education,” Rita Cheng, Chair of HLC’s Board of Directors and President of Northern Arizona University. “Throughout its 125-year history, HLC consistently demonstrates a strong commitment to membership training, convening of stakeholders among the industry, and professional development opportunities. We want to increase support for the diversity of missions among higher education.”

In addition to being a gatekeeper for federal financial aid, HLC’s mission embraces advancement. HLC has a record of innovation, working closely with the states, and providing member-driven resources for colleges and universities.

An accelerated process for achieving accreditation is in development for colleges and universities with a proven history of quality assurance from other accreditors similar to HLC. This process will feature a reduced timeline to achieving accreditation while still assuring rigor and protection for student success.

“Certain colleges and universities that have already demonstrated their commitment to providing quality education for student success will not be required to go through the traditional eligibility process,” says Gellman-Danley. “Rather, the timeline to accreditation will be truncated to leverage previously demonstrated quality assurance. This will also offer increased cost savings to the colleges and universities.”

HLC's procedure for adoption of changes to its Bylaws and policies requires initial approval by the HLC Board of Trustees, a 60-day membership comment period, followed by final adoption by the Board. Final consideration of these changes will take place during the June 2021 Board Meeting.

President Gellman-Danley noted, "We want to assure everything we do at HLC supports our vision and strengthens the value proposition of 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.

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