

March 5, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dr. Edward Martinez
President
Luna Community College
366 Luna Drive
Las Vegas, NM 87701

Dear President Martinez:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning Luna Community College (“the Institution”). This action is effective as of the date the Board acted, February 29, 2024. In taking this action, the Board considered materials from the most recent comprehensive evaluation, including, but not limited to: the Assurance Filing the Institution submitted, the report from the comprehensive evaluation team, the report of the Institutional Actions Council (IAC) Hearing Committee, and the institutional responses to these reports.

Summary of the Action: The Board determined that the Institution is no longer out of compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation and removed the Institution from Probation and assigned interim monitoring.¹ This action also resulted in a reaffirmation of the Institution’s accreditation, as outlined below. The Institution meets Core Components 4.A, 4.B, 5.B and 5.C with concerns. The Institution is required to host a Focused Visit, as outlined below, no later than November 2025.

Substantive Change: HLC policy² states an institution removed from Probation shall be subject to additional requirements for substantive change for three (3) years following the removal of Probation.³

Notification Program: HLC policy⁴ states that the Institution remains ineligible for the

¹ The Institution was placed on Probation by the HLC Board of Trustees in November 2021. As set forth in the action letter dated November 8, 2021, in accordance with HLC policy, the Institution was initially scheduled to have its Probation status reviewed by the Board in November 2023. However, under HLC Policy INST.COVID.10.010 (Temporary Emergency Policy Related to COVID-19), as then in effect, HLC staff approved the Institution’s request to delay its comprehensive evaluation for Probation to fall 2023, due to significant wildfires in the area and related disaster declarations. This resulted in review of the Institution’s Probation status being moved to February 2024. This change in the Institution’s evaluative schedule, and corresponding extension to the Institution’s Probation based on INST.COVID.10.010, was not formally approved by the Board at its November 2023 meeting.

² INST.E.20.010, Probation.

³ INST.F.20.040, Substantive Change.

⁴ INST.E.20.010, Probation.

Notification Program for Additional Locations until it has completed three (3) years in good standing as required for access.

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:

Luna Community College (“the Institution”) now meets Criterion Two, Core Component 2.C, “the governing board of the institution is autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution in compliance with board policies and to ensure the institution’s integrity,” for the following reasons:

- The Institution took strategic measures to transform and streamline the Institution, including that the board established bylaws and other expectations to delineate the boundaries between Board oversight and day-to-day operations.
- The Institution’s Board has undergone additional training to better understand its roles and responsibilities.
- The Institution hired administrative and executive staff to serve in leadership roles to better ensure the continuity and consistency of day-to-day operations.
- The Board and President have demonstrated a better understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities.

The Institution meets, but with concerns, Criterion Four, Core Component 4.A “the institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings,” for the following reason:

- The Institution needs time to demonstrate that it has implemented a stronger approach to program review and that data is consistently being utilized for improvement.

The Institution meets but 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 lacks consistency across assessment practices for general education, courses, and programs.
- The Institution lacks defined measures and data collection for co-curricular assessment.
- The Institution must use data from student outcomes assessment, rather than focusing on grades, in order to move the assessment process to a higher level of maturity and meaningfulness.

The Institution meets but with 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 is in the process of stabilizing its financial leadership, including through the recent hiring of a new Chief Financial Officer.
- The latest audit report submitted by the Institution was for FY2021 and the FY2022 audit was delayed due to natural disasters.

- The Institution lacks a detailed plan and analysis to address its financial challenges and declining enrollments, including the lack of mitigation and contingency options.

The Institution meets but with concerns Criterion Five, Core Component 5.C “the institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement,” for the following reasons:

- The Institution remains in the process of deploying finance and human resources modules in its platform.
- The Institution lacks consistent training for financial leadership.
- While the Institution’s Long-Term Sustainability plan was updated in July 2023, changes at the Institution are not yet fully realized in the plan.

The Board of Trustees of the Higher Learning Commission has determined based on the preceding findings and evidence in the record the Institution has demonstrated that it is otherwise in compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation, Assumed Practices, and Federal Compliance requirements, but the Institution is nevertheless at risk of being out of compliance based on the findings stated above.

Next Steps in the HLC Review Process

Focused Visit: The Board required that the Institution host a Focused Visit regarding Core Components 4.A, 4.B, 5.B and 5.C no later than November 2025.

Comprehensive Evaluation: The Institution has been placed on the Standard Pathway with its next comprehensive evaluation for reaffirmation of accreditation in 2027-28.

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,⁵ 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.

⁵ COMMA.10.010, Notice of Accreditation Actions, HLC Public Notices and Public Statements

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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. Stephanie Brzuzy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Gellman-Danley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barbara Gellman-Danley
President

Enc: Public Disclosure Notice

Cc: Chair of the Board of Trustees, Luna Community College
Evaluation Team Chair
IAC Hearing Committee Chair
Stephanie Brzuzy, Vice President of Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning
Commission
Marla Morgen, Vice President and General Counsel, Higher Learning Commission
Stephanie Rodriguez, Cabinet Secretary, New Mexico Higher Education Department