

West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission
Meeting of March 13, 2015

ITEM: Approval of Annual Reauthorization of Degree-Granting Institutions

INSTITUTION: Salem International University

RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION: *Resolved*, That the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission approves the annual reauthorization for Salem International University.

Further resolved, that Salem International University shall submit progress reports to the Chancellor every six months on efforts to enhance retention and graduation rates. The first report shall be due on August 15, 2015. The final report will be due following completion of Salem's participation in the HLC Academy for Student Persistence and Completion.

STAFF MEMBER: Mark Stotler

BACKGROUND:

At its April 25, 2014 meeting, the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, delayed reauthorization for Salem International University until additional review and investigation was conducted. Based on this action, a subcommittee of the Reauthorization Compliance Review Team conducted a site visit to Salem on August, 13, 2014. The primary purpose of the visit was to gain a better understanding of the university's accreditation status with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), which had recently placed Salem International University on Notice. Following the site visit, the review team recommended reauthorization but noted in their report that Salem was scheduled to host a focused visit by HLC in September 2014 focused on validating the contents of the Notice report.

At its November 21, 2014 meeting, the Commission again voted to delay reauthorization until final results of the HLC focused report were available. Since that meeting, Commission staff has received the HLC team's report which states that evaluators found neither evidence that HLC follow-up is needed nor evidence that HLC sanction is warranted. The assessment of the HLC visiting team was that each of the relevant core components was met. The HLC team's report was approved by the HLC Board of

Trustees at its February meeting.

In the interim, a second year of reauthorization data was submitted by institutions for review by the Compliance Review Team. After reviewing the data submitted by Salem International University, the following items were noted as concerns that need to be addressed by the institution:

- The graduation rate of 7% is below the 25th percentile of Carnegie peers and is a decrease from the previous year
- The loan default rate is approaching the critical threshold of 30%
- The Nursing licensure passage rate was 51.5 %

At this time, areas of concern have not led to specific follow-up reports. Institutions are simply put on notice that identified areas will be monitored for progress and improvement. With respect to Salem's low graduation rate, the Compliance Review Team felt that this item needs regular monitoring. The review team was informed that Salem has been accepted into the July 2014 cohort of the HLC Academy for Student Persistence and Completion. This four year commitment to addressing concerns about retention and graduation is a very positive development. The review team recommends that Salem be reauthorized but that they submit progress reports to the Chancellor every six months while participating in the Academy.

MEMORANDUM

March 9, 2015

via Email

To: Paul Hill, Ph.D.
Chancellor
West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (“HEPC”)

From: C. Eric Kirkland, Ph.D.

Cc: Corley Dennison, Ed.D.
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Mark Stotler, Ed.D.
Assistant Director of Academic Affairs

Re: Action of the Board of the Higher Learning Commission (“HLC”)

Ref: Action Letter from HLC President Barbara Gellman-Danley, dated March 9, 2015

Salem is pleased to report receipt today of the referenced letter from HLC that states in part:

At its meeting on February 26, 2015 the Board removed the sanction of Notice from the University. The Board determined that the removal of the sanction was warranted based on evidence provided by the University, including the Notice Report, the report of the visiting team, the staff analysis of the sanction, the University’s responses to these reports, and other relevant materials. (p. 1)

A copy of the original HLC letter, which was received via email in PDF format, is attached.

If there is additional information that you require, please, advise at your earliest convenience.

Best regards,



Executive Vice President
Accreditation Liaison Officer



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

A COMMISSION OF THE NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

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March 9, 2015

Mr. Dan Nelant, President
Salem International University
223 W Main St.
Salem, WV 26426

Dear President Nelant:

This letter is formal notification of action taken concerning Salem International University, (“the University”) by the Higher Learning Commission Board of Trustees (“the Board”). At its meeting on February 26, 2015 the Board removed the sanction of Notice from the University. The Board determined that the removal of the sanction was warranted based on evidence provided by the University, including the Notice Report, the report of the visiting team, the staff analysis of the sanction, the University’s responses to these reports, and other relevant materials. In addition, the Board maintained the placement of the University on the Standard Pathway. The Board required that the University host its next comprehensive evaluation in 2016-17 as currently scheduled. The Board also required that the comprehensive evaluation include a special emphasis on continued progress in the area of persistence and retention.

The Board based its action on the following findings made with regard to the University:

The University has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission’s concerns related to Criterion Three, Core Component 3.C, “the institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services,” for the following reasons:

- the University has demonstrated that faculty are assigned a workload within the bounds of good practice and that it is assigning qualified faculty to course assignments;
- the University uses its data management system to manage course evaluations and facilitate review by relevant administrators;
- University faculty are engaged in academic committees, which are appropriately engaged in assessment of student learning and program review; and
- the University has made certain curricular modifications to improve student outcomes in one academic program and has provided evidence of strong student outcomes in another program, demonstrating the effectiveness of faculty engagement in reviewing academic offerings.

The University has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission’s concerns related to Criterion Four, Core Component 4.A, “the institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs,” for the following reasons:

- the University provided evidence of annual program reviews, alignment of learning outcomes and goals, and use of an internal process to collect and analyze data; and
- the University has appointed staff to coordinate the data management system and has demonstrated that representatives from across the University use this system.

The University has demonstrated that it has made progress toward addressing the Commission’s concerns related to 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,” for the following reasons:

- the University has created a new team focused on persistence and completion and has demonstrated that the team analyzes data on persistence and retention effectively, in an approach that reflects good practice and responds to the student population of the University;
- the University has supplemented its academic support structures with services such as a Writing Center for students to bolster their performance; and
- the University is participating in the Commission's Persistence and Retention Academy, an initiative that will continue to develop its understanding and adoption of good practices.

Although the University has demonstrated procedural improvements related to student, retention, persistence and completion, the University's overall graduation rate is currently reported through the College Navigator as 8%.

The University has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission's concerns related to 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," for the following reasons:

- the University Board demonstrated effective planning and action related to governance, leadership, financial management and control, and effective environmental scanning through such activities as hiring an appropriately qualified new president;
- the University Board provided documentation of appropriate qualifications for Board members and effective functioning of the Board through a standing committee structure; and
- the University has reviewed and refined its policies and procedures as the result of its review.

The University has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission's concerns related to Criterion Five, Core Component 5.D, "the institution works systematically to improve its performance," for the following reasons:

- the University has implemented a dashboard of institutional data to inform decision-making; and
- the University has used external sources of information and survey data and advisory groups to inform program level analysis and decision-making.

The University has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission's concerns related to Assumed Practice A.2, "the institution has ethics policies for faculty and staff regarding conflict of interest, nepotism, recruitment and admissions, financial aid, privacy of personal information, and contracting," because the University has documented that it has such policies in place.

The University has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission's concerns related to Assumed Practice B.2.c, "Faculty participate substantially in:

- a. oversight of the curriculum—its development and implementation, academic substance, currency, and relevance for internal and external constituencies;
- b. assurance of consistency in the level and quality of instruction and in the expectations of student performance;
- c. establishment of the academic qualifications for instructional personnel;
- d. analysis of data and appropriate action on assessment of student learning and program completion," because the University has demonstrated sufficient faculty engagement in these various roles.

The University has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission's concerns related to Assumed C.7, "Institutional data on student retention, persistence, and completion are accurate and address the full range of students who enroll," because the University has demonstrated that it has taken steps to ensure proper analysis of data that takes into account the University's specific student population.

The University has demonstrated that it has addressed the Commission's concerns related to Assumed Practice D.4, "the institution maintains effective systems for collecting, analyzing, and using institutional information," because the University has demonstrated that has such systems in place and uses data collected through these systems to make improvements.

While the University has resolved the concerns of the Board identified in the Notice action, Commission follow-up at the time of the next comprehensive review is necessary to ensure continued progress in the area of persistence and retention.

At this time, the Commission will reassign the College from its liaison Vice President Anthea Sweeney to Vice President Eric Martin. If you have any questions or concerns about the information in this letter, please contact Dr. Martin. Please be assured that Dr. Martin will work with Dr. Sweeney to create a smooth transition.

The Board action resulted in changes to the affiliation of the University. These changes are reflected on the Institutional Status and Requirements Report. Some of the information from that document, such as the dates of the last and next comprehensive evaluation visits, will be posted to the Commission's website along with information from the Organizational Profile. In addition, Commission Policy INST.G.10.010, Management of Commission Information, anticipates that the Commission will release action letters related to the removal of a sanction to members of the public. The Commission will do so by posting this action letter on the Commission website.

Information about notifying the public of this action is available at <http://ncahlc.org/Information-for-Institutions/institutional-reporting-of-actions.html>. In addition, Commission policy COMM.A.10.010, Commission Public Notices and Statements, requires that the Commission prepare a summary of actions to be sent to appropriate state and federal agencies and accrediting associations, and published on its website. The summary will include the Commission Board action regarding the University. The University may choose to prepare a statement to its constituencies regarding this action; I ask that you copy Dr. Martin on any such communication.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I thank you and your associates for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Barbara Gellman-Danley
President

cc: Chair of the Board of Trustees, Salem International University
Evaluation team members
Dr. C. Eric Kirkland, Executive Vice President, Salem International University
Dr. Anthea M. Sweeney, Vice President for Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning Commission
Dr. Eric V. Martin, Vice President for Accreditation Relations and Director, AQIP Pathway, Higher Learning Commission
Ms. Karen L. Solinski, Vice President for Legal and Governmental Affairs, Higher Learning Commission
Mr. Herman Bounds, Accreditation and State Liaison, Office of Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education