



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500
Chicago, IL 60604-1411
312.263.0456 | 800.621.7440
Fax: 312.263.7462 | hlcommission.org

June 29, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Kerry Prather, President
Franklin College
101 Branigan Blvd.
Franklin, IN 46131

Dear President Prather:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning Franklin College (“Franklin” or “the Institution”). This action is effective as of the date the Board acted, June 24, 2021. In taking this action, the Board considered materials from the most recent Focused Visit including, but not limited to: the Focused Visit Report the Institution submitted, the report from the Focused Visit team, the report of the Institutional Actions Council (IAC) Hearing Committee, and the institutional responses to these reports.

Summary of the Action: The Board continued the accreditation of the Institution based on its findings outlined below.

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:

The Institution now meets without concerns Criterion Two, Core Component 2.B, “the institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public,” for the following reasons:

- Franklin has taken concrete steps to ameliorate the conflict of interest inherent in the dual role of the College General Counsel/Trustee by having the individual serve only in the capacity of a Trustee, thereby clarifying the role.
- Franklin has adopted a new process for hiring and evaluating a general counsel for the Institution and has followed through with that process, hiring a new outside counsel and using that position in a manner more consistent with best practices for college legal affairs.
- The Institution is assuring that there has been (and will be) no retaliation against those who spoke frankly about their concerns during the Focused Visit.

- The Institution is working with faculty and relevant staff to review the current faculty employment contract, including how it co-exists with the faculty/staff handbook.
- The Institution is strengthening shared governance, particularly in academic operations, and is engaging in intentional efforts across the faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees to develop and implement a collaborative governance structure.

The Institution meets Criterion Two, Core Component 2.A, “the institution establishes and follows policies and processes to ensure fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty and staff,” for the reasons noted above.

The Institution meets Criterion Five, Core Component 5.A, “through its administrative structures and collaborative processes, the institution’s leadership demonstrates that it is effective and enables the institution to fulfill its mission,” for the reasons noted above.

The Institution Assumed Practice A.1, “the institution has a conflict of interest policy that ensures that the governing board and the senior administrative personnel act in the best interest of the institution,” for the reasons noted above.

The Board of Trustees of the Higher Learning Commission has determined based on the preceding findings and evidence in the record that the Institution has demonstrated that it is otherwise in compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation and other HLC requirements.

Next Steps in the HLC Review Process

Comprehensive Evaluation: The Institution has been maintained on the Standard Pathway with its next comprehensive evaluation (Year 4) in 2023-24.

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.

HLC policy¹ requires that a summary of Board actions be sent to appropriate state and federal agencies and accrediting associations. It also will be published on HLC’s website. The summary will include this HLC action regarding the Institution.

¹ COMM.A.10.020, Notice of Accreditation Actions

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. Linnea Stenson.

Sincerely,

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

Barbara Gellman-Danley
President

Cc: Betsy Schmidt, Director of Academic Partnerships, Franklin College
Evaluation Team Chair
IAC Hearing Committee Chair
Linnea A. Stenson, Vice President of Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning Commission
Anthea Sweeney, Vice President of Legal and Regulatory Affairs, Higher Learning
Commission