

MORTON COLLEGE

COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT NO.

527 COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS

Minutes for the Regular Board Meeting

Thursday, October 11, 2018

A Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Morton College was held Thursday, October 11, 2018, beginning at 11:00 AM in the Morton College Board Room (221B) of Building B located at 3801 S. Central Avenue, Cicero, Illinois.

1. **Call to Order**

The Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Illinois Community College District No. 527 was called to order by Board Chair Frank Aguilar at 11:04 AM on Wednesday, September 26, 2018, in the Morton College Board Room (221-B).

2. **Roll Call**

Present:

Frank J. Aguilar, Chair
Susan L. Banks, Trustee
Joseph J. Belcaster, Trustee
Jose A. Collazo, Secretary
Anthony Martinucci, Vice Chair
Frances Reitz, Trustee
Jesus Javier Ruan, Advisory Student Member

Absent:

Melissa Cundari, Trustee

Also Present:

Dr. Stanley Fields, President
Dr. Linnea Stenson, Higher Learning Commission Liaison

3. **Citizen Comments**

None

4. **"The Importance of Regional Accreditation to an Institution"**

Dr. Linnea Stenson, Higher Learning Commission Liaison, gave a presentation on the importance of accreditation. The presentation is attached.

Questions:

Dr. Fields: Is the HLC's focus to regulate or help institutions?

Dr. Stenson: The HLC is here to help and support institutions.

Dr. Fields: In August, the College sent a 3-page letter explaining the actions we are taking to improve. Will this letter help?

Dr. Stenson: The HLC Board will consider all evidence when making their decision.

Dr. Stenson: Why is the attorney seated at the Board table? The attorney should be moved to the audience. The attorney is the College's attorney, not the Board's attorney. You may still ask him questions during the meeting, but it is important to move the attorney to the audience to establish separation.

Dr. Stenson: Why is Trustee Cundari not in attendance?

Trustee Reitz: Trustee Cundari has a position with the Federal Government, and cannot attend meetings on Wednesdays. The Board was given 3 dates to choose from, and October 11th was the only date that she could not attend. Trustee Cundari could not attend by phone per Board Policy only allowing 2-phone attendances per year.

Dr. Fields: What is the appeal process?

Dr. Stenson: The only appealable sanction is withdrawal. We will go through those steps with the institution should that decision be reached by the HLC Board.

Dr. Fields: Going forward, would the Board Agenda and Minutes be a good place to demonstrate action?

Dr. Stenson: Yes. It is also important to establish your Board Calendar each year, and do not change the meeting dates. This past year the Board had quite a few reschedules, and one meeting was canceled and not rescheduled.

5. Board Member Comments

Trustee Reitz: Our Board retreats have fallen off schedule, and I feel it is important to continue with these practices. Dr. Stenson said it is important to continue educating yourselves, the AGB and ACCT conferences are great resources for learning.

The Board had retreats on March 12, 2016, June 7, 2017 and November 18, 2017 with Dr. Fields.

6. Adjournment

Trustee Martinucci moved to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board. Trustee Collazo seconded the motion.

Advisory Vote-Student Member Ruan: Aye

Aye: Trustees Aguilar, Banks, Belcaster, Collazo, Martinucci, and Reitz.

Nays: None. Absent: Trustee Cundari. Motion Carried.

This meeting was adjourned at 12:16 PM

The Regular Board Meeting will be on Wednesday, October 17, 2018 at 11am.

/s/ Frank J. Aguilar,
Board Chair

/s/ Jose Collazo
Board Secretary


 HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

Morton College:

Accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission
and the
Context for the HLC Board's Upcoming Decision

Linnea A. Stenson, Ph. D. | October 11, 2018

Prepared for



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What is Accreditation?

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) says it “is a process of external quality review created and used by higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities, and programs for quality assurance and quality improvement.”

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Types of Accreditation

SPECIALIZED

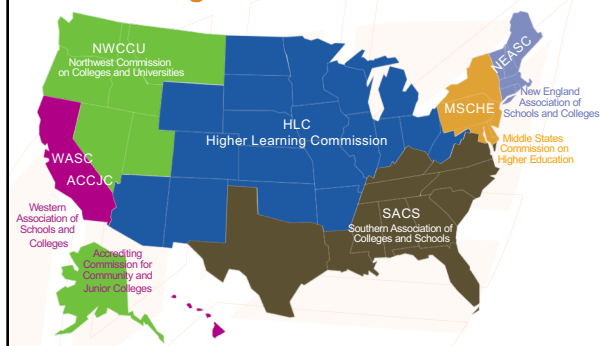
- Program specific – law, business, nursing
- Often linked to national professional associations

INSTITUTIONAL

- Evaluation of entire institution
- National and Regional Agencies

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Regional Accreditation



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Overview of the Higher Learning Commission

- Established in 1895
- Mission Statement (Organizational Purpose):

***“Serving the common good by
assuring and advancing the
quality of higher learning.”***

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Diversity of Membership

- Two-year & four-year institutions
- Public, private not-for-profit, and for-profit
- Liberal arts colleges
- Comprehensive institutions
- Tribal colleges
- Faith-based institutions
- Research universities
- Single-purpose institutions
- Virtual (all online) institutions

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Importance of Regional Accreditation

- Assesses and ensures through peer review that an institution's academic programs are of high quality.
- Builds and maintains confidence in higher education by providing assurance to the public about quality.
- Is responsive & responsible to diversity of institutions, of missions, of students.
- Allows for voluntary self-regulation.

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Importance of Regional Accreditation

- Promotes institutional self-knowledge and advancement by expecting comprehensive involvement of faculty and staff in an institution's planning and evaluation.
- Eases transfer of credits from one regionally accredited institution to another.
- Qualifies institutions to participate in Title IV funding for students.

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HLC Accreditation

Guiding Values

- Underlying intentions for Criteria and Assumed Practices

Assumed Practices

- Unlikely to vary by mission; matters of fact rather than judgment

Criteria for Accreditation

- Central to demonstrating quality

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HLC Guiding Values

1. Focus on student learning.
2. Education as a public purpose.
3. Education for a diverse, technological, globally connected world.
4. A culture of continuous improvement.

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HLC Guiding Values

5. Evidence-based institutional learning and self-presentation.
6. Integrity, transparency, and ethical behavior or practice.
7. Governance for the well-being of the institution.

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HLC Guiding Values

8. Planning and management of resources to ensure institutional sustainability.
9. Mission-centered evaluation.
10. Accreditation through peer review.

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Guiding Values

Governance for the well-being of the institution

The well-being of an institution requires that its governing board place that well-being above the interests of its own members and the interests of any other entity. Because HLC accredits the educational institution itself, and not the state system, religious organization, corporation, medical center or other entity that may own it, it holds the governing board of an institution accountable for the key aspects of the institution's operations.

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Guiding Values

continued:

The governing board must have the independent authority for such accountability and must also hold itself independent of undue influence from individuals, be they donors, elected officials, supporters of athletics, shareholders, or others with personal or political interests.

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Guiding Values

continued:

Governance of a quality institution of higher education will include a significant role for faculty, in particular with regard to currency and sufficiency of the curriculum, expectations for student performance, qualifications of the instructional staff, and adequacy of resources for instructional support.

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Assumed Practices

Foundational to the Criteria and Core Components is a set of practices shared by institutions of higher education in the United States. Unlike the Criteria and Core Components, these Assumed Practices are (1) generally matters to be determined as facts, rather than matters requiring professional judgment and (2) unlikely to vary by institutional mission or context.

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HLC Assumed Practices

- A. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct
- B. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support
- C. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement
- D. Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

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Assumed Practices

A. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

8. The governing board and its executive committee, if it has one, include some "public" members. Public members have no significant administrative position or any ownership interest in any of the following: the institution itself; a company that does substantial business with the institution; a company or organization with which the institution has a substantial partnership; a parent, ultimate parent, affiliate, or subsidiary corporation; an investment group or firm substantially involved with one of the above organizations.

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Assumed Practices

A. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

cont'd

All publicly-elected members or members appointed by publicly-elected individuals or bodies (governors, elected legislative bodies) are public members.

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Assumed Practices

A. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

9. The governing board has the authority to approve the annual budget and to engage and dismiss the chief executive officer.

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How did Morton Get Here?

1. A Focused Visit, which occurred in January 2018, was assigned as a result of the Comprehensive Visit. The focus was primarily on governance.
2. The IAC "First Committee" looked at the Focused Visit team report, and opted to send the report to an IAC Hearing.

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How did Morton Get Here?

3. The IAC Hearing Committee, after looking at all documents and meeting with representatives from Morton, recommended the sanction of Probation in July 2018.
4. The HLC Board of Trustees will consider Morton's case at their meeting occurring on November 1-2, 2018.
5. Final decision will be communicated approximately a week following the meeting.

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Criteria for Accreditation

The screenshot shows the Higher Learning Commission website. The main heading is "HLC Policy". Below it, the "Policy Title: Criteria for Accreditation" and "Number: CRRT.B.10.010" are displayed. A note states: "HLC's Board of Trustees considers clarifying modifications to the Criteria for Accreditation and the Assumed Practices annually, usually with first reading in February and second reading in June." On the right, a "Policy Book" icon and a "Related Policies" section are visible, listing "CRRT.B.10.020 Assumed Practices", "INST.B.30.020 Obligations of Affiliation", and "INSTA.10.020 Evaluative Framework for the HLC Criteria".

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Criterion 1

Mission

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

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Criterion 2

Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

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Criterion 2

Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

2.A. The institution operates with integrity in its financial, academic, personnel, and auxiliary functions; it establishes and follows policies and processes for fair and ethical behavior on the part of its governing board, administration, faculty, and staff.

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What is a "Concern"?

A concern is an issue that *must be improved* in order to be in full compliance with the Core Component's expectations.

- A "Concern" can also occur when the institution
- is not aware of the issues identified,
 - has no plans or processes to implement any improvements, or
 - may not possess the capacity or inclination to improve.

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Criterion 2

Core Component 2.A Issues:

- The Board does not follow its own policies
- Confused relationship between the college attorney, the board and the president

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Criterion 2

Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

Core Component 2.C. The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity.

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What is “Not Met”?

A Core Component is not met when

- The team or IAC is unable to demonstrate the institution is in compliance or
- when it identifies a *systemic* problem.

Attention should also be given to the Assumed Practices if a Core Component is determined to be not met.

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Criterion 2

Core Component 2.C Issues:

- Some board members fail to understand they have no authority apart from board capacity as outlined in by-laws and policies
- Some board members interfere in day-to-day management of the college
- The board needs strong leadership to clarify appropriate behaviors for all board members

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Criterion 2

Core Component 2.C Issues *continued*:

- The “board attorney”* communicates with the board and often excludes the president
- The “board attorney”* often speaks as a board member when he is not
- The “board attorney”* along with all other personnel employed by the college, should take direction from the president

** The attorney should serve the college, not the board*

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Criterion 2

Core Component 2.C Issues *continued*:

- The Board does not engage in regular professional development to best understand their role
- The board does not have a mandatory on-boarding orientation for new members to ensure understanding and compliance with established bylaws

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Criterion 3

Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support

The institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

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Criterion 4

Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

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Criterion 5

Resources, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness

The institution's resources, structures, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future.

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Criterion 5

Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

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.

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NOT MET WITH CONCERNS

Criterion 5

Core Component 5.B. Issues:

- The modified governance structure, designed to expand participation of all college stakeholders, still needs time to demonstrate its effectiveness
- All policies need to be followed by all parties

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Criterion Rubric: Recommendations for Monitoring or Sanction

Core Components	Criterion is...	...then team recommends
ALL Met	Met	No monitoring
1+ Met with Concern	Met with Concerns	Monitoring or Notice (sanction)
1+ Not Met	Not Met	Probation (sanction) or Withdrawal

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HLC Sanctions

- **Placed on Notice**
 - *At risk* of not meeting at least one of the Criterion
 - Institution is placed on the Standard Pathway
- **Probation**
 - Does not meet one or more Criterion
 - Institution will not remain on a Pathway
- **Withdrawal**
 - Does not meet one or more Criterion
 - Institution will not remain on a Pathway

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Sanction Factors

Severity- How grave are the issues themselves? Are they institutionalized? Is the institution's capacity jeopardized?

Accretion – Taken together, do the various team findings have the cumulative effect of placing the institution's educational quality or financial viability in jeopardy?

Duration – How long has the institution been aware of or struggled with these issues?

Depending on the answers to such questions, the board can decide that an institution, on the whole, is at risk of noncompliance or is noncompliant in one or more of its Core Components.

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Notice Recommendation

The necessary steps in making a Notice Recommendation are:

- 1) determining that at least one Core Component is Met with Concerns (*All you need is One*); and
- 2) confirming that Interim Monitoring is an inappropriate mechanism for HLC follow-up, because the institution is at risk of non-compliance.

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Practical Implications

- The maximum Notice period is two years, although the HLC Board has acted to shorten the period in the past.
- Institutions on Notice are placed on the Standard Pathway when the sanction is imposed. Standard Pathway institutions that are placed on Notice remain on that pathway.
- A Notice Visit typically takes the form of a focused visit and is limited to the scope of the Core Components cited. Peer Reviewers use the Focused Visit Template to prepare their reports. Institutions prepare a Notice Report in the same manner that Focused Visit Reports are prepared.

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Probation Recommendation

- Regardless of the combination of findings, if a team determines a single Core Component is "not met," Notice is no longer available to the team as a recommendation, per HLC policy.
- Probation is a public sanction indicating that an accredited institution is no longer in compliance with one or more of the Criteria for Accreditation.
- A finding of "not met" for a single Core Component triggers, at a minimum, a Probation recommendation.
- Probation is the least severe recommendation available when there is a finding of non-compliance.

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Practical Implications

- The initial period of Probation per policy is two years, although the HLC Board has acted to shorten the period in the past.
- Institutions on Probation are removed from any Pathway when the sanction is imposed.
- The initial imposition of Probation always triggers a full comprehensive evaluation of all Criteria and Core Components, Federal Compliance and the specific Assumed Practices that were cited as a result of the findings of non-compliance.
- The institution prepares an Assurance Filing, but is careful to include documentation providing evidence that it has resolved the underlying concerns related to the Probation sanction.

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Show-Cause Order

- Show-Cause is not a sanction.
- Show-Cause is a procedural order that shifts the burden to the institution to demonstrate why its accreditation should not be withdrawn.
- Neither teams nor the IAC may recommend Show-Cause. The HLC Board has sole discretion to issue this order.
- Institutions placed on Show-Cause are removed from any Pathway when the order is issued.
- Once imposed, the Show-Cause order requires institutions to demonstrate that they meet all the Criteria for Accreditation, all Federal Compliance Requirements and all Assumed Practices, regardless of the reasons the order may have been issued.

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Withdrawal

- A recommendation for withdrawal can be issued at any time. There is no incremental approach requirement in HLC policy suggesting that an institution should have been on some other sanction(s) first.
- Further, when an institution's compliance deteriorates immediately following a period of noncompliance, a recommendation for withdrawal should be considered.

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What Happens Next?

- All initial recommendations for sanction are reviewed by at least one other decision-making authority.
- The HLC Board makes all final decisions related to sanction.
- The HLC Board is not bound by an incremental approach to sanctions or by previous recommendations, but will make its decision based on the strength of the evidentiary record supporting a particular sanction.
- Institutions on sanction remain eligible for Title IV financial aid and remain accredited unless and until accreditation is finally withdrawn.
- Withdrawal actions by the HLC Board are subject to appeal.

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Questions?

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Contact

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