



## Focused Visit Report

After the team reaches a consensus, the team chair completes this form to summarize and document the team's view. Notes and evidence should be essential and concise. **Note:** If the visit involved more than five areas of focus, please contact the institution's HLC staff liaison for an expanded version of this form.

Submit the completed draft report to the institution's HLC staff liaison. When the report is final, submit it as a single PDF file at [hlcommission.org/upload](http://hlcommission.org/upload). Select "Final Reports" from the list of submission options to ensure the report is sent to the correct HLC staff member.

Institution: Morton College

City, State: Cicero, IL

Visit Date: 03/09-10/2020

**Names of Peer Reviewers** (List the names, titles and affiliations of each peer reviewer. The team chair should note that designation in parenthesis.)

Roberta C. Teahen, Ph.D.  
Director, Doctorate in Community College Leadership  
Ferris State University  
Traverse City, MI 49686

Benjamin F. Young, Ed.D.  
Vice President Emeritus  
Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana  
Winchester, IN 47394 (chair)

### Part A: Context and Nature of Visit

#### 1. Purpose of the Visit (Provide the visit description from the Evaluation Summary Sheet.)

The Institution will host a Notice Evaluation no later than April 2020 to determine whether the Institution has ameliorated the findings that led to the imposition of Notice and to make a recommendation about whether to remove Notice or take other action.

#### 2. Accreditation Status

Accredited

- Accredited—On Notice
- Accredited—On Probation

### 3. Organizational Context

Morton College (the College) is a comprehensive, public community college located in Cicero, Illinois. Founded in 1924, its initial accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) was granted in 1927. The College serves approximately 160,000 residents in six Chicago suburbs and employed 464 faculty and staff members as of October 1, 2019. It enrolled 6,951 credit students and 434 non-credit students during the 2018-2019 academic year. A total of 685 degrees and certificates were awarded to students in 2019. Over 85 percent of the current student body is Hispanic, making Morton College the seventh largest public two-year Hispanic serving institution in the nation.

In October 2016, a team conducted a Standard Pathway comprehensive evaluation visit for Reaffirmation of Accreditation. The team's set of recommendations called for the next Reaffirmation of Accreditation visit to occur in 2026-2027, the Criteria for Accreditation "Met with Concerns," the Pathway Recommendation "Limited to Standard," and a Focused Visit due by January 31, 2018 (or one year from final action). The purpose for the Focused Visit was to determine the extent of Board of Trustees (the Board) engagement with policy development; professional development plan for the president; participatory governance; and a comprehensive internal communication plan. Additional focus on financial accountability responsibilities was included.

The College, while acknowledging some areas of concern (Core Components 2C, 5A, and 5B met with concerns), exercised its right to submit the Institutional Response Form to HLC indicating that it concurred with the 2016 team's overall recommendations but wanted to propose for further consideration a written report as an alternative to a Focused Visit. In March 2017, HLC notified the College that the Institutional Actions Council (IAC) took actions to accept the team's recommendation that the next Reaffirmation of Accreditation occur in 2026-2027 with a Focused Visit by January 1, 2018, for the aforementioned expectations, which focused heavily on Morton College Board of Trustees' relationships and actions.

The Focused Visit, held in January 2018 concluded that the College made adequate progress on two of the areas of focus (Professional Development for the President and Comprehensive Internal Communications Plan) but substantial work was necessary on three areas of focus ( Participatory Governance—recommended Interim Monitoring Report by June 1, 2019--and Board Engagement with Policy Development and Financial Accountability Responsibilities—recommended Focused Visit by March 1, 2020). The College responded satisfactorily to HLC's request for a Monitoring Report on Participatory Governance by June 1, 2019.

Given the College's history of non-compliance with HLC standards (two notice sanctions since 2005), the College was notified in May 2018 that it was referred to an IAC Second Committee Hearing for that level of review. The Second Committee Hearing occurred on July 16, 2018, with five members of the Morton College community in attendance. The College received the Second Committee Hearing Report which opted to stiffen the College's sanction by recommending Probation and citing 2A, 5A, and 5B as met with concerns and 2C as not met. The College responded to the HLC notification admitting to a problematic relationship with HLC and pledging its commitment to address lingering issues in a transparent manner. In addition, the College sent a letter to HLC in October 2018 that updated actions taken by the College related to governance and Board of Trustees issues. On November 1, 2018, the College was placed on Notice by the HLC Board of Trustees for meeting Core Components 2A, 2C, and 5B with concerns and requiring the College to host a Notice Evaluation no later than April 2020 to determine whether the institution has ameliorated the areas of

focus that led to the imposition of the sanction. The College's accreditation status was changed from "Accredited" to "Accredited—On Notice."

This team (2020) is responsible for reviewing the contents of the College's Notice Evaluation Report, electronic and hard copy supplemental materials, and onsite testimony from targeted constituents, notably governing board members and administrators, and verifying compliance.

#### 4. Unique Aspects of Visit

Given the nature of the six areas of focus, which dealt exclusively with Board of Trustees in many instances, and the troublesome relationship between HLC and the College since 2005, the team sought to schedule individual meetings with members of the Board of Trustees (the seven elected members and the one student trustee) as well as a meeting with the full Board on the first day and at least two Board members (Board chair and vice chair) for the discussions with chief administrators on areas of focus. The visit's master schedule was developed with this expectation in mind. Board members' participation in the agreed-upon sessions was disappointing. One elected member failed to appear for all sessions; no explanation was offered. The student trustee was absent throughout deliberations; no explanation was offered. Two board members, without consultation of the team chair, opted to phone in to a few sessions. The telephone transmissions were poor at times and contributed to the team members' difficulty in hearing comments and determining the accuracy and sincerity of responses.

#### 5. Interactions With Institutional Constituencies and Materials Reviewed. List the titles or positions, but not names, of individuals with whom the team interacted during the review and the principal documents, materials and web pages reviewed.

##### Institutional Constituencies:

Morton College Board of Trustees (four elected members attended in-person with two joining via telephone)

College Attorney

President of the College

Provost

Executive Assistant to the President/Clerk of the Board

Vice President Administrative Services/Inspector General

Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer (CFO)

Chief Information Officer (CIO)

Executive Director of Institutional Advancement

Associate Provost/Accreditation Liaison Officer

Director of Human Resources/Title IX Coordinator/FOIA Officer

Dean of Student Services

Faculty Assembly Chair

Adjunct Faculty Chair

College Council Chair

Selected Meetings:

- Faculty Assembly
- College Council
- Student Government Association
- Collective Bargaining Unit Representatives

Materials Reviewed:

Morton College Website ([www.morton.edu](http://www.morton.edu))

Morton College Report for March 9-10 Notice Evaluation Visit (with Table of Content) submitted on January 10, 2020

HLC Focused Visit Report Template

HLC Policies regarding Focused Visit, Notice, and Special Monitoring

HLC Background Information and Materials Regarding Relationship with Morton College for 2018 Notice Visit

Institutional Response (dated August 15, 2018) to July 16, 2018 IAC Hearing

Morton Classified Employee Handbook Final FY18

Morton College Faculty Handbook Spring 2020 Revised

Press Release for Newly Appointed Member of the Morton College Board of Trustees

Morton College Organizational Chart, revised November 2019

Morton College Follow-up Responses to Six Areas of Focus

Morton College Faculty Handbook, revised Fall 2017

Morton College Adjunct Handbook 2019-2020, revised Spring 2020

Del Galdo Law Group, LLC Letter of Engagement executed October 2007

Del Galdo Law Group Billings for past two years

Morton College Board of Trustees Agenda and Minutes of Meetings Documenting the Following Actions:

- David Gonzalez--GW & Associates, P.C. (contract termination)
- Res Publica (contract termination)
- Follett (contract approval)
- Sallie Nyhan--Nyhan and Friends, Ltd. (contract termination)

- Victory Media (contract termination)
- Single Path (contract approval)

#### Executive Staff Position Descriptions and Current Resumes:

- President of the College
- Provost
- Executive Assistant to the President/Clerk of the Board (updated version March 10, 2020)
- Vice President Administrative Services/Inspector General
- Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer (CFO)
- Chief Information Officer (CIO)
- Executive Director of Institutional Advancement
- Athletic Director
- Associate Provost/Accreditation Liaison Officer
- Director of Human Resources/Title IX Coordinator/FOIA Officer
- Dean of Student Services
- Associate Dean Student Services/Registrar (updated version March 10, 2020)
- Director of Student Activities
- Director of Financial Aid
- Director of Admissions and Records/Registrar (updated version March 10, 2020)

#### Morton College Board of Trustees Biographical Sketches

#### Sample of Morton College Informational Documents

- Capital Improvements
- Institutional Advancement
- Development and Alumni Relations
- Community and Continuing Education
- Student Life and Campus Activities (January, February, and March 2020)
- Women's EmpowHERment Conference
- College Community Health Announcement (March 3, 2020)
- Morton College: Panther Newsletters (January 13, February 21, and March 6, 2020)
- Two Sets of Reports (One Month Behind, Three Months Ahead)

#### Morton College Recent Chronology of Major Events (Informational Sheet)

#### Set of Materials from Morton College Faculty Union re HLC Focused Visit March 10, 2019

#### Morton College Adjunct Faculty Union Statement (March 10, 2020)

#### College Council Minutes (August 22, 2019; September 19, 2019; and October 17, 2019)

#### Board Materials from College President: Agenda for Regular Meeting (June 26, 2017); Notice and Agenda for a Special Board Meeting (June 30, 2017); and Minutes for the Special Board Meeting (June 30, 2017)

#### Del Galdo Law Group, LLC Monthly Statements for Services (May 31, 2017 through February 29, 2020)

#### Morton College Resource Allocation Management Program (RAMP) FY2021 Request

[https://www.morton.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/MC\\_2019-2020-Catalog.pdf](https://www.morton.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/MC_2019-2020-Catalog.pdf)

6. **Areas of Focus.** Complete the following A and B sections for each area of focus identified in the visit description on the Evaluation Summary Sheet. Note that each area of focus should correspond with only one Core Component or other HLC requirement.

**A1. Statement of Focus:**

**The Institution’s governing board does not consistently follow its established policies and although there are adequate policies in place, some members of the board fail to comply with them, which calls into question fair and ethical behavior on the part of the Institution’s governing board.**

Relevant Core Component or other HLC requirement:

Criterion Two, Core Component 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”

**B1. Statements of Evidence (check one below):**

- Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention, rather than monitoring, is required in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that monitoring is required.
- Evidence demonstrates that HLC sanction is warranted.

The team will also note its determination as to each applicable Core Component or HLC requirement in Part B.

Evidence:

- The Morton College Notice Report contained a section devoted to Core Component 2A. That section, while not specifically addressing the identified area of focus that some board members failed to comply with established Board policies and procedures, did provide useful information that demonstrates the College’s commitment to operate with some sense of integrity calling for fair and ethical behavior across all constituencies. Cited was Board Policy 5.3 describing the role of the Chief Financial Officer who acts as the agent of the College authorized to order all supplies and equipment, develops the annual budget, serves on the President’s Cabinet, oversees the annual audit process, and provides monthly financial reports to the Board of Trustees. At each April’s Board meeting for the past two years action is taken to officially appoint the CFO as Treasurer to the Board. The team took note of a statement from the Faculty Union that alleges the CFO also attends negotiation sessions with the Faculty Union but does not provide numbers or input on economically bargained issues and, according to Faculty Union representatives, failed on a number of occasions during

negotiation sessions to respond to Union requests in a timely or accurate manner, while the administration contends that this is not the case. This difference in perception may be remedied by agreement on acceptable timelines for responses and documentation that supports their achievement. The team requests the College review this matter as a means of clarifying the CFO's role when requests for information are made and appropriate responsiveness to these requests. The Faculty Union leadership must also share in the responsibility for developing productive strategies for fulfilling the mission of the College. This team concludes that administrative personnel and faculty share their commitment to excellence and these tensions are, in the view of the team, detrimental to the College's future.

- All members of the Morton College community, including Board of Trustees, students, and faculty-staff, are informed of expected ethical behavior in documents available on the College's website as well as in a student handbook and college catalog. The team found evidence that the College had more than ample full-time faculty (recent hiring of 15 full-time faculty members in last two academic years) for the enrollment size of the College. The team reviewed employment policies and procedures, under the auspices of the Human Resources Department, and deemed fair and reasonable. However, the College's grievance policies and practices were identified as a source of concern by internal constituents to team members, which is yet another area where the administration's and faculty's perspectives differ. Claims of violations of due process by the Human Resources Department and the central administration were mentioned in handling faculty union grievances and student complaints. In addition, state of Illinois mandated curriculum, program review, and articulation agreements are followed and fulfill the expectations of state government. A review of the College's Resource Allocation Management Program FY2021 request (referred to as RAMP document for community college capital requests) focused on needed HVAC equipment and roofing replacement for a College with aging infrastructure. This is yet another state mandated request for information on a five-year cycle that is useful in allocating statewide resources.
- The Morton College Notice Report describes the process for ensuring faculty control of academic standards, curriculum, and research matter (there is an Institutional Research Board in place). The Faculty Assembly is the primary body which represents full-time faculty members. All policy proposals are subjected to further review by the Faculty Assembly, which also include the following long-standing committees (Curriculum, Academic Standards, Professional Development, Student Relations, and Presidential Advisory). In particular, the Curriculum Committee takes the lead role in making sure faculty members have access to the official curriculum and change of curriculum processes. New curricular actions receive final approval through the full Faculty Assembly and eventually the Board of Trustees. Since the last visit, there is greater clarity between the work of the Faculty Assembly and the College Council, a distinction that should continue to be clear. The team concluded Morton College has fair and ethical processes that demonstrates faculty ownership of academic practices.
- The team reviewed in-depth the Morton College Board Policies with a focus on whether members followed their own policies and procedures. A supplemental document was produced by the College in response to the team's request for specific College actions since the last HLC team visit to address this concern. That document indicated that "a majority of the Board has worked closely with the President and his administrative team to ensure that the Board consistently follows its own policies relative to its role as a policy governing board." However, testimony gathered onsite from Board members and administrators was mixed, with a joint acknowledgement by the team and College that concerns pertaining to the college attorney's role and reporting responsibility were satisfactorily adjudicated. Several Board members confessed to a lack of understanding about their responsibility to refer College matters directly to the President's Office; another Board member voiced reservations about

not being able to advocate for individual issues when asked if the Board always spoke with one voice. That Board member, surprisingly, stated that he feels should be able to voice any concern at any time. The problem observed by the team is that not all Board members know what is expected of them and seemingly operate using their gut-level instincts (not Board directives).

- A review of the College's Board Policies (which included conflict of interest and anti-nepotism statements) provided evidence that there is ample documentation governing Board of Trustees' behavior. During meetings with board members who were present in-person and on-call via telephone, they expressed a willingness to adhere to established Board policies moving forward and would take their lead from the College President. Absent from discussions with the team was any indication that Board members would self-govern themselves if breaches of ethical conduct occurred and extend outreach to coach the student trustee, who did not attend any of the Board sessions and has abandoned his position based on comments from Student Government Association leaders. The newly sworn-in Board member (seated January 2020) stated that her orientation consisted of a brief meeting with the College President, yet she stated she felt adequately informed about her duties and responsibilities. While this is acceptable practice at Morton College, best practice per ACCT guidelines suggests that new board members be formally introduced to the policies and practices of the Board and the institution they are expected to serve through an established orientation process. In sum, the team concluded that little progress has been made relative to Board members holding to their pledge (Board Policy 8.11 in particular) to exemplify ethical behavior and avoid appearances in which they receive personal gain for themselves, associates, or relatives.
- It is evident that Board internal relations have not been strong in recent years which is an issue that must continuously be addressed. With recent transitions, it is thought that these will improve or have improved, but vigilance will be required. Among the professional development topics Board members may benefit from is supporting shared purposes, managing conflict, improving communications within the Board, etc. Additionally, the Board would benefit from ongoing self-assessment of individual contributions and Board functioning. It is this team's conclusion that the Board may not be capable of accomplishing what is needed without external, ongoing assistance in Board development and Board governance with individuals or firms not immersed in the political landscape of the greater Chicago area or of the College.
- Moreover, the College should consider removing the Board-specific bylaws from the current Morton College Board Policies and creating a separate set of bylaws and operating parameters to govern the work and action of Board of Trustees. Such an undertaking, if seriously considered and adopted, would help eliminate confusion internally and externally as to appropriate roles and responsibilities for Board members and provide this Board the final opportunity to clearly spell out operating guidelines/parameters that would be honored and, better, followed by Board members themselves. For example, all components of the current set of Morton College Board of Trustees policies would be retained or reworked (dealing with the mission statement in two languages, statement of philosophy and objectives, statement describing code of conduct), and particulars regarding membership, officers, offices, powers and responsibilities, meetings, etc.). However, a new set of operating parameters exclusively designed to describe how the Board functions would need to be developed. A recommended template for the new operating parameters/guidelines would include Board of Trustees ethical standards, roles and responsibilities, conflict of interest policy and annual disclosure process and form, nepotism policy, board committees, procedures for handling grievances directed to the Board, process for filling vacant trustee positions, Board Chair and College President relationship, Board development activities, Board communication strategies, Presidential



evaluation processes, etc. Given the history of this publicly-elected Board, which included work with a highly recognized governing board expert in Fall 2017 that appears to have been of little value, this team believes direct and measurable action is mandated with external facilitation once again for conduct of difficult conversations, unified planning, and honest appraisals of their work.

## A2. Statement of Focus:

**Some institutional board members fail to understand that they have no authority outside of official board capacity as outlined in the Institution’s bylaws and board policies and as a result, they involve themselves in day-to-day administrative functions of the Institution (e.g. soliciting exemptions for individual students from institutional employees below the president, participating in faculty disputes, engaging the Institution’s attorney). As a result, the board fails to recognize its proper role through majority action as a policymaking body only.**

**There is confusion about the reporting relationship between the Institution’s attorney and the Institution, specifically who may engage the attorney and to whom the attorney reports which, as with all personnel, should be to the Institution’s president. Additionally, the Institution’s attorney is incorrectly identified in board minutes as the “board attorney,” further confounding the misperception; the Institution’s attorney is often engaged by some board members on institutional matters and such board members often exclude the president from these discussions.**

**There has been a lack of ongoing and continuous training for all board members, wherein the board engages in long-term commitments to professional development as well as orientation for all new board members.**

Relevant Core Component or other HLC requirement:

Criterion Two, 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”

## B2. Statements of Evidence (check one below):

- Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention, rather than monitoring, is required in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that monitoring is required.
- Evidence demonstrates that HLC sanction is warranted.

The team will also note its determination as to each applicable Core Component or HLC requirement in Part B.

## Evidence:

- In multiple meetings with the President and Board members, the team was told that Board members have internalized the message provided by prior HLC teams and the HLC liaison that the President should be entrusted to run the College. They have gotten the message that they are not to intercede on behalf of staff, students, or community members and that they should refer any individuals who wish to discuss College business to the President and that the President will handle the issue as he or his designees deem appropriate.
- The President and senior administrators told the team that their opinion is that the Board has been abiding by its new understandings of their role. Board members and senior staff also report that they believe that the current President is a strong president and that this strength has contributed to the improvement in the functioning of the Board in the area of intervention where it is inappropriate.
- One testament to the likelihood that the President will be empowered to fulfill his role without inappropriate Board intrusion is the fact that recently the Board approved a four-year contract with the President. This action should enable the President to be confident in his role as he provides required leadership for the college.
- With particular reference to the Board's referring to the attorney as the "Board's attorney" and potentially engaging the attorney directly, the College's attorney, the President, and the Board members all clearly articulated their understanding that the Del Galdo Law firm represents the college and the firm works directly with the President of the College or his designees. Conversations with these College representatives confirm the previous team's understanding that this was an area of confusion. All now report that the reporting relationship is clear. The attorney confirmed that it is his understanding that nothing comes to him without the president's involvement.
- One reason the Board may have been confused by the attorney's role is the fact that Mr. Del Galdo is in attendance at each board meeting, providing guidance on procedures associated with Robert's Rules or Order as well as advice on legal matters, including contracts or job descriptions. However, both College personnel and the attorney clearly articulate their knowledge that the attorney works for the College and specifically the President or those designated to work with the attorney on particular issues.
- One concern has been contractual relationships, which to a prior team appeared excessive and/or redundant. A review of the agreement with the attorney and billing statements for the past two years convinced this team that the College is getting high quality service from a firm with experience with other public-sector entities at a very competitive rate. In fact, the billing hour rate has not changed since 2007, in part because a new contract could result in bidding out of the service and state law enables this contract to continue year after year until the College would determine to end it. Several other contracts, many with Board affiliations and some with questionable value, have been terminated.
- At the same time as those Board members talked with during the team's visit acknowledged that they understood their roles and were meeting their responsibilities appropriately, the team is not convinced that there is a deep understanding of the breadth of the roles and/or sufficient commitment. Failure to "show" for the team's visit that was largely focused on their effectiveness suggests a casual commitment to this work. While the contractual relationships have been improved since prior team visits, some of the redundancy was the direct result of prior Board intervention in contract awards. This response to a serious Notice visit coupled with the fact that some trustees have had poor attendance records, where commonly at least two members are missing, along with the failure to complete important documents, such as

the President's evaluation, leave the impression that there may still be some Board members who have not made improving the position of the institution with its accreditor a high priority or they may lack sufficient interest in the work of the College. In explanation, there were reported health issues that existed with at least two. One trustee with participation challenges has resigned. The Board needs to understand that the entire Board is important in serving the College through thoughtful, engaged, and knowledgeable participation. Given the history of attendance issues, individual Board members may wish to reconsider whether they are able to serve the College and to free up a position on the Board for another who would invest the proper level of interest and effort in serving the students and the community through the College.

- Not unique to this college, the Cook County area is notoriously political. Given that Board members are elected, there is indication that local politics also figure into board dynamics. To the extent that the Board can rise above those affiliations and focus their collective energies on helping Morton College to be a better college and for each of them to be better board members, the college, the community, and students would be better served.
- Conversations with Board members suggest that some have a more limited view of their overall responsibilities. Those individuals speak most of their role in bringing the community's interests to the attention of college leaders. While this is an important responsibility, it is not the only role Board members should fulfill. Beyond this, they all well understand that a major function is hiring of the President, but they appear less knowledgeable about their responsibilities for evaluating the president.
- Especially in recent months, multiple Board policies have been reviewed and updated. At each of several recent board meetings, Board policies were reviewed and acted upon. Board minutes, however, provide limited insight to the discussions that ensued. Most actions of the board take place on a consent agenda. Those that are not on the consent agenda are reported in the minutes with just their votes. Most policies have passed unanimously, with members in attendance – that is frequently just a quorum. At least two recent revised policy approvals – Sexual Harassment and Conflict of Interest – are significant topics. The Board minutes would be improved if some of the discussion were reported, such as any concerns that may have been raised or addressed or endorsements offered. It is not necessary that Board member names be associated with the topics but more information about the Board's discussion could be helpful in Board transparency.
- In addressing the prior team's concerns about professional development of the Board, the administration has provided Board members with three resources from the Association of Governing Boards and Associations: The Board's Role in Financial Oversight; Effective Governing Boards (A Guide for Members of Governing Boards of Public Colleges, Universities, and Systems); and Making the Grade – How Boards Can Ensure Academic Quality. A review of Board minutes does not reveal any discussion of the topics contained within these books/pamphlets and interviewed board members did not make any mention of these resources except by one who mentioned that they had been given the materials (but made no mention of whether they had been read or useful).
- The concern about the lack of ongoing and continuous training for all Board members appears to remain. Beyond the distribution of the books and an attempt to host a retreat, where some board members did not attend, little has been done to build effective board capacity. In response to this concern, the College addressed the improved reporting by administrators to the Board on substantive issues, such as enrollment management, financial stability, strategic plan progress, etc. These efforts are commendable and important to the board's understanding of the college so they can provide more valuable input. However, these institutional reports do not address developing the other capabilities and knowledge of

board members in fulfillment of their roles. The team acknowledges the long service of most board members but also notes that it is largely this same Board that been at the helm in the multiple years where board concerns have been raised. In addition, when Board members are not present, they cannot contribute. The Board would be wise to establish some professional standards concerning Board participation.

### A3. Statement of Focus:

**Efforts to utilize a modified governing structure intended to expand participation to a broader element of the Institution needs additional time to demonstrate its effectiveness with further attention to integrating various decision-making processes into a comprehensive strategy.**

**The Institution's policies and procedures are not always followed; if the established policies were followed as written, many of the Institution's issues related to governance could be resolved.**

Relevant Core Component or other HLC requirement:

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"

### B3. Statements of Evidence (check one below):

- Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention, rather than monitoring, is required in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that monitoring is required.
- Evidence demonstrates that HLC sanction is warranted.

The team will also note its determination as to each applicable Core Component or HLC requirement in Part B.

Evidence:

- During its scheduled meeting with the College Council co-chairs, the team was presented with evidence that the College Council continues to operate effectively since the last HLC visit in 2018. A review of three sets of Council minutes revealed several successful initiatives (vendor contract for bookstore, 2020 persistence goal of 80 percent for full-time students, and campus safety, etc.) undertaken promoting student success and adding to the integration of other voices to the College's decision-making processes. It was made clear to the team that efforts were made to ensure that faculty related matters were appropriately considered by College sanctioned bodies, notably the Faculty Assembly. College Council agendas are developed through a collaborative process including the President, Provost, Faculty Chair, Classified Staff Union President, Associate Provost, and College Council co-chairs. In

addition, each stakeholder group selects its own representatives to avoid the appearance of coercion of any group. While there was commendation for the work of this Council, which was originally suggested and implemented by the College President, there are also naysayers among the faculty, as significantly reflected in a Faculty Assembly meeting.

- The next team should examine the work of the College Council focusing on efforts to refine the Council's membership by employee grouping and opportunities for the Council to have broad input into the College's decision-making process before major decisions are discussed and approved at the Board level. The relationship between the work of the Faculty Assembly and the College Council should continue to be reviewed and efforts made to enhance shared governance activities with greater clarity about how all work collaboratively to advance achievement of the college mission. Faculty appear to feel they have lost "voice" so their important roles in setting academic standards and curricular development and improvement may need to be further emphasized. The College would likely benefit from additional training in shared governance as well as shared responsibilities and the contributions each group makes to effective functioning.
- Morton's central administration professed, in meetings and in the follow-up Notice Evaluation document, that Board members have significantly improved by adhering to established governance processes over the last 18 months. Further, the Board and central administration are engaged in comprehensive review of all Board policies with revisions made when and where necessary. Current Board policy calls for such review to occur every five years. This review is considered a helpful reminder to Board members of what the policies are and how they are to be applied. Additional proof was offered with reference to the Morton College Board of Trustees' August 15, 2018, written correspondence to the HLC Board of Trustees. This correspondence, signed by all seven elected trustees and the student trustee, acknowledged the value of regional accreditation, accepted the fact it has had problems with accreditation and College leadership over the past 10 years, identified three actions already taken in response to the August 2018 IAC Second Committee Hearing report, and listed six additional measures the current President will recommend to the Board (and the Board indicated its commitment to address these six measures). The Board members present (face-to-face or via phone) during the visit spoke affirmatively that they, collectively and individually, are allowing the President to guide them and manage College operations without their interference. The team acknowledges these Board members' expressions but warns members to stay the course in the coming years.
- Several Board members pointed to the recent resignation of a long-time Board member as the solution to the problem. The team was struck by the lack of accountability for past actions on the part of Board members (all except the new member coming aboard January 2020) who were on the Board over the past 10 years. Board members' expression of confidence in the President to address crucial issues facing the College and a willingness to better understand their role as the policy-making body is viewed as a positive sign by the team and evidence of progress made in the right direction. It was evident to the team that this Board of Trustees need direction and guidance. That is, they need to reach consensus and be clear about what decisions they need to make and what reports they need to see. If adopted, these two steps will assist them in making better use of their time and give the central administration of their needs. In this light, the team observes that the spillover of the Board into the business of the College may be exacerbated by the detail provided to the Board in the meeting packets, including bi-weekly payroll records, every purchase, etc.

- While qualified personnel are in place administratively, there are still apparent dysfunctional relationships between administrators and faculty. Union leadership for both the regular faculty and adjunct faculty each provided the team with a list of concerns, including handling of grievances, relationships with administrators, board functioning, and more. During the team's visit, contract negotiations were continuing and had become more contentious, likely contributing to the dissatisfaction expressed by several in the Faculty Assembly. While the team finds that improvements have been made, it also recognizes the need for continuing attention to building a more collaborative internal culture.

**A4. Statement of Focus:**

Relevant Core Component or other HLC requirement:

**B4. Statements of Evidence (check one below):**

- Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention, rather than monitoring, is required in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that monitoring is required.
- Evidence demonstrates that HLC sanction is warranted.

The team will also note its determination as to each applicable Core Component or HLC requirement in Part B.

Evidence:

**A5. Statement of Focus:**

Relevant Core Component or other HLC requirement:

**B5. Statements of Evidence (check one below):**

- Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention, rather than monitoring, is required in the area of focus.

- Evidence demonstrates that monitoring is required.
- Evidence demonstrates that HLC sanction is warranted.

The team will also note its determination as to each applicable Core Component or HLC requirement in Part B.

Evidence:

7. **Other Accreditation Issues.** If applicable, list evidence of other accreditation issues, identify the related Core Components or other HLC requirements and note the team's determination as to each applicable Core Component or other HLC requirement in Part B.

## Part B: Recommendation and Rationale

---

### Recommendation:

- Evidence demonstrates that no monitoring is required.
- Evidence demonstrates that monitoring is required.
- Evidence demonstrates that HLC sanction is warranted.

### Rationale for the Team's Recommendation

The team recommends continuation of Notice for six months, the maximum allowable period given the current Notice status. The team concludes that the institution is still at risk of not meeting the Criteria for Accreditation and that there are still three core components that are met with concerns, despite some efforts that have been directed toward addressing these. Concerns remain about Board compliance with Board policies, about perceptions of fairness in Board actions, and about lack of training. While designed to expand participation, the College Council shows great promise yet there remain tensions between administration and particularly Faculty Unions in the College's governance processes.

Morton College is scheduled to have its next HLC accreditation site visit in November 2020, which will be a Year 4 Assurance Review. There is evidence of progress made by the College regarding the six areas of focus (citing Core Components 2A, 2C, and 5B) that prompted the Notice Evaluation Visit. As noted below, outside the areas of focus, great progress is being made in other areas of the Criteria for Accreditation.

If this Notice recommendation is sustained through the IAC and Board actions, the College should provide detail on its progress and sustainable plans for assuring that it continues to meet the Criteria for Accreditation in these areas of focus. The team recognizes that Morton College is challenged with its current, publicly elected Board of Trustees and took time to outline several recommendations in the report's evidentiary statements as well as guidance for the Notice Report that could lead to improvement and perhaps stability. At this time, this team believes additional monitoring is warranted for the College to fully ameliorate the findings that led to the Notice sanction.

In its Notice Report, future reviewers should expect to see detail on actions undertaken to address issues pertaining to Board organization, governance, professional development and training, decision-making, Board roles and responsibilities, policy-making, Board development, and their interactions with internal College administrative practices along with evidence of plans for the foreseeable future that will provide evidence of sustainable improvements made in Board functions. The Board would benefit from clarifying explicitly its form of governance, and it may wish to look to models such as the Carver model for Board governance as one possible approach.

Ideally, a Notice Report would also produce a five-year plan for Board development, with evidence of at least one substantial training in Board governance and/or operations having been completed by the time of the Notice visit. This substantive training should be facilitated by an individual or group with no current relationships to the current Board members and who is deemed to be impartial as well as experienced in this type of work. Morton College should also produce both internal and external evaluations of its effectiveness as a collective Board and plans for continued self-evaluation and improvement planning as a part of the Notice Report.

The Notice Report should also provide evidence that all members of the Board are compliant with the requirements of Illinois Public Act 99-0692, state mandated leadership training for community college board of trustees. Each Board member must complete four hours of professional development leadership training covering topics that include (but are not limited to) open meeting law, ethics, audits, community college and labor law, financial oversight and accountability, fiduciary responsibilities, and contract law. Such training for Board members is required during their first, third, and fifth years in office.

In the interests of assuring transparency in policy-making processes, the College is encouraged to involve a cross-section of representatives in a review of Board vs. College institutional/staff policies and the consolidation of Board policies into one section, so that there is coherence across the policies and that any misunderstandings or conflicts are minimized. In this regard, representatives of the Board, the senior administration, and representatives of major unions would be appropriately included. This joint work should be designed to continue to improve collaboration among important stakeholder groups at the College in pursuit of greater unity toward achieving the institutional mission and best serving Morton College students and its communities.

The Notice Report should also provide evidence that all formal grievances filed in accordance with collectively bargained agreements from July 1, 2018, to the present time have been adjudicated and the outcomes communicated to impacted parties or that grievances that are still under review have an anticipated date of resolution. Evidence that the unions, the administration, and the Board are working collaboratively to effectively resolve any grievances should also be addressed.

Morton College has made strides over the past four years in many important areas, including financial stability, enhancing participation in the College's decision-making processes, increasing the number of full-time faculty, updating an aging physical plant, maintaining a more stable leadership team, and increasing student persistence. However, the team was not able to look past the lack of seriousness exhibited by Board members to this Notice Visit. To the team, it was incomprehensible that duly elected Board members failed to appear in person for meetings that the College and Notice Visit team negotiated to accommodate their schedules and that the team was only advised of their lack of participation once on site. This lack of attendance by Board members is also evident at regularly scheduled monthly and special meetings, creating difficulty in achieving quorum and ensuring full participation by all Board members. A Notice Report should include reporting on Board participation.

The Morton College Board of Trustees must overcome the influence of local politics to re-define itself with external expertise into a functioning body based on best practice (and avoid ill-advised actions such as a Board member casting an affirmative vote to hire a relative to a senior-level position for which the individual was not qualified based on the College's job description, as one glaring example also illuminated by the Faculty Union leadership).



### Stipulations or Limitations on Future Accreditation Relationships

If recommending a change in the institution's stipulations, state both the old and new stipulation and provide a brief rationale for the recommended change. Check the Institutional Status and Requirement (ISR) Report for the current wording. (Note: After the focused visit, the institution's stipulations should be reviewed in consultation with the institution's HLC staff liaison.)

There is no change in Stipulations.

### Monitoring

The team may call for a follow-up interim report. If the team concurs that a report is necessary, indicate the topic (including the relevant Core Components or other HLC requirements), timeline and expectations for that report. (Note: the team should consider embedding such a report as an emphasis in an upcoming comprehensive evaluation in consultation with the institution's HLC staff liaison.)

The team may call for a follow-up focused visit. If the team concurs that a visit is necessary, indicate the topic (including the relevant Core Components or other HLC requirements), timeline and expectations for that visit. (Note: The team should consider embedding such a visit as an emphasis in an upcoming comprehensive evaluation in consultation with the institution's staff liaison.)

### Core Component Determinations

Indicate the team's determination(s) (met, met with concerns, not met) for the applicable Core Components related to the areas of focus or other accreditation issues identified by the team in Part A. If a Core Component was not included in an area of focus, it should be marked as not evaluated.

Number	Title	Met	Met With Concerns	Not Met	Not Evaluated
1.A	Core Component 1.A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1.B	Core Component 1.B	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1.C	Core Component 1.C	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1.D	Core Component 1.D	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.A	Core Component 2.A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.B	Core Component 2.B	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.C	Core Component 2.C	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Number	Title	Met	Met With Concerns	Not Met	Not Evaluated
2.D	Core Component 2.D	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.E	Core Component 2.E	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3.A	Core Component 3.A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3.B	Core Component 3.B	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3.C	Core Component 3.C	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3.D	Core Component 3.D	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3.E	Core Component 3.E	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.A	Core Component 4.A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.B	Core Component 4.B	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.C	Core Component 4.C	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.A	Core Component 5.A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.B	Core Component 5.B	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.C	Core Component 5.C	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.D	Core Component 5.D	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Other HLC Requirement Determinations

Indicate the team's determination(s) (met or not met) for the HLC requirements related to the areas of focus or other accreditation issues identified by the team in Part A.

## Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

---

<b>INSTITUTION and STATE:</b>	Morton College, IL
<b>TYPE OF REVIEW:</b>	Sanctions Notice
<b>DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW:</b>	The Institution will host a Notice Evaluation no later than April 2020 to determine whether the Institution has ameliorated the findings that led to the imposition of Notice and to make a recommendation about whether to remove Notice or take other action. <b>Recommendation: continue Notice for 6 months.</b>
<b>DATES OF REVIEW:</b>	3/9/2020 - 3/10/2020

No Change in Institutional Status and Requirements

### Accreditation Status

Nature of Institution

Control: Public

**Recommended Change: no change**

---

Degrees Awarded: Associates

**Recommended Change: no change**

---

Reaffirmation of Accreditation:

Year of Last Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2016 - 2017

Year of Next Reaffirmation of Accreditation: 2026 - 2027

**Recommended Change: no change**

---

### Accreditation Stipulations

General:

The institution is approved at the following program level(s): Associate's

The institution is not approved at the following program level(s): Bachelor's, Master's, Specialist, Doctoral

**Recommended Change: no change**

---



## Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

---

### Additional Location:

Prior HLC approval required.

**Recommended Change: no change**

---

### Distance and Correspondence Courses and Programs:

Approval for distance education is limited to courses. The institution has not been approved for correspondence education.

**Recommended Change: no change**

---

### Accreditation Events

Accreditation Pathway

Standard Pathway

**Recommended Change: no change**

---

### Upcoming Events

Comprehensive Evaluation: 2026 - 2027

**Recommended Change: no change**

---

Comprehensive Evaluation: 11/09/2020

Year 4 Comprehensive Evaluation.

**Recommended Change: no change**

---

### Monitoring

#### Upcoming Events

None

**Recommended Change: no change**

---

### Institutional Data

#### Educational Programs

##### Undergraduate

Certificate	37	_____
Associate Degrees	19	_____
Baccalaureate Degrees	0	_____

**Recommended  
Change: no  
change**



## Institutional Status and Requirements Worksheet

---

### Graduate

Master's Degrees	0	_____
Specialist Degrees	0	_____
Doctoral Degrees	0	_____

---

### Extended Operations

#### Branch Campuses

None

**Recommended Change: no change**

---

#### Additional Locations

None

**Recommended Change: no change**

---

#### Correspondence Education

None

**Recommended Change: no change**

---

#### Distance Delivery

None

**Recommended Change: no change**

---

#### Contractual Arrangements

None

**Recommended Change: no change**

---

#### Consortial Arrangements

None

**Recommended Change: no change**

---