

November 8, 2023

BY CERTIFIED MAIL

Dr. Keith McLaughlin  
President  
Morton College  
3801 S. Central Avenue  
Cicero, IL 60804-4398

Dear President McLaughlin:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning Morton College (“the Institution”). This action is effective as of the date the Board acted, November 2, 2023. In taking this action, the Board considered materials from the most recent comprehensive evaluation, including, but not limited to: the Assurance Filing the Institution submitted, the report from the comprehensive evaluation team, the report of the Institutional Actions Council (IAC) Hearing Committee, and the institutional responses to these reports.

**Summary of the Action:** The Institution has been placed on Notice because it is at risk of being out of compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation. The Institution meets Core Components 2.A, 2.C, and 5.C with concerns. The Institution is required to host a Notice Visit no later than April 2025 to determine whether the Institution has ameliorated the findings that led to the imposition of the sanction.

**Institutional Disclosure Obligation:** HLC policy<sup>1</sup> requires that an institution inform its constituencies, including Board members, administrators, faculty, staff, students, prospective students, and any other constituencies about the sanction and how to contact HLC for further information. The policy also requires that an Institution on sanction disclose this status whenever it refers to its HLC accreditation. HLC will monitor these disclosures to ensure they are accurate and in keeping with HLC policy. The Institution must submit drafts of its planned disclosures to these various audiences to its HLC Staff Liaison in advance of transmission and provide its Staff Liaison with a link to relevant information on its website. At a minimum, an institution must: i) provide a copy of this Action Letter to its governing board, administration, and faculty, ii) provide a copy of the enclosed Public Disclosure Notice to its currently enrolled students, and iii) prominently display the Mark of Accreditation Status where accreditation status is described on its website. Once disclosures have been made, the Institution must submit copies of its disclosure documents as a single .pdf file to [www.hlcommission.org/upload](http://www.hlcommission.org/upload) (by selecting “Information about Institutional Disclosures”) no later than seven (7) business days following receipt of this Action Letter. HLC will retain this information as part of the Institution’s record.

---

<sup>1</sup> INST.E.10.010, Notice.

**Substantive Change:** HLC policy<sup>2</sup> requires that an institution placed on Notice be subject to additional requirements for substantive change during the Notice period and for three (3) years following the removal of Notice.

**Notification Program:** HLC policy<sup>3</sup> states that an institution placed on notice is ineligible for the Notification Program for Additional Locations for three (3) years following the removal of Notice, providing all other requirements for the Notification Program are met.

### **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:

Morton College (“the Institution”) meets, but with concerns, 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 following reasons:

- The Board of the Institution has a history of interfering with the management of the Institution in a manner that is not aligned with HLC expectations regarding sound governance. The Institution has an expressed interest in resolving past governance issues.
- The Institution has begun to take significant and sustainable concrete steps to improve governance, but more time is needed to demonstrate continued effectiveness.
- On occasion, the best interests of the Institution are not fully the priority for some elected board members, as would be aligned with the Code of Conduct for the Board.

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

- The Board is not always clear on its roles in oversight of the institution. The Board of the Institution has plans to address governance issues, but those plans are only in their infancy as to implementation, and more time is needed to demonstrate continued effectiveness.
- Some Board members exhibit a disregard for common Board practices, including a lack of quorum at board meetings or failure to comply with best practices voted on by the Board. The Institution has begun to implement plans to ameliorate the issue, but these plans have yet to be put into enduring practice.

---

<sup>2</sup> INST.F.20.040, Substantive Change.

<sup>3</sup> INST.E.10.010, Notice.

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

- The Institution has incorporated a practice into its budget process this year in which all budget managers meet individually with their Vice President to discuss their justification for the entire budget request. However, the Institution has not yet demonstrated the criteria or policy that is used to frame those conversations and make decisions regarding changes to the budget requests.
- Although the Institution is changing its budget processes, it cannot yet clearly and consistently demonstrate how assessment of student learning is linked to budgeting and planning.
- The Institution’s College Council has not been used effectively to make employees part of the planning process. The Institution has plans to rework the process so that the College Council is more involved in the institution’s planning process, but these efforts need time to mature.

The Board of Trustees of the Higher Learning Commission has determined based on the preceding findings and evidence in the record that the Institution is at risk of being out of compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation.

### **Next Steps in the HLC Review Process**

**Notice Report:** The Board required that the Institution submit a Notice Report no later than February 1, 2025, or at least eight weeks prior to the Notice Visit, providing evidence that the Institution is no longer at risk for non-compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation and that it has ameliorated the issues that led to the Notice sanction.

**Notice Visit:** The Institution will host a Notice Visit no later than April 2025 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.

**Board Review:** The Board will review the documents associated with the evaluation at its November 2025 meeting to determine whether the Institution has ameliorated the findings of Met with Concerns and is no longer at risk of noncompliance with the Criteria for Accreditation and thus whether Notice shall be removed, or if the Institution has not ameliorated the findings, or is no longer in compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation, whether other action should be taken under HLC policy, up to and including withdrawal of accreditation.

**Comprehensive Evaluation:** The Institution has been maintained on the Standard Pathway with its next comprehensive evaluation for reaffirmation of accreditation in 2026-2027.

### **HLC Disclosure Obligations**

The Board action resulted in changes that will be reflected in the Institution’s Statement of Accreditation Status as well as the Institutional Status and Requirements Report. The Statement

of Accreditation Status, including the dates of the last and next comprehensive evaluation visits, will be posted to the HLC website.

In accordance with HLC policy,<sup>4</sup> information about this action is provided to members of the public and to other constituents in several ways. This Action Letter and the enclosed Public Disclosure Notice will be posted to HLC's website not more than one business day after this letter is sent to the Institution. Additionally, a summary of Board actions will be sent to appropriate state and federal agencies and accrediting associations. This summary also will be published on HLC's website. The summary will include this HLC action regarding the Institution.

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, Linnea Stenson.

Sincerely,



Barbara Gellman-Danley  
President

Enc: Public Disclosure Notice

Cc: Chair of the Board of Trustees, Morton College  
Evaluation Team Chair  
IAC Hearing Committee Chair  
Marisol Velazquez, Associate Provost & Vice President of Student Services, Morton College  
Linnea A. Stenson, Vice President of Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning Commission  
Marla Morgen, Vice President and General Counsel, Higher Learning Commission  
Brian Durham, Executive Director, Illinois Community College Board  
Herman Bounds, Director, Accreditation Group, Office of Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education

---

<sup>4</sup> COMMA.10.010, Notice of Accreditation Actions, HLC Public Notices and Public Statements