

July 2, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Rev. Dr. Steven Beseau
Rector/President
Pontifical College Josephinum
7625 N. High Street
Columbus, OH 43235-1498

Dear President Beseau:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning Pontifical College Josephinum (“the Institution”). This action is effective as of the date the Board acted, June 27, 2024. 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 Board determined that the Institution is no longer out of compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation and removed the Institution from Probation and assigned interim monitoring. This action also resulted in a reaffirmation of the Institution’s accreditation. The Institution meets Core Component 4.B with concerns. The Institution is required to submit an embedded Interim Report in its next Assurance Filing, as outlined below.

Substantive Change: HLC policy¹ states an institution removed from Probation shall be subject to additional requirements for substantive change for three (3) years following the removal of Probation.²

Notification Program: HLC policy³ states that the Institution remains ineligible for the Notification Program for Additional Locations until it has completed three (3) years in good standing as required for access.

¹ INST.E.20.010, Probation.

² INST.F.20.040, Substantive Change.

³ INST.E.20.010, Probation.

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:

Pontifical College Josephinum (“the Institution”) now 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 following reason:

- The Institution has remedied the lack of appropriate approvals for the Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies (MAPS) and its distance modality.

The Institution now meets Criterion Two, Core Component 2.B, “the institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public,” for the following reason:

- With the Institution’s receipt of HLC approval for the MAPS program, the Institution has now received all required approvals for the educational programming it offers.

The Institution now meets Criterion Three, Core Component 3.A, “the rigor of the institution’s academic offerings is appropriate to higher education,” for the following reason:

- The Institution expended substantial effort to create a sustainable assessment cycle, including through curriculum mapping and establishing measurable program outcomes that include self-reflection, which enable it to maintain the overall rigor of its programs.

The Institution now meets without concerns Criterion Three, Core Component 3.B, “the institution offers programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments,” for the following reason:

- The Institution has revised its general education program to include outcomes that are clearly specified and assures that the general education program conforms to historical expectations for a liberal arts curriculum.

The Institution now meets without concerns Criterion Four, Core Component 4.A, “the institution ensures the quality of its educational offerings,” for the following reason:

- The Institution has formalized its process to award graduate credit and has created different syllabuses and expectations for the different levels.

The Institution meets, but with concerns, Criterion Four, Core Component 4.B, “the institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students,” for the following reason:

- While the Institution has expended considerable effort to redesign its assessment processes, full implementation of these processes is not expected until fall 2024 and, therefore, the institution does not have evidence that it is conducting assessment under these new processes and is using data collected to propose or make changes.

The Institution now meets without concerns Criterion Four, Core Component 4.C, “the institution pursues educational improvement through goals and strategies that improve retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs,” for the following reason:

- The Institution’s graduation and retention rates are appropriate given the Institution’s mission and student body.

The Institution now 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 following reason:

- The Institution has implemented revised governance structures, which included reconstituting the administrative council, clarifying the role and responsibilities of the Institution’s board of trustees, and articulating the purposes, membership, and duties of all governance-related committees.

The Institution now meets without concerns Criterion Five, Core Component 5.B, “the institution’s resource base supports its educational offerings and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future,” for the following reasons:

- The Institution has strengthened its fundraising capacity by fully staffing its development office.
- The Institution increased its endowment balance from over \$30 million in 2020 to over \$35 million in 2022.
- The Institution’s financial condition has improved, including through smaller operating deficits resulting from increased donor support and an increase in enrollment.

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

- The Institution has developed both operational and strategic plans arching from 2022-2027. Both plans were developed with input from institutional constituent groups and approved by the Institution’s board of trustees.
- The Institution’s operational and strategic plans are accompanied by several mechanisms to afford continual alignment and calibration, including the development of an operational scorecard that is regularly updated and shared with the Institution’s board of trustees, the appointment of a President’s Council to aid in the vetting of key decisions, and the announcement of a new annual review process for the president.

The Institution now meets HLC’s Federal Compliance requirement on Assignment of Credits, Program Length & Tuition, for the following reasons:

- The Institution’s credit hour policy is clearly presented in its catalog and this policy applies to both face-to-face and online courses.
- The Institution has formalized the process to award graduate credit and created different syllabi and expectations for the different levels.
- The Institution has placed student outcomes for its programs in the online academic catalog and the required elements for time to graduation and average grade point averages at admission and graduation are clearly evident on the Institution’s website.

The Institution now meets HLC's Federal Compliance requirement on Publication of Student Outcome Data, for the following reasons:

- Student outcome data, including retention and completion, are available on the Institution's website. The data are entered by degree with information about time to degree completion, grade point average earned, and placement following completion.

The Board of Trustees of the Higher Learning Commission has determined based on the preceding findings and evidence in the record the Institution is in compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation and Federal Compliance requirements.

Next Steps in the HLC Review Process

Interim Report: The Board required that the Institution submit an embedded Interim Report regarding Core Component 4.B in its next Assurance Filing.

Comprehensive Evaluation: The Institution has been placed on the Standard Pathway with its next comprehensive evaluation for reaffirmation of accreditation in 2027-28.

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,⁴ 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, Dr. John Marr.

Sincerely,



Barbara Gellman-Danley
President

⁴ COMMA.10.010, Notice of Accreditation Actions, HLC Public Notices and Public Statements

Enc: Public Disclosure Notice

Cc: Chair of the Board of Trustees, Pontifical College Josephinum
Eric Graff, Dean of Institutional Planning, Assessment, and Accreditation, Pontifical
College Josephinum
Evaluation Team Chair
IAC Hearing Committee Chair
John Marr, Vice President of Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning Commission
Marla Morgen, Vice President and General Counsel, Higher Learning Commission
Mike Duffey, Chancellor, Ohio Department of Higher Education