

November 6, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dr. Robert Matz  
President  
Hannibal-LaGrange University  
2800 Palmyra Road  
Hannibal, MO 63401-1999

Dear President Matz:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning Hannibal-LaGrange University (“the Institution”). This action is effective as of the date the Board acted, October 31, 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 the Board continuing and reaffirming the Institution’s accreditation. The Institution meets Core Components 5.B and 5.C with concerns. The Institution is required to host a Focused Visit, as outlined below, no later than January 2027.

**Substantive Change:** HLC policy<sup>1</sup> states an institution removed from Probation shall be subject to additional requirements for substantive change for three (3) years following the removal of Probation.<sup>2</sup>

**Notification Program:** HLC policy<sup>3</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> INST.E.20.010, Probation.

<sup>2</sup> INST.G.10.010, Substantive Change.

<sup>3</sup> 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:

Hannibal-LaGrange University (“the Institution”) now meets 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 Hannibal-LaGrange University (HLGU or “the Institution”) Board of Trustees (“the HLGU Board”) has transformed into an engaged and committed board in support of the Institution; specifically, the HLGU Board accepts its role and responsibility with respect to both governance of the Institution and reporting to the Missouri Baptist Convention (MBC). The HLGU Board is also invested in and supports HLGU with foundation support.
- The HLGU Board now engages in training and continuing education both through Institution-directed board training and through utilization of MBC resources.
- The HLGU Board recognizes its role in supporting the Institution and ensuring that its engagement and involvement governs the Institution appropriately, including with respect to fiscal management and yielding the day-to-day management and operation of the Institution to the administration.

The Institution now meets without concerns Criterion Three, Core Component 3.C, “the institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services,” for the following reasons:

- The Institution has thoroughly examined academic program viability, course sizes and course rotations, and made significant changes that right-sized the academic unit based on enrollment and program/course demand.
- The changes implemented by the Institution, including the reduction in courses, resulted in positive progress in ensuring that it has sufficient faculty to support teaching, learning, and student advising responsibilities.

The Institution now meets, but with 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:

- Although HLGU has made progress in addressing financial challenges, such as staffing changes that improve the management capacity to maintain that progress, including the hiring of a CFO with extensive financial management experience, the ongoing impact of the Institution’s historical financial challenges will continue.
- The Institution has implemented strategies to improve its financial position, including through reducing its debt to the endowment. These strategies will have an important impact on addressing the debt, but also means that the endowment will have limited growth for several years.
- The HLGU Board and the Institution’s leadership have been diligent in strengthening the financial position of the institution, as evidenced by the HLGU Board Finance Committee meeting quarterly and a separate monthly discussion of

finances among institutional leadership. However, as such efforts continue to be implemented, they will take time to put the Institution on a strong financial footing.

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:

- Although short-term planning was helpful to the Institution in terms of crisis management, the Institution’s planning processes need to engage stakeholders in a more systematic and integrated fashion. The Institution needs to plan strategically for the future and to establish clear metrics that can provide support for key performance indicators.
- The Institution has made progress with respect to systematic and integrated planning and improvement, but there remains much work ahead for it to be sustainable financially.

The Institution now meets Assumed Practice D.3, “the institution has future financial projections addressing its long-term financial sustainability,” for the reasons noted above under Core Components 5.B and 5.C.

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

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

**Focused Visit:** The Board required that the Institution host a Focused Visit regarding Core Components 5.B and 5.C no later than January 2027.<sup>4</sup>

**Comprehensive Evaluation:** The Institution has been placed on the Standard Pathway with its next comprehensive evaluation for reaffirmation of accreditation in 2028-29.

### **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.

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<sup>4</sup> Please note: Revisions to HLC’s Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices will go into effect on September 1, 2025. Institutions will be evaluated against these revised HLC requirements for all reviews conducted after that date, including reviews related to previously assigned monitoring. Institutional reports submitted on or after September 1, 2025, or institutional reports or Assurance Arguments for visits that will take place on or after September 1, 2025, should be written to the revised version of the Criteria or Assumed Practices as applicable. More information, including a crosswalk between the current and revised versions of the Criteria, is available on HLC’s website at <https://www.hlcommission.org/accreditation/policies/criteria/>.

In accordance with HLC policy,<sup>5</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, Dr. Linnea Stenson.

Sincerely,



Barbara Gellman-Danley  
President

Enc: Public Disclosure Notice

Cc: Chair of the Board of Trustees, Hannibal-LaGrange University  
Ray Carty, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Hannibal-LaGrange University  
Evaluation Team Chair  
IAC Hearing Committee Chair  
Linnea A. Stenson, Vice President of Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning  
Commission  
Marla Morgen, Vice President and General Counsel, Higher Learning Commission  
Ben Boggs, Commissioner, Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce  
Development

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<sup>5</sup> COMMA.10.010, Notice of Accreditation Actions, HLC Public Notices and Public Statements