



ACCREDITATION STATUS UPDATE

Report to the South Dakota Board of Education

March 2017

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) notified Western Dakota Tech in an action letter dated March 3, 2016, that the college was being placed on Probation for several reasons related to assessment of student learning, attention to retention and graduation rates, and institutional effectiveness. Those issues led the HLC Board of Trustees to find that Western Dakota Tech was out of compliance with the following Criteria for Accreditation Core Components:

- 4.B.: The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.
- 4.C.: The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.
- 5.D.: The institution works systematically to improve its performance.

In addition, the Board found the college out of compliance with the following Assumed Practices:

- C.6.: Institutional data on assessment of student learning are accurate and address the full range of students who enroll.
- D.4.: The institution maintains effective systems for collecting, analyzing, and using institutional information.

Western Dakota Tech has taken the sanction of Probation seriously and has used it as an opportunity to make serious and important improvements to processes already in place. These efforts have resulted in the strengthening the college's assessment of student learning work, developing even more effective systems for collecting, analyzing, and using institutional information, and engaging in systematic and integrated planning at all levels within the college.

The college's commitment to continuous improvement allowed it to recognize opportunities for improvement. The college has demonstrated earnest momentum toward strengthening processes already in place and significantly improving its ability to document that work. Our current efforts and the college's plan for the future ensure improvements continue as part of the Western Dakota Tech culture. Western Dakota Tech believes strongly the college meets the Assumed Practices and Core Components in question.

Western Dakota Tech's progress is the result of work from each and every faculty and staff member. From the moment sanctions were announced, faculty and staff pitched in to do the work needed to make improvements and to create a culture where assessment of student learning, continuous improvement, and, most importantly, documentation of those efforts, are part of the fabric of the college. The college has created processes to ensure the work being done is not merely a flurry of activity. Instead, processes will make these activities part of everyone's daily work and result in lasting quality improvements across campus. Those improvements include stronger and more meaningful assessment of student learning, the creation of a data-informed culture that allows more strategic decision-making, and a robust system of continuous improvement built on planning at all levels of the college.

During the past year, Western Dakota Tech has been in regular contact with the Higher Learning Commission through scheduled reports and a visit in May 2016 by our HLC liaison. Our liaison will visit again April 27, 2017, to see first-hand the progress Western Dakota Tech has made. The college will submit its Assurance Argument by July 2017 to show compliance with all Criteria for Accreditation. A team of HLC reviewers will visit campus September 18-20, 2017, to confirm our Assurance Argument filing. Western Dakota Tech will have an opportunity to review the team's report before it is finalized and given to the HLC Board of Trustees for consideration in February 2018. The Board of Trustees will determine the college's accreditation status at that time.

Western Dakota Tech is confident it will be removed from probation because of the significant progress made in all areas of concern.