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Dr. Donald Astrab, Interim President

October 31, 2024

Mr. Richard Cordray
Chief Operating Officer, Federal Student Aid
U.S. Department of Education
830 First Street, NE, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20202

Re: Notification of Intent to Change Primary Accrediting Agency

Dear Mr. Cordray,

Broward College, one of 28 state college within the Florida College System, seeks approval from the Office of Federal Student Aid to change its primary accrediting agency from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) based in Decatur, Georgia, to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) based in Chicago, Illinois. In June 2024, the SACSCOC Board of Trustees reaffirmed Broward College's accreditation through June 2034.

According to policy noted on the HLC website:

"An institution may be eligible to seek accreditation with HLC through the Accelerated Process for Initial Accreditation if it meets certain requirements, including being currently accredited by a historically regional accrediting agency or a state entity recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as an institutional accreditor of degree-granting institutions of higher education. The institution also must not have been placed on sanction, been issued a show-cause order or experienced other similar negative action by its institutional accreditor for at least the past five years. The process allows the institution to apply for initial accreditation with HLC on an accelerated timeline, without serving a period of Candidacy".

Broward College is in good standing with our current accreditor. In choosing to seek membership with HLC, our institution will demonstrate compliance with a new set of standards which will challenge and strengthen the College as we adapt to the standards imposed by this accreditor.

Benefits of the Change

Seeking and achieving accreditation with HLC will require our institution to address academic and student support programs, documenting the achievement of rigorous student outcomes. HLC

expects institutions to be mission-driven in their decision making, budgeting, strategic planning and operations. The pursuit of accreditation with HLC will also require our institution to revisit our mission of *“transforming students’ lives and enriching our diverse community through academic excellence, innovation, and meaningful career opportunities”* to determine if we are capable of even greater student success. This process will also lead to the development of a new strategic plan which will be the means to that end.

In addition to a focus on Mission, there are four other Criteria which the Commission requires institutions to comply with in order to be accepted into membership. These are: *“ethical and responsible conduct; quality resources and support for teaching and learning; evaluation and improvement of teaching and learning; and institutional effectiveness, resources and planning.”* HLC provides member institutions with more training resources and opportunities to assist in the development of staff and faculty than our present accreditor.

Broward College is entering its 65th year and has often been recognized for its excellence including five top-ten finishes in the biennial Aspen Prize competition. By successfully pursuing and earning accreditation with HLC, Broward College will need the support of a broad range of individuals and units within the College. This cross-departmental initiative will require cooperation and collaboration among all constituencies leading to improved communication and efficiency.

Other Potential Accreditors

In considering this transition, the college considered two other potential accreditors: the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and the Northwest Commission on College and Universities. Other colleges in Florida also going through this transition have found that the HLC would be best aligned with our focus on academic excellence, student learning outcomes, community service and commitment to shared governance. Our assessment of these alternative accreditors led to the same conclusion.

The recommendation to seek accreditation by HLC was presented and approved by the Faculty Senate on September 19, 2024. The recommendation was also approved by the President’s leadership team on October 23, 2024, and finally approved by the District Board of Trustees of Broward College on October 29, 2024.

A collegewide steering committee is being established to lead this effort which will have members of the Board of Trustees, Administration, Faculty, Staff, Students and community representation reflecting the need to have broad-based support for this process from all stakeholders.

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Appended Materials

To support this request, Broward College has appended the letter from the SACSCOC notifying the College of the most recent reaffirmation of accreditation, the minutes of the Faculty Senate and the minutes of the Board Meeting approving this plan.

On behalf of Broward College, thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Donald Astrab,
Interim President and COO