



October 17, 2016

Dr. Barbara Gellman-Danley
President, Higher Learning Commission
230 South LaSalle Street
Suite 7-500
Chicago, IL 60604

Dear Dr. Gellman-Danley:

As you are aware, Adams State University is scheduled for a comprehensive HLC review visit April 10-12, 2017. We acknowledge that Adams State University requested this date and that this will be a comprehensive review. We request an extension to November 2017 and acknowledge that we will make no additional request for an extension.

Adams State University is a Hispanic-serving institution. In fact, we have the most diverse student population in the state, and the highest percentage of low-income, first-generation students. Our freshman class this year is 49 percent Hispanic/Latino and 11 percent African-American. We provide a higher education and economic hub for the San Luis Valley, one of Colorado's poorest and most geographically remote areas.

We acknowledge the findings of the September 2015 HLC advisory visit and are pleased to inform you that significant progress has been made toward addressing HLC's concerns. For example:

- We have implemented a stringent new policy limiting faculty teaching loads;
- We have passed a student account identity verification policy;
- We are now requiring proctored exams in online courses;
- We have disallowed any additional online open enrollment courses and are not registering additional students in such courses.
- Five criterion-specific teams have drafted our comprehensive assurance argument which has gone out to independent reviewers and our campus community for review, and we will spend the fall refining it with confidence that it demonstrates this university's full worthiness for accreditation;
- Our new Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Chris Gilmer, was hired largely due to his extensive leadership in distance education, much of it spent in the Historically Black College and University (HBCU) system. He has also held leadership roles preparing institutions for accreditation review by HLC and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

I have charged him, based on his expertise in online education and in supporting historically-underserved populations, to lead a comprehensive review and redesign of our distance education programs.

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

208 Edgemont Boulevard, Suite 2180 • Alamosa, CO 81101 • Phone: 719-587-7341
www.adams.edu

I ordered an external review of our distance education programs (attached) and the Office of Extended Studies (OES). Dr. David Mathieu, former associate vice chancellor of the University of Wisconsin system and a former senior administrator at Walden University has built and overseen distance education programs and worked closely on HLC accreditation. Dr. Mathieu's independent report pointed out systemic problems in our distance education programs which had not been addressed by the previous administration.

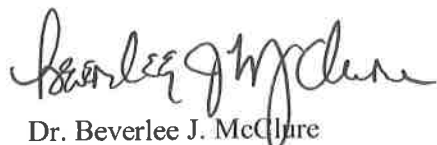
The university's new leadership team takes these findings seriously, has already acted on a number of them, and will address up to and beyond HLC's expectations for all problems noted in Dr. Mathieu's report. We have been transparent in releasing the Mathieu report and in seeking feedback from the broad campus community. We will be equally transparent in our overhaul of distance education, and have set an aggressive timeline to move forward. Major milestones achieved include a policy of no new enrollments in open enrollment online courses, one of HLC's major concerns, and a shift of responsibility for the integrity of online semester-based courses to the academic departments. These changes will ensure consistent rigor of academic content. Distance education at Adams State University will be redesigned to become one of numerous methods to serve our own degree-seeking students including unique populations such as the incarcerated students whom we proudly engage, one of few institutions nationwide to do so.

We are confident the steps already taken and to be taken this academic year will more than adequately address HLC's accreditation concerns, but we need more time to fully implement our reforms. By definition, open enrollment online courses allow one year to complete, and we have a number of students currently enrolled in these courses, most of whom are not degree-seeking at Adams State University. Terminating existing courses would leave these students with the unfulfilled promise of completion. As the leader of a student-centered university, I am committed to making the needed reforms, but in a way that fulfills our legal and ethical contract to students currently enrolled. It could, then, take one full calendar year to complete teach-out of all online open enrollment courses.

If we move forward with the April 2017 visit as scheduled, we will be able to demonstrate significant progress and a timeline to implement all remaining reforms within six months after the visit. If you grant our request for extension and set our comprehensive visit for early November 2017, we will be able to demonstrate full implementation of all reforms with a degree of certainty and proficiency which should satisfy all accreditation requirements.

Adams State University does not seek special favors. We seek the opportunity to give our best, to fulfill the promise of the institutional reforms in which we are vigorously engaged, and to end the probation which threatens the long-term educational, economical, and social viability of not only this institution, but of the very special place and equally special students that it serves. I thank you in advance and most sincerely for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Dr. Beverlee J. McClure
President

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

208 Edgemont Boulevard, Suite 2180 • Alamosa, CO 81101 • Phone: 719-587-7341
www.adams.edu