

Executive Summary: Higher Learning Commission Review (2025)



This executive summary highlights the outcomes of the Higher Learning Commission's (HLC) reaffirmation review of Lake Land College (LLC), conducted on April 28, 2025. The comprehensive review included an on-site visit, a Federal Compliance Review, and a Reaffirmation Review.

Lake Land College's Significant Strengths and Their Impact

Lake Land College demonstrates a strong commitment to its mission and the public good, with several areas of notable excellence that positively impact its students and community:

- Mission-Driven Operations with Clear Direction
- Profound Commitment to the Public Good
- Integrity and Transparency in Conduct
- Comprehensive Student-Centered Support
- Strong Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Initiatives
- Responsive Community Relationships and Workforce Development

Areas Requiring Interim Monitoring and Their Impact on Improvement

While LLC exhibits many strengths, the HLC review identified five key areas that require focused improvement and subsequent interim monitoring. Lake Land College is required to submit an Interim Report by **May 1, 2027**, detailing the effective implementation of academic offerings appropriate to higher education (3.A), sufficiency of faculty and staff (3.C), program review (4.A), assessment of student learning (4.B), and systematic and integrated planning and improvement (5.C).

Ensuring Comprehensive Assessment Implementation for Enhanced Learning (3.A)

Rationale: LLC's previous assessment practices, while compliant, often lacked a focus on improving student learning outcomes from collected data. The new assessment software, Heliocampus, is still in its pilot phase, meaning data to drive improvements has not yet been collected or analyzed comprehensively. This leads to inconsistencies in how assessment outcomes and action steps are applied across all academic programs, especially for distance education and dual enrollment courses, which hinders assurance of consistent instructional quality and academic rigor.

Action with Interim Monitoring: The interim report must demonstrate full implementation of Heliocampus and its use in consistently evaluating instructional quality, academic rigor, and achievement of student learning outcomes across *all* academic programs, including distance education and dual enrollment. This will enable the college to track improvements in student learning resulting from the use of assessment data and ensure the transferability for DOC courses.

Developing Consistent Faculty Evaluation and Mandatory Professional Development Across All Modalities (3.C)

Rationale: A significant gap exists in the systematic evaluation process for dual credit instructors employed by partner high schools; regular observation or student assessment is not consistently in place, making it difficult to confirm comparable rigor to on-campus courses. Additionally, professional development for faculty is currently optional, limiting consistent quality improvement in this critical area.

Action with Interim Monitoring: LLC must implement a faculty evaluation process for dual credit instructors that is well-aligned and comparable to existing board policy expectations, thereby ensuring

consistent instructional quality and rigor. Furthermore, consistent and mandatory professional development expectations must be established across all learning modalities, with assessment data used to guide and inform targeted support for faculty based on instructional needs, ultimately enhancing teaching effectiveness.

Institutionalizing Program Review for Widespread Improvement (4.A)

Rationale: While some program improvements have occurred, the consistent use of program review data to inform decision-making is not yet widespread or institutionalized. This fragmented approach means the full potential for college-wide student learning improvements is not being realized. The lack of formal processes for observing and evaluating adjunct and dual credit faculty further hinders confirmation of instructional quality and academic rigor across sections.

Action with Interim Monitoring: LLC needs to implement a college-wide process where program review data are consistently translated into actionable improvements, ideally led by faculty shared governance committees. This will also include developing a formal process for observing and evaluating adjunct and dual credit faculty to ensure consistent instructional quality, academic rigor, and achievement of student learning outcomes across all delivery formats.

Strengthening Academic Rigor Enforcement and Consistency (4.B)

Rationale: Inconsistent enforcement of course prerequisites, particularly outside of English and Math, raises faculty concerns about student preparedness, potentially impacting academic success. The Federal Compliance review also noted that syllabi were inconsistent in referencing credit award policies or clearly stating time expectations, which can impact student understanding of course rigor and transferability.

Action with Interim Monitoring: LLC must take necessary steps to ensure assessments for programs and courses are consistent. Additionally, the college should undertake an effort to revise syllabi to reference the award of credit policy and standardize stated learning outcomes, ensuring greater transparency and consistency in academic rigor across all courses and modalities.

Developing a Fully Integrated Planning System (5.C)

Rationale: While various planning efforts exist, they currently lack cohesive integration with student assessment data and program assessment.

Action with Interim Monitoring: To ensure effective decision-making, these efforts must be integrated with student learning and academic program assessment data. LLC must develop a system for integrated planning that cohesively incorporates all existing planning efforts (including assessment, facilities, financing, strategic enrollment, technology, and environmental scanning). This will ensure that institutional priorities align with strategic objectives and mission-driven work, leading to more effective and holistic decision-making for the future.