U.S. Department of Education

Staff Report
to the
Senior Department Official
on
Recognition Compliance Issues

RECOMMENDATION PAGE

1. **Agency:** HLC-Report to NACIQI (1952/2007)
   (The dates provided are the date of initial listing as a recognized agency and the date of the agency's last grant of recognition.)

2. **Action Item:** Other Report

3. **Current Scope of Recognition:** The accreditation and preaccreditation ("Candidate for Accreditation") of degree-granting institutions of higher education in Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming, including the tribal institutions and the accreditation of programs offered via distance education within these institutions. This recognition extends to the Institutional Actions Council jointly with the Board of Trustees of the Commission for decisions on cases for continued accreditation or reaffirmation, and continued candidacy. This recognition also extends to the Review Committee of the Accreditation Review Council jointly with the Board of Trustees of the Commission for decisions on cases for continued accreditation or candidacy and for initial candidacy or initial accreditation when there is a consensus decision by the Review Committee.

4. **Requested Scope of Recognition:** Same as above.

5. **Date of Advisory Committee Meeting:** December, 2010

6. **Staff Recommendation:** N/A

7. **Issues or Problems:** N/A

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE AGENCY

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC or the agency) is a regional institutional accreditor that accredits (or preaccredits) over 1,000 degree granting institutions in 19 states, tribal institutions and including those programs offered via distance education within these institutions.

Most of the institutions accredited by HLC use the Secretary's recognition of the agency to establish eligibility to participate in the Title IV, HEA student financial assistance programs.

Recognition History

HLC received initial recognition in 1952 and has received periodic renewal of recognition since that time. The last full review of the agency was conducted in December 2007, at which time the Committee recommended and the Secretary concurred that the agency's recognition be renewed for five-years and that it submit an interim report addressing the six issues identified in the staff analysis. The agency's interim/compliance report is also being reviewed at this NACIQI meeting.

PART II: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

§602.18 Ensuring consistency in decision-making

The agency must consistently apply and enforce standards that respect the stated mission of the institution, including religious mission, and that ensure that the education or training offered by an institution or program, including any offered through distance education or correspondence education, is of sufficient quality to achieve its stated objective for the duration of any accreditation or preaccreditation period granted by the agency. The agency meets this requirement if the agency--

> **(c) Bases decisions regarding accreditation and preaccreditation on the agency's published standards;**

In 2009, Department staff conducted a special review of the agency following issuance of an Alert Memorandum by the Office of the Inspector General. Department staff sent the agency a report on the results of its review, which required the agency to develop a corrective action plan. One element of that plan was a requirement that the agency submit a written report describing the process it follows in reviewing institutions for initial accreditation and the number of institutions it reviewed for initial accreditation from December 2009 through October 2010. This report is provided to the NACIQI for information only.

PART III: THIRD PARTY COMMENTS

The Department did not receive any written third-party comments regarding this agency.