

March 3, 2026

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Mr. Scott Molander  
President  
Dickinson State University  
291 Campus Dr.  
Dickinson, ND 58601-4896

Dear President Molander:

This letter is formal notification of action taken by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Board of Trustees (“the Board”) concerning Dickinson State University (“the Institution”). This action is effective as of the date the Board acted, February 26, 2026. In taking this action, the Board considered materials from the most recent comprehensive evaluation, including, but not limited to: the Assurance Filing the Institution submitted, the report from the comprehensive evaluation team, the report of the Institutional Actions Council (IAC) Hearing Committee, and the institutional responses to these reports.

**Summary of the Action:** The Board continued and reaffirmed the accreditation of the Institution. The Institution meets Core Components 3.A, 3.C, 4.B, and 5.C with concerns. The Institution is required to submit an interim report, as outlined below, no later than by May 31, 2028. The Institution is also required to submit an embedded interim report, as further outlined below, with its next Assurance Filing.<sup>1</sup>

### **Board Rationale**

The Board based its action on the following findings made with regard to the Institution as well as the entire record before the Board:

Dickinson State University (“the Institution”) meets, but with concerns, Criterion Three, Core Component 3.A, “the rigor of the institution’s academic offerings is appropriate to higher education,” for the following reasons:

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: Revisions to HLC’s Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices went into effect on September 1, 2025. Institutions will be evaluated against these revised HLC requirements for all reviews conducted after that date, including reviews related to previously assigned monitoring. Institutional reports submitted on or after September 1, 2025, or institutional reports or Assurance Arguments for visits that will take place on or after September 1, 2025, should be written to the revised version of the Criteria or Assumed Practices as applicable. More information, including a crosswalk between the previous and revised versions of the Criteria, is available on HLC’s website at <https://www.hlcommission.org/accreditation/policies/criteria/>.

- The Institution does not differentiate learning outcomes for University Learning Outcomes or program level outcomes.
- While the Faculty Senate for the Institution has recently passed updated learning outcomes that would provide differentiation, and there are plans for the Institution's Assessment Committee to require further development of differentiated learning outcomes, it will take time for the Institution to implement these differentiated outcomes.

The Institution meets, but with concerns, Criterion Three, Core Component 3.C, "the institution has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services," for the following reasons:

- The Institution has adopted a new faculty qualifications policy. However, given that the Institution has a recently adopted dual mission, and offers courses supporting certificates at different levels, the Institution needs to clarify the faculty qualifications policy to provide differential evaluation of faculty qualifications for faculty teaching at the lower division and upper division undergraduate levels. The Institution then needs to implement this aspect of the faculty qualifications policy.

The Institution meets, but with concerns, Criterion Four, Core Component 4.B, "the institution engages in ongoing assessment of student learning as part of its commitment to the educational outcomes of its students," for the following reasons:

- The Institution does not systematically use assessment data for improvements.
- The Institution is making significant progress in assessment and is building a positive culture of assessment, including hiring a Director of Assessment; developing templates, tools, and training opportunities to enhance the assessment process; and compiling a comprehensive document summarizing assessment results across the Institution that supports academic leaders in improving programs. However, the changes to the assessment process need to be evaluated after more data has been collected.

The Institution meets, but with concerns, Criterion Five, Core Component 5.C, "the institution engages in systematic and integrated planning and improvement," for the following reasons:

- The Institution can identify examples of how it uses assessment results and analysis to plan, budget, and make informed decisions. However, the Institution does not demonstrate that it engages in systematic planning and decision-making across all programs as a result of these assessment results.
- The Institution has begun using data for continuous improvement, but needs time to collect meaningful assessment data to improve its processes

### **Next Steps in the HLC Review Process**

**Interim Report:** The Board required that the Institution submit an interim report no later than May 31, 2028, regarding Core Components 3.C and 5.C.

**Interim Report:** The Board required that the Institution submit an embedded interim report regarding Core Components 3.A and 4.B with its next Assurance Filing.

**Comprehensive Evaluation:** The Institution has been maintained on the Standard Pathway with its next comprehensive evaluation (Year 4) in 2029-30.

**HLC Disclosure Obligations**

The Board action resulted in changes that will be reflected in the Institution's Statement of Accreditation Status as well as the Institutional Status and Requirements Report. The Statement of Accreditation Status, including the dates of the last and next comprehensive evaluation visits, will be posted to the HLC website.

HLC policy<sup>2</sup> requires that a summary of Board actions be sent to appropriate state and federal agencies and accrediting associations. It also will be published on HLC's website. The summary will include this HLC action regarding the Institution.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank you in advance for your cooperation. If you have questions about any of the information in this letter, please contact your HLC Staff Liaison, Dr. Stephanie Brzuzy.

Sincerely,



Barbara Gellman-Danley  
President

Cc: Kathy Geisen, Director of Special Projects and West River Teacher Center, Dickinson  
State University  
Evaluation Team Chair  
IAC Hearing Committee Chair  
Stephanie Brzuzy, Vice President of Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning  
Commission  
Marla Morgen, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, Higher Learning  
Commission

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<sup>2</sup> COMM.A.10.010, Notice of Accreditation Actions, HLC Public Notices and Public Statements