Colleagues,

I am pleased to report good news: The evaluation team from the Higher Learning Commission is recommending that the College be removed from probation.

More than 300 employees and community members have been at work since the HLC handed down the sanction in April 2013. We documented our comprehensive and systematic review of College policies and practices in a Self-Study Report submitted to the HLC in July, and hosted the HLC Site Evaluation Team’s visit in September.

The evaluation team’s report resulting from the site visit noted that “In the last year and a half, PCC has worked diligently and quickly to conduct a self-study, respond to the Commission’s concerns, and implement necessary changes to come into compliance, while at the same time continuing to serve the educational needs of the community.” [The evaluation team’s draft report; our response, which corrected errors of fact in the draft; and the evaluation team’s final report are available on the Pima Addresses Probation webpage of our website.]

The team’s report affirms that, because of the hard work of many, we have made great strides in rebuilding Pima and addressing the many serious problems that led us to probation. I thank those whose tireless efforts have helped us reach this milestone.

The report also notes what has been clear to me since becoming Chancellor in July 2013: The community cares deeply about PCC. As the evaluation team wrote, “The significant level of attention [PCC] receives, both positive and negative, attests to the significant role PCC plays in the community. It is evident that PCC and the services it provides are important and vital to Tucson and Pima County.”

What’s next
On Jan. 13, 2015, I will lead a team from the College to appear before the HLC’s Institutional Actions Council Hearing Committee in Chicago. After its review, the Hearing Committee could issue a recommendation that concurs with the team’s recommendation. The Commission’s Board of Trustees likely will issue the HLC’s final decision in February or March.

Even after the HLC makes its final decision, our work is far from over. As many of the changes we are implementing are too new to demonstrate sustained evidence of success, the HLC team is recommending that the College be placed “on notice,” a designation requiring close monitoring by the HLC to ensure that the changes “are effectively implemented in the long term.”

The HLC team is recommending that a focused visit take place no later than March 31, 2016. The follow-up visit will determine if we can demonstrate:

- A well-defined, inclusive formal review process of the institution’s mission;
• Evidence of the work of the College Diversity Committee, including the development of strategies to enhance the recruiting, hiring and retention of minorities, women and other protected classes;
• Evidence of the effectiveness of newly adopted policies, processes and procedures;
• Evidence of a comprehensive assessment of Human Resources, including structure, staffing and key performance indicators;
• Implementation of a process for assessing the effectiveness of the new Office of Dispute Resolution, including a review of the number, type and status of complaints and grievances;
• Evidence that syllabi have specific learning goals;
• A process to coordinate and ensure consistency in the review of dual learning courses and dual training faculty training;
• Progress with the Developmental Education Task Force and Council;
• Evidence of the effectiveness of the assessment process for making changes to teaching and learning based on learning outcomes;
• Evidence that persistence, retention, and completion metrics are used for making changes in programs;
• Evidence of stability in leadership, including campus presidents, the hiring of key vacant positions; and
• Evidence of the implementation of the 2014-17 Strategic Plan, including completion of the campus plan.

This level of scrutiny is not unexpected, nor is it a bad thing. The College already is committed to instilling a culture of continuous improvement, and it is clear we are moving in the right direction. Regaining the full trust of our accreditor and the community requires us to continue to push forward with changes that, ultimately, will transform this institution into one of our nation’s premier community colleges.

Lee D. Lambert,
Chancellor