Colleagues,

I am pleased to report significant progress in our effort to regain the fullest confidence of our accreditor. In a report dated Jan. 13, the Higher Learning Commission’s Institutional Actions Council (IAC) concurs with the site-evaluation team’s recommendation that we be taken off probation.

As you may know, on Jan. 13 I led a PCC team at a meeting of the IAC Hearing Committee in Chicago. The hearing was held to review the report of the HLC site-evaluation team that visited PCC Sept. 15-17.

In fact, there is more good news to report: The Hearing Committee believes that the College has fully met four Core Components which the site-visit team listed as “met with concerns.” The four Core Components are:

- Core Component 1b: The mission is articulated publicly. Quoting from the report: “The mission is articulated publicly and widely understood.”

- Core Component 1c: The institution understands the relationship between its mission and diversity of society. From the report: “The College recognizes its duty to the community to alleviate educational disparities among all its members and to prepare them for leadership positions.”

- Core Component 2c: The governing board of the institution is sufficiently autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution and to assure its integrity. From the report: The PCC Board has the “autonomy and authority to make decisions in the best interest of the institution.”

- Core Component 2d: The institution is committed to freedom of expression and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. From the report: The hearing committee “found no evidence that academic freedom has been adversely affected.”

What’s next

In short, a lot of challenging work remains. As I outlined last month, the HLC site-evaluation team recommended that our status be changed to “on notice” because many of the changes we are implementing are too new to demonstrate sustained evidence of success. The designation means the HLC will conduct a focused visit to determine that our changes are effective. The IAC recommended that the visit occur no later than Oct. 31, 2016. The site evaluation team had recommended the visit occur in March 2016; thus, we will have more time to prepare.

The next month will be decisive. Per the HLC process, we will respond to the IAC report by Feb. 4. The Board of Trustees is scheduled to meet Feb. 26-27. No PCC representatives will be at the
meeting. The HLC officially communicates the Board’s action through a letter to the institution typically within one week and not later than 30 days after the action has occurred. [To learn more about the process, read the letter from HLC President Barbara Gellman-Danley which accompanied the report.]

The PCC team that accompanied me to Chicago -- Charlotte Fugett, Vice Chancellor for Human Resources (Acting); PCC Board Chair Sylvia Lee; Mary Ann Martinez Sanchez, Vice Provost and Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Services and Accreditation Liaison Officer; and Nicola Richmond, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Planning and Institutional Research – did an excellent job representing the College and addressing the Hearing Committee’s questions and concerns.

The dedication of our employees, working together in service to our students and community, fills me with pride. More than ever, I am hopeful we will be taken off probation and be on our way to becoming a premier community college.

Lee D. Lambert,
Chancellor