Dear Colleagues,

As many of you know, the Pima Community College Governing Board held a Study Session on July 31, 2015, to discuss job qualifications for employees who provide student support services. I started the meeting communicating a few guiding principles. First, the goal is no employee should lose a job over this issue, and we treat all employees with compassion and respect. Secondly, we are striving to be a premier community college. Putting students first is critical to this. [A video of the BOG Study Session is available on our website.]

Background
Earlier this year the HLC removed the College from Probation and placed us on Notice. Notice means that the College is now in compliance with the HLC’s Criteria for Accreditation, but remains at risk of being out of compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation and the Core Components. The HLC identified 11 areas in which the College must demonstrate compliance. It also identified areas the College has “met with concern,” including Criterion 3C. Criterion 3C.6 says, “Staff members providing student support services, such as tutoring, financial aid advising, academic advising, and co-curricular activities, are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development.”

Our commitment
At the Study Session, I related that the road ahead will require adaptability by all concerned to ensure student success, provide high quality services, and fully meet accreditation criteria. Key pieces of the process will not be compromised, to include:

- Our goal is that no employee loses a job because of this issue.
- We will continue to be compassionate and empathetic, and place ourselves in the shoes of employees in evaluating proposed courses of action.
- We are researching the possibility of assessing “tested experience” in order to acknowledge skills and abilities accrued through years of work at PCC.

The process
To achieve the highest level of HLC compliance in all areas, we are focused on outlining processes and leading in a progressive manner.

Phase 1: Data Development -- Determine which student services positions and functions are subject to 3C.6. Benchmark from other community colleges in Arizona and peer institutions across the country. [Benchmarking and other information is available on the Intranet in a designated ‘Accreditation’ folder.] Examine research from national organizations such as National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) and the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS).

Phase 2: Outline Options -- Determine framework and proven practice guidelines.

Phase 3: Devise Plan -- Finalize and implement plans across campuses.

Currently, we are in Phase 1, and working with NACADA, an independent, third-party organization, to objectively define the size, scope and composition of best approaches and practices moving forward.
In conclusion
As your Chancellor, my No. 1 priority is to establish Pima Community College as a premier educational institution, one committed to student success, community engagement, and diversity. Our employees are essential to our success, and I want to thank everyone for their patience and insight as we work through this issue together.

Lee D. Lambert,
Chancellor