

June 20, 2025

Dr. Shelley White, President
Haywood Community College
185 Freedlander Drive
Clyde, NC 28721

SENT VIA EMAIL

Dear President White,

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) is pleased to acknowledge that Haywood Community College (the “College” or the “Institution”) submitted its application for membership, including its Accelerated Process Application Evidence, on June 2, 2025.

This letter confirms receipt of those materials, provides a summary of HLC’s review and analysis of those materials, and highlights next steps. HLC is pleased to affirm that the College may proceed to the next step of seeking accreditation with HLC through the Accelerated Process for Initial Accreditation; this step is the Preliminary Peer Review. Congratulations!

Qualifications for the Accelerated Process for Initial Accreditation

In its application, the College confirmed that it has been accredited by the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges (SACSCOC) since January 1, 1973. SACSCOC is an historically regional accreditor. The College confirmed that its last reaffirmation of accreditation with SACSCOC was June 13, 2019.

The College also confirmed that it has not been placed on a sanction, Show-Cause Order, or other similar negative action with SACSCOC for at least the past five years, and that there is no reason, based on current interactions with SACSCOC, to anticipate that this information will change in the next year.

Items 1-4 of the Institution’s Accelerated Process Application Evidence further confirm this information.

Based on this information, HLC confirms that the College meets the qualifications in HLC policy to participate in the Accelerated Process for Initial Accreditation.

Reasonable Cause to Change Accreditors

Further, the Institution provided, as item 5 of the Accelerated Process Application Evidence, documentation demonstrating that the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) reviewed the Institution’s request for changing its primary accreditor and, on March 20, 2025, notified the Institution “[t]he Department has determined that [the College] has established reasonable cause to change its institutional accrediting agency to HLC.”

Review of Other Accelerated Process Application Evidence

Finally, HLC has also reviewed items 6-12 of the College's Accelerated Process Application Evidence. This includes information documenting that the institution has substantial presence in HLC's jurisdiction and that it has legal status to operate as an institution of higher education; information about the institution's degree programs, instructional locations, modalities, and enrollments; affirmation from the institution's governing board confirming its intent to seek accreditation with HLC; and information about the institution's other accreditation relationships.

HLC's review of the Accelerated Process Application Evidence indicates sufficient information for the College to proceed with the Accelerated Process for Initial Accreditation. Of course, all determinations as to whether the Institution has met HLC requirements at each stage of the process of seeking accreditation will be made by HLC peer reviewers and decision-making bodies through HLC's evaluative and decision-making processes.

As the Institution progresses through the process of seeking accreditation with HLC, and the information previously submitted changes over time, the Institution is advised to update any items that are re-submitted to HLC in future stages of the process.

Important Information About the Preliminary Peer Review

As noted above, the next step in the Accelerated Process for Initial Accreditation is the Preliminary Peer Review. The Preliminary Peer Review is conducted by a panel of experienced HLC peer reviewers specifically selected and trained for this purpose. The Preliminary Peer Review is designed to ascertain the Institution's readiness to prepare for and undergo a comprehensive evaluation for initial accreditation.

As noted in the [Accelerated Process for Seeking Accreditation Process Overview](#), the Institution's Preliminary Peer Review materials must be submitted to HLC within one (1) year of the date of this letter. All materials for the Preliminary Peer Review are to be uploaded into HLC's Canopy system, which HLC uses for conducting accreditation reviews. These materials include (1) an Assurance Argument at the Criterion "summary" level (not at the Core Component level) including both narrative and evidentiary documents, which are also uploaded and linked to the narrative; and, (2) the following forms: the [Institutional Data form](#), the [Compliance with Eligibility Requirements form](#), and the [Compliance with Assumed Practices form](#).

General information about using Canopy is located on HLC's [website](#). Please also review and adhere to the additional instructions for using Canopy in the Accelerated Process for Initial Accreditation found in this [supplemental guide](#).

The links above provide information about logging in to Canopy as well as access to the Canopy User Guide and helpdesk. Institutions will need to identify a Primary Filing Coordinator, who is the primary person managing the institution's Assurance Filing area within Canopy and the person who can manage access for other institutional representatives to the institution's Canopy site. Please email assuranceadmin@hlcommission.org to identify your institution's Primary Filing Coordinator's name and email address so that HLC can provide login credentials for this person. Thereafter, the Primary Filing Coordinator may then grant Canopy access to a small number of additional institutional representatives, as needed. Please note that some areas of Canopy will not be used by institutions seeking accreditation with HLC until later in the process and after initial accreditation is obtained.

HLC will coordinate with the Institution to establish a timeline for the Preliminary Peer Review, within the one (1) year window described above.

Please consult with HLC Vice President of Accreditation Relations Andrew Lootens-White (alootenswhite@hlcommission.org) for assistance identifying the date that the Preliminary Peer Review is scheduled to begin. HLC requires that this date be identified at least twelve (12) weeks in advance of the review, and takes into consideration several important aspects, including projected institutional readiness for the review and the identification of peer reviewers who will conduct the panel review of the institution's Preliminary Peer Review submission. The date identified becomes the "lock date" for the institution's Canopy site; after that date, the institution retains "read only" access to the information it has provided and will not be able to edit or alter the information while the peer review panel conducts its review, which takes approximately four weeks.

Sharing Information Regarding Seeking Accreditation

To ensure that students and other stakeholders have a clear understanding of an institution's accreditation status, HLC requires that institutions follow guidelines when publicly discussing their accreditation status and plans. After an institution that is participating in HLC's Accelerated Process for Seeking Accreditation has submitted its application to HLC, it may publicly disclose that it has done so and may indicate a general timeline for the process. The institution should refer others to [HLC's website](#) for a consistent description of the process and should not speculate as to the outcome. Institutions participating in HLC's Accelerated Process for Seeking Initial Accreditation are, by definition, concurrently accredited by another institutional accreditor and should be transparent about that accreditation status.

Maintaining Existing Accreditation Obligations While Seeking Accreditation

HLC expects institutions participating in the Accelerated Process for Seeking Initial Accreditation to adhere to all of their current institutional accrediting agency's requirements throughout the process of seeking accreditation with HLC, including requirements regarding substantive change. Institutions must keep HLC informed about all substantive changes in process and anticipated while seeking accreditation with HLC so that HLC can track all such changes in the institution's records. All substantive changes requiring approval should be timed so as to have final approval by the original accreditation agency prior to the award of Initial Accreditation by HLC. Significant changes undertaken and not made known to HLC in advance may result in cancellation of any scheduled aspect of the process and may require that the institution restart the Accelerated Process for Initial Accreditation.

Payment of Fees and Additional Assistance

The HLC [Dues and Fees Schedule](#) requires a fee at the Application and Preliminary Peer Review steps of the process. HLC will invoice the Institution for this fee if not already submitted.

HLC staff is available to answer any questions that the Institution may have. Please feel free to contact the following individuals as needed:

- Kerry Lofton, Accreditation Services Manager, klofton@hlcommission.org
- Andrew Lootens-White, Vice President of Accreditation Relations, alootenswhite@hlcommission.org

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Thank you again for your interest in seeking accreditation with HLC.

Sincerely,

Higher Learning Commission

cc: David Onder, Director and Accreditation Liaison, Haywood Community College
Andrew Lootens-White, Vice President of Accreditation Relations, HLC
____ Marla Morgen, Vice President and General Counsel, HLC