



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

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December 16, 2021

President Reyes Gonzalez
Saint Augustine College
1345 W. Argyle St.
Chicago, IL 60640

Dear President Gonzalez:

The interim report you submitted to our office has now been reviewed. The staff analysis of the report is attached.

On behalf of the Higher Learning Commission staff received the report on enrollment and finances. No further reports are required. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2023 – 2024.

For more information on the interim report process contact interimreports@hlcommission.org. Your HLC staff liaison is Tom Bordenkircher (tbordenkircher@hlcommission.org).

Thank you.

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION



STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT

DATE: 12/15/2016

STAFF LIAISON: Tom Bordenkircher

REVIEWED BY: Lee Bash

INSTITUTION: Saint Augustine College, Chicago, IL

EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Dr. Reyes Gonzalez, President

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION AND SOURCES: An interim report is required by 10/1/2021 on enrollment and finances.

The report should include, at minimum, the following: 1) Enrollment figures through Fall 2021, with a three-year comparison showing Fall 2019 and Fall 2020; 2) Enrollment projections through Fall 2023 based on figures derived from enrollment planning procedures described in the report; and 3) Final operating budget figures for AY2020-2021 (FY21) and the approved operating budget for AY2021-2022.

This report is a follow-up to an earlier (2019) interim report.

REPORT PRESENTATION AND QUALITY: The St. Augustine College interim report is organized into three sections which provide responses to the areas of focus identified in an earlier interim report. The responses provide information and evidence to support compliance with the identified Core Component. Supportive documents are also provided, resulting in a comprehensive and thorough text. A series of supportive documents is also supplied in addition to the narrative, resulting in a coherent document.

REPORT SUMMARY: The St. Augustine College interim report addresses each of the concerns expressed in the previous interim report analysis. Action 1 focuses on enrollment figures through Fall 2021 with a three-year comparison of Fall 2019 and Fall 2020 figures, using a narrative supported by relevant data.

Action 2 focuses on enrollment projections through Fall 2023 based on figures derived from Enrollment planning procedures and initiatives that have been adopted in the past three years as described in the report.

Action 3 provides the final operating budget for AY2020-2021 (FY21) and the approval stage operating budget for AY2021-2022. A narrative outlines multiple efforts (with

supporting documents) that St. Augustine College has undertaken in the past 3 years, as well as providing the budget figures noted above.

REPORT ANALYSIS: The St. Augustine College interim report first addresses its enrollment figures through Fall 2021 with a previous three-year comparison. Although the enrollment has significantly declined from Fall 2019 (966) to Fall 2021 (777), St. Augustine College notes that: a) a sustained reduction in overall enrollment is widespread among higher education institutions (in large part, due to COVID-19) and b) the need to transition from 100% face-to-face to 100% remote courses, and, c) furthermore, as a partial result of its high-touch approach relating to this change, the gross revenue from tuition and fees increased by 6%.

Regarding its enrollment projections through Fall 2023, a major component of developing enrollment projections at St. Augustine College is a series of retention strategies designed to significantly increase the retention rate broadly and using at least 11 strategies that the institution has identified and put into play. Some of the strategies are narrow and only designed to address a small proportion of the student body while others are much broader and more diverse. However, when considered in its entirety, the sum of the initiatives is designed to have a positive impact on future enrollment.

The retention strategies include: a new academic advising model with relies on a success coach for each student; an initiative that maximizes Latino student's achievement in search of excellence, knowledge and innovation; an expanded zero-credit Freshman Seminar where Learning Facilitators (i.e., success coaches) provide instruction that needs to be successfully completed prior to allowing students to register for further courses; heightened attendance monitoring for the first two weeks of the term; a new teacher evaluations system to support online instruction; the adoption of Distance Learning Standards; the use of early warning systems to encourage identification of students struggling as early as possible; revitalization of the Institutional Retention and Persistence Committee (which reflects increasing stakeholder's focus on retention; Learning Facilitators evaluate their students' performance at least 3 times in the 8-week term: Early Warning (week 2), midterm grades (week 4) and high-risk assessment (week 6) in order to improve the student's standing in class by the end of the term; supplemental instruction that provides tutoring; and financial aid support. As a composite strategy, they appear to strengthen the system previously in place.

As noted in their report, St. Augustine College has been able to significantly increase their total revenues (by \$4 million) in the fiscal year 2021, despite the unique challenges associated with COVID 19. In addition to receiving Payroll Protection Program Loans that were forgiven, the institution was able to increase scholarship distributions, move to a distance education format, revise its 16-week semester to two terms of 8-weeks, establish a new Bachelor of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education, all resulting in higher total revenues and lower costs in FY 2020/21 when compared to prior years. Projections for future years suggest a positive net gain of \$1.4 million in the upcoming year.

ANALYSIS CONCLUDING STATEMENT: The St. Augustine College interim report reflects an institution that has adopted necessary changes to help establish improvements in enrollment, retention practices, marketing, and positive impacts on the organizational culture and climate of the college. St. Augustine College has already begun a new major strategic planning effort which should help position in a healthier position in preparation for their 2023-2024 comprehensive visit.

STAFF FINDING:

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s) 5A

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

- Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.
- Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

STAFF ACTION: Receive the report on enrollment and finances. No further reports are required.

The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2023 – 2024.