HLC Frequently Asked Questions/Answers

1. Q. What is reaffirmation of accreditation?
   A. An institution’s reaffirmation consists of evidence that the institution meets the Criteria for Accreditation and Federal Compliance Requirements. Concord University is in the process of a reaffirmation of an accreditation process by the Higher Learning Commission. Reaffirmation occurs 10 years from the last formal Commission action reaffirming accreditation. Concord University’s first accreditation occurred on January 1, 1931, the most recent reaffirmation was confirmed on September 4, 2008. The next reaffirmation will be April 16 – 17, 2018. Statement of Accreditation Status for Concord University.

2. Q. Which accrediting body accredits Concord University?
   A. Concord University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The HLC transitioned from the North Central Association in July 2014 through an agreement with the Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (CASI). There were no changes in standards or process for accreditation.

3. Q. Why is accreditation important?
   A. Accreditation is a voluntary evaluation process that institutions of higher education undergo in order to maintain standards of educational quality agreed upon by members of an accrediting body. The U.S. Department of Education relies upon accrediting agencies to determine eligibility for U.S. government assistance. If an institution is not accredited, a student may not be eligible for financial aid, and have other difficulties such as transferring credits or obtaining professional licenses. HLC also shares information with other agencies, such as the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), to assure quality education through institutional accreditations.

4. Q. What Pathway is CU?
   A. There are three Pathways options for maintaining accreditation. Concord University is under the Open Pathway option. The Open Pathway is a 10-year cycle and is focused on quality assurance and institutional improvement. The Quality Initiative is unique to the Open Pathway.
5. Q. How often is CU evaluated by the HLC?
   A. Concord University is under the Open Pathway 10-Year Cycle, the institution undergoes regular monitoring, institutional updates, substantive change requests, interim monitoring and other processes.

6. Q. What is the re-accreditation process?
   A. The reaccreditation process for the Open Pathway includes, Institutional Updates, Assurance Review, the Quality Initiative and a Comprehensive Evaluation. The Comprehensive Evaluation includes the Federal Compliance Review, Student Opinion Survey, On-site Peer Review Visit, and if needed, a multi-campus visit and/or embedded change requests.

7. Q. What is the Assurance Review?
   A. The Assurance Review will be compiled and written by, Dr. Cheryl Barnes, Associate Provost/HLC Liaison, and Dr. Kathryn Liptak, Assistant Provost/Director of Assessment, selected by the administration to demonstrate the institution is meeting the five Criteria for Accreditation and Assumed Practices. Concord University’s Criteria Teams will compile information for each Criteria and submit to the internal web-based assurance site. The Assurance Review is comprised of an Assurance Argument and an Evidence File uploaded in the HLC’s Assurance System. A team of peer reviewers from other accrediting institutions, chosen by the HLC, evaluates and writes a report upon their findings within the Assurance System.

8. Q. What are the Five Criteria?
   A. Criteria for Accreditation are the standards of quality by which the Commission determines whether an institution merits accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation

9. Q. What are Assumed Practices?
   A. Assumed Practices is a set of practices, actual facts, shared by institutions of higher education in the United States and are unlikely to vary from institution to institution.

10. Q. What is the Federal Compliance Program?
    A. The Federal Compliance Program includes information to assure all higher education institutions are meeting Title IV program responsibilities and are in compliance with specific regulations set forth by the U.S. Department of Education to ensure institutions are eligible for federal financial aid.
11. Q. What is the Quality Initiative?
   A. The Quality Initiative (QI) is unique to the Open Pathways 10-Year Cycle that occurs during years 5-9 of the Open Pathways Cycle. The QI is a project designed to address institutional present concerns or aspirations.

12. Q. What is the HLC Timeline?
   A. The tentative HLC timeline has been updated throughout the process. The current timeline and completion of items is now available.

13. Q. How is the HLC peer review team chosen?
   A. The HLC Peer Review Team is chosen approximately six months prior to the onsite visit.

14. Q. Who is on the Concord University HLC Peer Review Team?
   A. The CU HLC Peer Review Team consists of four members.

15. Q. What is an on-site visit?
   A. The HLC peer review team will have 1½ days to visit the institution. Concord University’s on-site visit is scheduled for April 16-17, 2018.

16. Q. Who will the HLC Peer Review Team interview?
   A. The HLC Peer Review Team will determine who they need to meet with after evaluating the Assurance Review (see #11 above).

17. Q. What types of questions will the HLC Team ask?
   A. The HLC Peer Review Team may ask questions to the various constituents after review of the Assurance Argument, Federal Compliance Review, Third-Party Comments, and Student Opinion Survey. A possible list of questions may be general or program specific.

18. Q. What is an “exit session?”
   A. An HLC peer review team may, but are not required to, conduct a private exit session at the conclusion of the on-site visit to share initial observations about strengths, weaknesses, and concerns of the institution. The exit session usually involves The President and senior leadership. They will also provide information about “next steps.”