

# Great Lakes Christian College Frequently Asked Questions November 11, 2022 Accreditation and Concerns

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is accreditation and why does it matter?

Colleges and universities are accredited to ensure students receive what they pay for: an excellent education. Students receive money from the Federal government in the form of loans and grants. Those funds, called Title IV funds, can only be used at accredited institutions. If a college is not accredited by an approved accrediting association, that institution cannot receive Title IV funds from their students.

### What is GLCC's accreditation history?

GLCC was first accredited by the American Association of Bible College, which later became the Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE). When GLCC later became accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) they maintained dual accreditation for a time before dropping ABHE accreditation. The HLC is the major accrediting association in our region, endorsing schools like MSU, The University of Michigan, Hope College, Calvin and many more.

### How does accreditation work?

Colleges are accredited for ten years at a time. Our accreditation was renewed in 2018. Four years after each college is reaccredited, a team of peer reviewers visits the college to ensure they remain in compliance with accreditation standards. This "mid-cycle review" took place at GLCC on April 11-12, 2022.

### What is GLCC's current status with the HLC?

Our mid-cycle review did not go as well as we had hoped. Consequently, the College was placed on probation by the HLC on November 4. The probation period is for up to two years and will be removed when GLCC meets the expectations the HLC set forth in its peer review visit.

### How does probation affect accreditation?

Presently it does not. All GLCC degrees that were awarded under HLC accreditation remain accredited. All courses currently offered at GLCC remain accredited. Probation is just that: a probationary period given to the College to ensure we address concerns raised during the peer review visit.

### Who else shares the HLC's concerns?

The US Department of Education has expressed concern about our financial viability. They will be requiring us to post a cash bond of \$115,000 to ensure that GLCC students receive any funds they might be owed should the College close. This is not unusual. GLCC had to do this many years ago, and the money was released to the College when our financial position improved. Other Bible colleges like ours have done this in recent years, too. Additionally, our auditors have expressed concern about our finances, insisting that we grow our giving and enrollment to meet our budget.

### Does probation affect this year's graduates?

Probation has no effect on seniors graduating or on underclass students' transcripts. The HLC expressed great satisfaction with the education GLCC students receive (more on that below). Their concern is for our finances, and our strategic plan to address our finances.

### What problems did the HLC cite?

The HLC identifies five criteria broken down into 18 components that colleges must meet. GLCC met four of the five (16 of the 18 components). One criterion composed of two components was not met. Here are some quotes from the HLC Peer Review Report:

#### *Component 1 – Mission*

“A strong focus on mission is a major strength of Great Lakes Christian College.”

#### *Component 2 – Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct*

“Overall, Great Lakes Christian College acts in an ethically and responsible way.”

#### *Component 3 – Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support* “The education offered at Great Lakes Christian College is appropriate to higher education.”

“GLCC has the faculty and staff needed for high-quality programs. Faculty and staff are qualified for their positions.”

#### *Component 4 – Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement*

“GLCC has a dedicated faculty and staff committed to providing quality in their educational offerings.”

#### *Component 5 – Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning*

“The administrative leaders at GLCC are dedicated to the success of the institution. They truly believe in the institution's mission and do their best to support it. It is evident that they care greatly for their students, faculty members, staff members, alumni, benefactors, and each other. Nonetheless, despite this great level of care and dedication to the mission by the GLCC leadership team, the HLC visiting Team has identified some major flaws in GLCC's ability to manage financial resources and ability to plan for the future.”

The HLC spoke positively about GLCC's "forward facing" components (those that directly interact with students). They like our commitment to the mission "to prepare students to be servant leaders in the church and world." They believe our faculty are qualified, and our educational offerings are appropriate to higher education. They believe our graduates receive what they are promised when they enroll.

They are not satisfied with our financial processes, our financial resources, or our lack of strategic planning to address those issues. We are being placed on probation to force us to address those issues.

### How did the College get in this situation?

The simple answer is that the College has been slow to react to recent trends: sagging enrollment and decreased giving. Enrollment is down across the Midwest, and especially in Michigan. Twelve of the 15 public universities in Michigan have declining enrollment. During the global financial crisis of 2007-2009, many young families moved out of Michigan to find work. Now, those students are graduating high school in other states. Additionally, churches that have supported GLCC in the past are declining in attendance. A decade ago, 127 churches supported GLCC with \$264,000 in gifts. Last year 78 churches gave \$194,000. Adjusted for inflation, giving today provides half the buying power it did a decade ago.

Regrettably, GLCC failed to react to these trends. Our posture has been to hunker down and ride out the storm. But the storm has not abated. The new administration at GLCC has made addressing these trends and finding a path to a sustainable future a priority.

### How is College addressing the HLC's concerns?

The College began addressing the concerns the HLC Peer Review Team identified in their visit before the team issued their initial report. Calling Dr. Frank Weller to become GLCC's tenth President was a step in that direction. Dr. Weller officially began serving in June, but he started addressing the College's lack of financial resources and inconsistent financial processes in late April.

He assembled a team of financial experts that included a former GLCC Vice President of Finance, the retired Executive Vice President of Rochester University, and members of the GLCC Board of Trustee Finance Committee. Since that time, President Weller has reduced the projected budget deficit for fiscal year 2022/2023 from \$599,000 to \$381,000. Balancing that budget is priority number one and will be accomplished by further reducing spending, increasing giving, and increasing enrollment.

### **Increasing giving**

Working with Vice President of Institutional Advancement and the GLCC Board of Trustees Advancement Committee, President Weller established revised giving goals for fiscal year 2022/2023. Our new goal is to raise an additional \$300,000 over what was originally budgeted (\$815,000 versus \$515,000). We have already seen an

increase. Giving in the first quarter is 40% over the originally budgeted amount. The College is actively seeking new financial partnerships with individuals and churches. President Weller and Vice President Beavers are frequently on the road meeting prospective donors and promoting the mission of the College.

### **Increasing enrollment**

The College is also taking steps to increase enrollment. GLCC just hired its first Regional Admissions Recruiter, Travis Fox. Travis will live in, and recruit from northeast Indiana. He will focus on traditional students from churches, Christian schools, and home school groups. Additionally, Vice President of Enrollment Management Greg Stauffer recently attended the ABHE Enrollment Leadership Conference and received training designed to boost his department's effectiveness. New standards for accountability in athletic recruiting are being implemented to ensure our athletic rosters are filled with mission fit student athletes.

We have also made investments in our online program. We are working with a marketing team to get the word out so we can grow enrollment in the online space. Additionally, our Bible and Theology department worked with the Enrollment Management division to develop a subscription-based certificate program called Equip. This enables churches to purchase a subscription that will allow their staff and leadership to take our accredited online Bible and ministry courses at a significant reduced cost. We believe these two initiatives will grow our online enrollment.

The College needs to move to the place where enrollment eases the pressure on giving so that rather than all donated funds being used for operations, they can begin being used to fund new programs and facility improvements. Our next incremental enrollment goal is 200 students. Given that our current enrollment is 164 students, a 22% increase seems astronomical. If our plan to maximize athletic rosters and grow traditional student enrollment succeeds, it is attainable.

### **The Forward in Faith campaign**

Forward in Faith is a campaign to underwrite the mission of GLCC through generous gifts and donations by churches and individuals. Regional meetings have been scheduled to explain the importance of our mission and the need to strengthen the foundation of that mission with students and financial support.

**The Log Cabin Society** – Part of the Forward in Faith campaign is identifying 60 new members of The Log Cabin Society. Members pledge \$1000 per year (\$84 per month) for five years.

**Trustee commitments** – Members of the GLCC Board of Trustees have committed to each raising (or personally giving) \$5,000 to GLCC by March 31, 2023.

**New church commitments** – Vice President Beavers is seeking ten churches who will

contribute donations of more than \$10,000.

**Alumni network** – Twelve percent of GLCC alumni regularly support the College. We will increase this by 50%, to 18% of College alumni.

**Major donor solicitation** – President Weller is seeking \$65,000 in major donation(s). You can help connect him with individuals who share our commitment to Christian higher education.

### How can I help?

**Bring a GLCC representative to your church** – President Weller and the GLCC Administrative Cabinet will be traveling throughout the region and would be grateful for the chance to come to your church to preach and/or present the work of the College to your congregation. Since becoming President, Dr. Weller has preached in or connected with more than twenty churches. Additionally, he has connected with dozens of alumni and supporters. He and Vice President Beavers are eager to come to your church.

**Connect GLCC with your church's Mission Committee** – We would be grateful for the chance to share GLCC's mission and ministry with your mission team. With fewer Christian College choices in the Midwest, churches who formerly supported other colleges may be interested supporting GLCC. Connecting the College with your church's mission team could help foster that support.

**Refer students to GLCC** – The best way to support GLCC has always been to send us your students. We are eager to prepare the next generation to be servant leaders in the church and world. Reach out to Greg Stauffer, Vice President of Enrollment Management with prospective students.

**Grow our enrollment network** – You can help grow our enrollment by introducing our enrollment team to Christian school leaders and home school networks in your region. Home school and Christian school students love the education and context we provide at GLCC.

**Host a GLCC alumni gathering in your home** – President Weller and the Administrative Cabinet are eager to connect with alumni in your region. You can help facilitate that by hosting a gathering of alumni and interested supporters in your home.

**Connect President Weller with prospective donors** – Many among us are growing increasingly concerned about the challenges confronting our world. As you learn of individuals for whom learning in a Christian context is a priority, please consider connecting those individuals to President Weller so he can share the GLCC mission with them to see if it is one they might choose to support.

### Who can I contact with questions?

President Weller and the GLCC Administrative Cabinet are committed to transparency and open communication. If you have questions, please reach out to President Weller at [fweller@glcc.edu](mailto:fweller@glcc.edu), or by phoning him at 517-321-0242. If he is unavailable, Kim Feldpausch, Assistant to the President, will make certain he receives your message and returns your call. Kim can also assist you in setting up a meeting with President Weller if you want to communicate face to face.