



Summary of Higher Learning Commission Report

Gateway Technical College is preparing for an accreditation review by the Higher Learning Commission, which accredits colleges and universities in a 19-state region of the United States.

Being commission-accredited marks an important way the college can show that it's a quality institution. The college has been accredited for nearly 50 years, and this effort seeks to maintain it. Gateway reaffirms this accreditation every 10 years to prove it provides students with a quality education driven by its mission and based on a solid foundation of integrity, human and financial resources, planning, and continuous improvement.

Why is it important to be accredited? Without it, students would be unable to apply for federal financial aid. Without it, students might be unable to transfer their credits to other colleges, credits and knowledge they paid for and earned at Gateway. And without it, students would lack the assurance of a third-party accrediting agency that Gateway meets the highest standards of education.

The HLC visit is a cause for celebration and collaboration.

The HLC will look at 21 specific points within the five areas – mission, integrity, teaching and learning resources, teaching and learning outcomes, and college resources and plans – to determine whether to allow Gateway to continue its accreditation.

In summary, the 21 points are:

Mission

- Gateway's **mission** articulates why we exist, what we do, and how we do it through the vision, mission, values and Board ends statements.
- Gateway outlines its mission to the **community** in its official catalog, on its website and in many publications. It also focuses on specific results for five key groups: students, employers, taxpayers, families and educational partners.
- Gateway's mission embraces respect for all groups of a **multicultural society**. Gateway has – and respects – a diverse student and employee population.
- Gateway serves the **public good** through events, economic development activities and sustainability efforts with its time, money, staff and energy. Gateway spends more than 90 percent of its resources on fulfilling its educational mission.

Integrity

- Gateway operates with **integrity** in all facets of its work by following laws and ethical policies.
- Gateway presents itself to the public **accurately** in its catalog, on its website and in its publications.
- Gateway's Board of Trustees focuses on **governing** the college; considers perspective of students, staff, partners, the public and its communities; is independent from inappropriate influences and does not micromanage the college. For example, the board creates policies requiring that we do not let our facilities deteriorate, but they do not get involved in every repair and maintenance project on campus.
- Gateway promotes **freedom of expression** and the pursuit of truth for instructors and students.
- Gateway has policies to ensure **scholarly activities** happen with integrity, use information ethically and enforce academic honesty.

Teaching and Learning Resources

- Gateway provides a **rigorous education** for certificate, technical diploma and associate degree credentials. It spells out the learning goals for each credential in program outcomes and course competencies. Faculty teach and students meet these learning goals at the same level no matter where or how learning takes place: in a Gateway classroom, a dual-credit classroom, online or in-the-field experiences.
- Gateway credentials require **general education**. General education learning outcomes are articulated clearly in course competencies, teach scholarship (which is to collect, analyze and communicate the concepts learned), develop cultural competence and yield scholarship and creative works.
- Gateway makes sure it has enough **faculty** to provide students with a quality education. In addition, faculty hold credentials needed to teach in colleges, are evaluated regularly and receive professional development. Faculty are expected to interact with students. The college also employs enough qualified student services and learning success staff to meet the individual needs of Gateway students.
- Gateway provides **support services** through its Learning Success and Student Services and Enrollment Management divisions. It supports student learning no matter the level of learning at which the student starts. It advises students to guide them on an academic path. It also provides **learning resources** including libraries, student services, learning success, labs, off-campus learning, and technology. Gateway also helps students use information responsibly.
- Gateway provides **student life** opportunities that fit our mission so students can engage in college life, expand learning and interact outside of the classroom. Gateway has innovative **education-economic development** activities, often in Business and Workforce Solutions, to bring together students and businesses. These activities meet

employers' need for trained workers in the district, which is done through innovative training for specific in-demand jobs, such as Telecom On Demand and the TRANS+ program.

Teaching and Learning Outcomes

- Gateway regularly conducts **program evaluations** through its program effectiveness processes. Gateway ensures the quality of all credits it accepts from other colleges and every credit that goes on student transcripts. It controls all aspects of the courses that it offers for credit. It maintains specialized accreditation for its programs when appropriate, and it evaluates the success of its graduates.
- Gateway sets clear goals for **student learning**. It assesses student learning in each academic and co-curricular program and uses the assessment results to improve learning. It follows best practices in assessing learning.
- Gateway sets clear goals for **student retention and graduation**. Our current goal is to increase retention and graduation by half a percent annually. It collects and analyzes student retention and graduation data. It makes improvements to its retention and graduation efforts based on its findings. It follows best practices in its retention and graduation efforts.

College Resources and Plans

- Gateway maintains the appropriate level of **funding, staff and technology** to provide a quality education. It is focused on meeting the educational goals stated in its mission. It hires qualified staff and provides professional development. It budgets and monitors its finances.
- The **governing board** is knowledgeable and qualified to oversee the college. It listens to internal and external constituencies. Administration, faculty, staff, and students are involved in setting college and academic policies.
- Gateway **allocates its time, money, staff** and efforts based on its mission and strategic plan, Vision 2021. It creates and implements plans – and follows that up by evaluating the results and tailoring new efforts to better meet our plan goals. This continuous process helps Gateway to remain a quality institution over time. The college understands its capacity and plans accordingly. Gateway gathers information about business, government and community needs regularly to use in planning.
- Gateway **evaluates** its operations. Gateway has processes to create plans for improvement, implement those plans, measure results and make adjustments in an on-going continuous improvement cycle.