



September 5, 2024

TO: THE DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF VALENCIA COLLEGE

FROM: DR. KATHLEEN PLINSKE
President

RE: AUTHORIZATION TO SEEK REGIONAL ACCREDITATION FROM A NEW
ACCREDITING AGENCY: HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

For Valencia College students to receive federal student aid from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) for postsecondary study, Valencia must be accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency. Since its beginning years, Valencia College has been accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The SACSCOC has traditionally served as the body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states. In 2020, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) revised federal regulations to remove geographical boundaries and restrictions on institutions seeking accreditation.

SB 7044, which passed and became law in 2022, created Sec. 1008.47, F.S., which prohibits Florida's public postsecondary education institutions from being accredited by the same accrediting agency or association for consecutive accreditation cycles. The law requires in the year following reaffirmation or fifth-year review by their accrediting agencies or associations, public postsecondary education institutions to identify accrediting agencies or associations that are recognized by the database created and maintained by the USDOE and are identified by the State Board of Education, other than their current accrediting agencies or associations, from which to seek accreditation and seek and obtain accreditation before their next reaffirmation date. In June 2024, Valencia's SACSCOC institutional accreditation was reaffirmed.

These changes and the College's recent reaffirmation provide a valuable opportunity for Valencia College to explore the benefits of membership with other regional accrediting agencies recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDOE). Following a detailed review of the 38 USDOE recognized agencies, the State Board of Education has recommended that FCS institutions seek institutional accreditation from one of the following:

- Higher Learning Commission (HLC)
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The President recommends that the District Board of Trustees of Valencia College authorize the College to seek accreditation from a new accrediting agency in compliance with the law and approve the selection of the Higher Learning Commission as Valencia College's next accrediting agency.



President