

FAQ's

Why is SMWC on “Accredited-On Notice” status?

The HLC noted in their Public Disclosure Letter that SMWC has received a status of ‘Accredited-On Notice’ because the HLC Board determined that the College is at risk of being out of compliance with some of HLC’s Criteria for Accreditation.

Is SMWC still an accredited institution?

Yes. SMWC remains FULLY accredited.

Will students who are eligible still receive financial aid?

Yes.

Does SMWC’s status affect transfer credits in any way?

No. Transfer credits will be evaluated by other colleges and universities, and those institutions will continue to accept transfer credits in accordance with their specific transfer and admission policies.

Who is the Higher Learning Commission, and what is accreditation?

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) is an independent agency, founded in 1895, to accredit degree-granting colleges and universities in the United States. The HLC is recognized by both the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

Accreditation is a process in which an external body evaluates a higher education institution and its programs to ensure they meet specific quality standards. It's essentially a stamp of approval, verifying that the institution provides a quality education. Accreditation is important because it helps students, families, employers, and the government identify reputable institutions and programs.

Does this status affect SMWC’s ability to continue to provide a quality education and student experience?

The concerns that HLC expressed were about finances and governance. Students will continue to receive credits, and graduates will continue to receive diplomas from an accredited institution. The quality of education at SMWC is excellent, as is the student experience.

What happens next?

In response to the concerns identified during the HLC July 2024 Focused Visit and the Institutional Council reviews, SMWC's Board of Trustees has taken the following actions, as recommended by the College President:

- Improved budgeting and financial oversight
- Increase in Board of Trustees training and improved governance
- Review, evaluation and improvement of policies and procedures for financial sustainability

HLC will visit SMWC for its scheduled re-accreditation visit in the fall of 2026 and review the College's progress during the On Notice period.

What should I do if I have additional questions?

If you have questions about SMWC and our current status, please contact BJ Riley, associate vice president for marketing and community relations, at BJ.Riley@smwc.edu. For more information about HLC and the accreditation process, visit <https://www.hlcommission.org/About-HLC/contact-us.html>