



2019

ANNUAL REPORT & RESOURCE GUIDE

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WE ARE
WASHINGTON GOVERNMENT OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DC MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR



"Mary McLeod Bethune asserted, 'I leave you a thirst for education.' I believe that education is the key to advancement, and my service on the Commission gives me the opportunity to support access to quality education and skills training in all wards of the city. Additionally, the Commission's processes ensure institutions are capable of serving diverse populations and that they will advance the principles of the 'thirst for education.'"

~ Commissioner Anita Shelton

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Message from the Executive Director & Commission Chairperson

The District of Columbia Higher Education Licensure Commission (HELC or the Commission) began licensing postsecondary institutions in 1976. Since then the Commission has modified its licensing work to reflect organizational shifts such as moving into the agency that became the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), and instructional shifts that required expanded authorization to license online educational programs.

However, in every iteration of the HELC, Commissioners and staff have maintained our core belief that it is necessary to ensure that all residents have access to postsecondary options that meet high standards of academic and organizational integrity, so that each person can fulfill their personal, professional, and academic goals. To do this, we focus on serving two primary audiences: (1) current and potential postsecondary students in DC; and (2) postsecondary educational institutions serving residents of the District of Columbia (either through a physical presence in DC or by offering online educational opportunities to DC residents).

The Commission is proud to offer this report on our work and accomplishments. This year, our primary goal was to increase the efficiency and transparency of the Commission's interactions with institutions, and this work was accomplished by implementing a publicity plan designed to inform stakeholders about the Commission's charge, including publishing institutional profiles that support student decision-making.

As we conduct the consumer protection business of the commission, we want to ensure that our interactions with institutions around licensure applications, appeals, and hearings are efficient and fair. In 2019, the Commission had 139 active institutions, addressed 28 complaints, supervised 6 institutional closures, and welcomed a new commissioner. These accomplishments, along with other data points, are detailed in the [By the Numbers](#) section.

We also support DC residents by encouraging informed postsecondary decision-making among students (traditional high school, GED, or National External Diploma Program (NEDP) graduates), their families, and our community. You can help us in this work by sharing resources for [Veterans Education](#) (page 8) with veterans and their dependents, and the [Resources for Residents](#) (page 10) with any DC resident who would like to know more about what to look for in a college, university, or other training program (including online classes).

We hope that the information in the Annual Report & Resources will help both DC residents and our postsecondary education stakeholders better understand the Commission's work to protect and support our community.



Angela H. Lee
Executive Director



Mary E. Dilworth, Ed.D.
Commission Chairperson



Values

- **Accountability** - The HELC is accountable to the residents of the District of Columbia and will operate with transparency and encourage public participation.
- **Integrity** - The HELC will be honest, fair, and respectful in making unbiased and impartial decisions.
- **Consistency** - The HELC will strive to apply the laws and regulations under its jurisdiction accurately and consistently.
- **Professionalism** - The HELC will strive to recruit, train, and retain qualified, effective, dedicated, and skilled staff with a strong commitment to public service.

About the Commission

The Higher Education Licensure

Commission is a group of five commissioners that the Mayor appoints to fill a necessary consumer protection role for DC residents by establishing standards for postsecondary educational institutions in areas of ethical business practices, fiscal responsibility, health, and safety. The Commission regularly reviews applications from institutions and programs to make sure programs meet the standards.

This work is important for DC residents and their families because when they verify that a program or institution has a license from the Commission they can be sure that both the courses and degrees offered meet certain baseline standards, and that institutions accurately represent the opportunities they offer.

In addition to licensing institutions, the Commission is charged with advising the Mayor and DC Council about the postsecondary educational needs of the District. The Commission has other functions which include enforcing postsecondary laws and regulations, maintaining the student records of institutions that close and have no other depository, issuing certified academic transcripts, and investigating complaints against educational institutions under its jurisdiction.



Mission

The mission of the HELC is to ensure that quality postsecondary education and training exist in the District of Columbia.

The HELC's mission is directly related to its legally-established purpose, which is to provide for the protection, education, and welfare of the citizens of the District of Columbia and its students enrolled in postsecondary training and education, by:

- Establishing minimum standards concerning the quality of postsecondary education, ethical and business practices, health and safety, and fiscal responsibility, to protect against substandard, transient, unethical, deceptive, or fraudulent postsecondary educational institutions and practices;
- Prohibiting the granting of false or misleading postsecondary educational credentials;
- Prohibiting misleading literature, advertising, solicitation, or representation by postsecondary educational institutions or their agents;
- Providing for the preservation of essential academic records;
- Advising the Mayor and Council of the District of Columbia as to the postsecondary educational needs of the District of Columbia; and
- Serving as the State Approving Agency (SAA) for veterans benefits.

Vision

The Commission strives to be a national leader in licensing, compliance monitoring, enforcement, and outreach that ensures students are protected and approved postsecondary institutions provide quality education and training programs.

"Serving on the Commission is an exceptional opportunity to view all parts of quality career, technical, and postsecondary education. It also gives us a chance to challenge all providers to enhance and leverage their work to meet the highest standards on behalf of District of Columbia residents."

~ Commission Chair Mary Dilworth



What We Do

The Commission's work includes the following key activities:

- Maintain a list of active and inactive institutions that students and families may refer to at: helc.osse.dc.gov/.
- Hold public meetings to determine if and how postsecondary educational institutions may operate in DC.
- Hold working sessions to discuss or review emerging trends and strategic initiatives in higher education.
- Conduct site visits and evaluations where Commissioners and/or independent evaluators visit institutions and complete a written assessment to document findings.
- Conduct research and identify best practices to address postsecondary education needs in DC.
- Update and manage information for institutions that are in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) website portal.
- Coordinate State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) to regulate the interstate offering of postsecondary education via distance learning (online coursework).
- Consult with DC's professional licensing agencies (such as the board of nursing), national counterparts charged with regulating higher education, accrediting agencies, and the US Department of Education.
- Maintain student records such as transcripts and financial aid records for closed institutions that do not make other arrangements to store these items.

Commissioners

- **Mary E. Dilworth, Ed.D. - Chair**
Ward 7 (5 years served, First term*: 2016-2019)
- **John M. Cross - Vice Chair**
Ward 6 (4 years served, First term: 2017-2020)
- **JoAnne Joyner, Ph.D. - Secretary**
Ward 4 (5 years served, First term: 2017-2020)
- **Anita Bellamy Shelton, MSW**
Ward 1 (2 years served, Prior term: 2017-2019)
- **Estell Mathis-Lloyd**
Ward 4 (Newly appointed, First term: 2019-2020)

* Persons appointed to fill the remainder of a term, where the remainder is less than one-half of the original term, may be reappointed to 2 full terms.

"The Commission fills a needed role in DC government and supports the Mayor's goal to give all residents a fair shot and a pathway to the middle class. I believe we use our tools and resources not only to ensure that post-secondary schools do what they say they will do, but also as a method of ensuring these schools improve the opportunities and level of education available to all residents of the District."

~ Commission Vice Chair John Cross

"The Commission provides a critical service to the residents of the city by ensuring that post-secondary educational institutions adhere to established local and national standards and regulations. I feel privileged and honored to serve as a commissioner, which affords me the opportunity to use my expertise and experience to further the Commission's work."

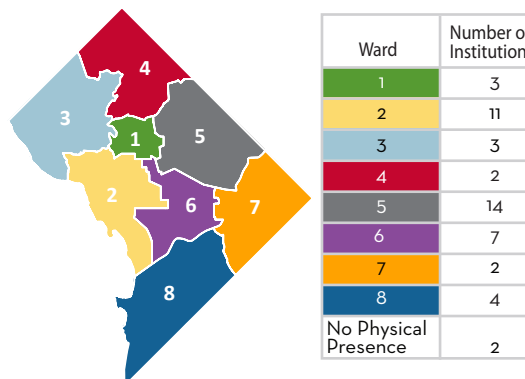
~ Commissioner JoAnne Joyner

By the Numbers

The Commission's work in fiscal year 2019 is illustrated by these key numbers and activities.

- Approved postsecondary institutions in DC*
 - 86 Degree-granting
 - 48 Non-degree granting
 - 42 VA approved institutions
- Hosted 6 new applicant workshops with 60 attendees
- Addressed 135 amendment requests

Number of non-degree granting institutions, by Ward



583	360	28	121	17	6
Transcript requests processed	Approval actions taken as state approving agency	Complaints addressed	Student verification requests	Commission meetings & hearings	Site evaluations

** Please note that the number of applications processed may differ from the number of approved institutions because some institutions do not renew annually, and because institutions may submit multiple applications during one year (e.g., renewal and amendment).*

DEFINITIONS

Degree-granting: postsecondary degree granting educational institutions which offer instruction that results in credit toward a postsecondary or college degree.

Non-degree-granting: private postsecondary non-degree schools operating or incorporated in the District, which offer instruction that does not result in credit toward a college degree.

New applicants: First-time applicants for review by the HELC.

Renewals: Returning applicants seeking license renewal.

State Approving Agency (SAA): the Commission serves as the SAA for veteran educational benefits in DC (see page 8 for additional details).

FOR YOUR REFERENCE

Agents: Applicants are representatives of postsecondary institutions located outside DC who seek to recruit DC students.

Amendments: Applicants for an amendment are licensed institutions that wish to change their licenses before required by the license renewal date. Examples include changes of address or adding and dropping programs.

Exemptions: Applicants that are seeking an exemption to standard licensure requirements based on a limited scope of service delivery, as defined in DCMR 38-1301.

The postsecondary educational institutions that are licensed or exempt from licensure by the HELC include a wide variety of programs, schools, colleges, and universities that serve DC students and students who come to DC for additional education opportunities. Below, we provide a snapshot of these institutions and programs serving students in the District of Columbia. The Commission collects institutional data annually, and the information on this page represents responses for FY 2018.

The structures of postsecondary educational institutions are incredibly diverse.

Postsecondary educational institutions have a variety of organizational structures that they use to offer education to students in the District of Columbia



Fact

The HELC also authorizes colleges and universities with a “primary residence” in another state when these institutions also offer DC-based internships or clinical experiences for their students, in addition to traditional postsecondary programs, and schools that are authorized for online education through reciprocity.

The Commission supports many District residents.

Together the postsecondary educational institutions under the Commission’s jurisdiction represent many individual students, no matter how they are counted.

194,015 Total students enrolled

60,375 Graduates

8,298 DC residents

The cost of attending is as varied as the institutions and their programs.

Program types vary in DC from non-degree (or vocational training) to two- or four-year degree-granting programs, and tuition or cost to the student also varies.

- The two-year degree-granting program has an annual cost of \$1,762.
- Four-year programs average higher annual costs and more credit hours, demonstrated by the fact that students attending degree-granting programs received \$957M in federal aid and students attending professional programs received \$4.1M in federal aid.

Institutions are also key local and regional employers.

94,583 employees (faculty and staff)

78% are full-time

The programs offered prepare graduates for many professional pathways and sectors.

Institutions in the District offer hundreds of programs of study including programs in DC’s six high-demand sectors: Business Administration and Information Technology, Construction, Healthcare, Hospitality, Security and Law, and Infrastructure ([WIOA State Plan for the District of Columbia FY- 2018](#)).

State Approving Agency for Veterans Education & Training

In the District of Columbia, the Higher Education Licensure Commission serves as the State Approving Agency (SAA) for veteran educational benefits. That means that in DC, the HELC approves and monitors institutions of higher learning and non-college degree programs that serve veterans and their dependents, including private and public colleges and universities, private career colleges, high schools, and on-the-job training/apprenticeship programs.

Veterans and their dependents living in DC can find information for servicemembers and their families under Student Eligibility. Related information for postsecondary institutions can be found under Institutional Eligibility. Additional information such as federal guidance is provided on the HELC's Resources page (osse.dc.gov/page/veterans-education#resources).

Fact

The term GI Bill® refers to any Department of Veterans Affairs education benefit earned by members of Active Duty, Selected Reserve and National Guard Armed Forces and their families. The benefit is designed to help servicemembers and eligible veterans cover the costs associated with getting an education or training.

Student Eligibility

Servicemembers and their dependents should [apply](#) through the VA to determine which education benefits they may be eligible for based on their service. The VA maintains a [GI Bill® Comparison Tool](#), which provides information about college affordability and value so beneficiaries can choose the best education program for their needs.

- Follow this link to VA's Web Enabled Approval Management System (WEAMS) to search for approved facilities: [USDVA's WEAMS Institution Search Site](#).
- Follow this link to find School Comparison Tools on the GI Bill® website at [GI Bill® Comparison Tool](#).

Institutional Eligibility

Institutional participation in veterans education and training benefits programs is voluntary; however, in order for a veteran, reservist, or dependent to use their GI Bill® benefits at an institution, the program must be approved by the SAA.

To request an application, contact Everette Jackson at Everette.Jackson@dc.gov or Jocelyn Harris at Jocelyn.Harris3@dc.gov. The approval process also includes a site visit to the educational institution or training establishment.

Background

The Higher Education Licensure Commission's first year as the SAA for veterans education benefits in the District of Columbia was fiscal year 2017. Since resuming this role, the Commission has received the highest possible rating (satisfactory) from the VA on its work.

In FY 2018, the Commission received a grant of \$100,000 from the VA for its work as the SAA.



Resources for Residents

The Commission partners with local and national groups to support DC residents by offering information to support making good educational choices and meeting individual professional and academic goals.

This guide offers links and contact information for our partners and local programs that can help residents determine career interests and higher education goals, search for postsecondary financing such as scholarships, grants, and loans, or request support targeted to adult learners.

A note about timing ...

It is a good idea to plan the college-going application process in the September of your senior year (or the semester before you plan to enroll). A few keys to success for college preparation are to: start early, be persistent, and ask for help.



Career Pathways DC

This is a list of programs that District residents can use to access training and education programs. Visit osse.dc.gov/careerpathwaysdc.

College & Career Resources for Students & Families

OSSE developed a list of resources (available at osse.dc.gov/page/college-and-career-resources-students-and-families) to support middle and high school students (and their support networks) as they prepare for college and careers after high school graduation.

Financial assistance such as scholarships and grants support college enrollment and graduation goals. In addition to the list of resources above, OSSE also shares opportunities for DC residents at osse.dc.gov/page/scholarships-and-grants-students, including the DC Tuition Assistance Grant (DCTAG) and Mayor's Scholars Undergraduate Program.



Adult Education in DC

In the District of Columbia, all residents can be learners. Each new job or stage of life can be an opportunity to brush up on skills or learn new information. OSSE provides resources at osse.dc.gov/service/adult-education to help District residents decide what step to take next to meet their educational and career goals. These resources can help anyone plan their next step - whether they are a teenager who wants to go back to school, an adult who needs a high school credential for their next job, or a mom who is ready to re-enroll in high school or college.

Key Questions about Postsecondary Program Quality

When completing the college search process, or considering financial aid offers from college acceptance letters, there are many things to consider. Asking these questions can inform personal decisions on important aspects of school and program quality. The resources on the Federal Trade Commission consumer education page under “Choosing a College” are also useful decision-making tools.

IS THE SCHOOL LICENSED?

Licensure and accreditation matter because they can impact whether a school can offer federal financial aid, and whether the degrees offered will allow graduates to find a job. The HELC Active Institution page at helc.osse.dc.gov/vPage/Active-Institution/108/91188 shows when a school or program is licensed in DC. The HELC standards for licensure are provided on the HELC website based on the laws and regulations of the District of Columbia.

WHY DOES ACCREDITATION MATTER? WHAT KIND OF ACCREDITATION SHOULD I LOOK FOR?

Regional and national accreditation agencies are recognized by the Department of Education to accredit postsecondary educational institutions. Beyond assuring the quality of education, there are many reasons that accreditation matters for students including the ability to access federal loans and grants, the potential to receive transfer credit, and impacts on professional licensing.

Accreditation will determine if the school or program can participate in federal (Title IV) and state financial aid programs, or in other words, if the school or program can help students get student loans and aid, such as Pell Grants.

Also, when considering transferred college credits or graduate school applications, most institutions will only accept transcripts from other accredited programs and schools.

Finally, accreditation may impact employment options after graduation. If a degree or certificate is earned without accreditation, graduates may not be as accepted for professions that require licensure, such as: accounting, dentistry, nursing, or teaching. Once individuals identify a profession they would like to receive training for, they should check with the specific profession’s licensing body (e.g., the Board of Nursing) about its accreditation requirements.

Other helpful hints:

- Starting a secure binder, folder, or file to save information about each college and financial aid application is essential – Passwords and individual FSA IDs are important pieces of personal information to remember!
- It is best to consistently use one personal email address rather than a high school, college, or work email address on applications (college, financial aid, or job).
- Make sure personal information matches across college applications, FAFSA forms, taxes, and other documents.
- Explore other scholarships and grants – choose those that are a good fit (for personal strengths, the college the student attends, or their field of study).

“Education is the key to success in life. As a parent selecting the higher education institution for my one and only child, I was determined to have him enrolled in one that would prepare him to successfully function independently in a global society. I want the same for each student enrolled in a higher education institution in the District of Columbia.”

~ Commissioner Estell Mathis-Lloyd

SERVE ON THE COMMISSION



Persons interested in serving on the Commission must be DC residents age 18 or over with knowledge regarding the operation of postsecondary institutions. For general information about District Boards and Commissions, please visit the Mayor's Office of Talent and Appointment website at mota.dc.gov/page/join-board-or-commission.



PARTICIPATE AS A SITE EVALUATOR

The Commission seeks individuals to serve as site evaluators for postsecondary institution site evaluations, and is establishing a pool of neutral, qualified professionals who have knowledge, skills or expertise in one or more of the following areas: postsecondary education, academic administration, accreditation, or compliance. Evaluators must be able to devote two or three full business days to the completion of site evaluations. To review criteria, please visit osse.dc.gov/page/call-site-evaluators.

REGISTER FOR A NEW APPLICANT WORKSHOP



The first step in the process to become a licensed postsecondary institution in the District of Columbia is attendance at the New Applicant Workshop. Registration is required. The registration fee is \$200 for this workshop. To register, please visit osse.dc.gov/service/new-applicant-workshops.



REQUEST A TRANSCRIPT OR STUDENT VERIFICATION

The Commission keeps academic records from postsecondary institutions in DC (programs, schools, colleges, and universities) that go out of business and do not have a way to maintain these records. Individuals who attended one of these institutions can request transcripts at osse.dc.gov/service/closed-postsecondary-school-transcripts.

APPLY FOR SAA APPROVAL



Participation in veterans education and training benefits programs is voluntary for institutions. However, in order for a veteran, reservist, or dependent to use their GI Bill® benefits at an institution the program must be approved by the State Approving Agency. To request an application, contact Everette Jackson or Jocelyn Harris or visit osse.dc.gov/page/veterans-education#institution.



SUBMIT A COMPLAINT

To initiate a complaint about a postsecondary educational institution in the Commission's jurisdiction, please visit osse.dc.gov/service/higher-education-licensure-commission-helc-public-complaints and access the Complaint form in the language of your choice. Please note, complaints are made available to the institution/alleged violator so that they may file a response to the allegations. The HELC cannot respond to anonymous complaints.

REVIEW CLOSED SCHOOL ADVISORIES



Students who attended an institution (program, school, college, or university) that closed recently may be able to access resources that will help with any loans and that may help them continue their education. Visit the HELC Closed School Advisories page at osse.dc.gov/page/helc-closed-school-advisories to find out more about these institutions and the options available. Please note, the options provided on the Closed School Advisories page are for informational purposes only, and are not intended as an endorsement or recommendation. Students may contact any institution of their choice, including ones not listed on that page.

STAFF & CONTACT INFORMATION

The Commission is located in the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education at:

1050 First St. NE, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20002

For general inquiries, or to report unlicensed activity, please email osse.elcmail@dc.gov or call (202) 727-6436.



CONTACT	FOR ASSISTANCE WITH:
Angela H. Lee, <i>Executive Director</i>	
Alesia Henry, <i>Education Compliance Specialist</i>	Application Process
Dorothy Thomas, <i>Education Compliance Specialist</i>	New Applicant Workshop; Online/Distance Education
Everette Jackson, Jr., <i>SAA Compliance Specialist</i>	SAA-Veterans Education Benefits
Jocelyn Harris, <i>Education Compliance Specialist</i>	SAA-Veterans Education Benefits
Maia Turner, <i>Administrative Assistant</i>	Student Transcripts or Verifications of Enrollment
Nagesh Tammara, <i>Assistant General Counsel</i>	

The Commission is located in the
DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education at:

1050 First St. NE, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20002

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