



Founded in 1885

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES, INC.  
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

DAVID QUIGLEY, Chair (2021)  
Boston College  
GEORGE W. TETLER, Vice Chair (2019)  
Worcester, MA

HARRY E. DUMAY (2019)  
College of Our Lady of the Elms  
JEFFREY R. GODLEY (2019)  
Groton, CT

COLLEEN C. PANTALONE (2019)  
Northeastern University

MARIKO SILVER (2019)  
Bennington College

KASSANDRA S. ARDINGER (2020)  
Trustee Member, Concord, NH

RUSSELL CAREY (2020)  
Brown University

FRANCESCO C. CESAREO (2020)  
Assumption College

F JAVIER CEVALLOS (2020)  
Framingham State University

RICK DANIELS (2020)  
Cohasset, MA

DONALD H. DEHAYES (2020)  
University of Rhode Island

PAM Y. EDDINGER (2020)  
Bunker Hill Community College

THOMAS S. EDWARDS (2020)  
Thomas College

KIMBERLY M. GOFF-CREWS (2020)  
Yale University

MARTIN J. HOWARD (2020)  
Boston University

SUSAN D. HUARD (2020)  
Manchester Community College (NH)

JEFFREY S. SOLOMAN (2020)  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

ELEANOR BAKER (2021)  
Falmouth, ME

KATHERINE BERGERON (2021)  
Connecticut College

PETER L. EBB (2021)  
Trustee Member, Boston, MA

GREGORY W. FOWLER (2021)  
Southern New Hampshire University

DENNIS M. BANNO (2021)  
Wheaton College

LILY S. HSU (2021)  
Johnson & Wales University

ELLEN L. KENNEDY (2021)  
Berkshire Community College

ABDALLAH A. SFEIR (2021)  
Lebanese American University

NEIL D. SEINSBERG (2021)  
Providence, RI

JOHN M. SWEENEY (2021)  
Providence College

President of the Commission  
BARBARA E. BRITTINGHAM  
bbrittingham@neasc.org

Senior Vice President of the Commission  
PATRICIA M. O'BRIEN, SND  
pobrien@neasc.org

Vice President of the Commission  
CAROLL ANDERSON  
canderson@neasc.org

Vice President of the Commission PAULA  
A. HARBECKE  
pharbecke@neasc.org

August 7, 2018

Dr. John Short  
President  
University of Maine at Fort Kent  
23 University Drive  
Fort Kent, ME 04743

Dear President Short:

I write to inform you that at its meeting April 20, 2018, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the report submitted by the University of Maine at Fort Ken and took the following action:

that the report submitted by University of Maine at Fort Kent be accepted;

that a focused evaluation be scheduled for Spring 2019 and the report prepared in advance of the evaluation give emphasis to the institution's progress in:

1) further implementing the One University initiative consistent with the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation*, specifically as related to shared positions with University of Maine at Presque Isle, academic partnerships with University of Maine at Presque Isle, cross-listed courses throughout the University of Maine System, and the reporting relationship of the institution's chief financial officer;

2) ensuring the academic integrity of the Rural U Early College and dual enrollment program;

that the interim (fifth-year) report scheduled for consideration in Fall 2020 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all interim reports, as well as the matters specified in our letter of April 13, 2016, the institution give emphasis, in the Fall 2020 report, to its success in making further progress on its capital plan and addressing its deferred maintenance;

that the comprehensive evaluation for Fall 2025 be confirmed.

Dr. John Short

August 7, 2018

Page 2

The Commission give the following reasons for its actions.

The report submitted by University of Maine at Fort Kent was accepted because it was generally responsive to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letter of April 13, 2016. As discussed below, we are gratified to note progress on all three matters addressed in the report: the One University initiative, the University's five-year capital plan, and dual enrollment. We commend the institution for the quality of the report and for the candor with which the issues were addressed.

The matters to be addressed by the focused evaluation scheduled for Spring 2019 relate to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation; Organization and Governance; The Academic Program; Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship; Institutional Resources; and Educational Effectiveness*.

We are gratified to see that University of Maine at Fort Kent (UMFK) is making progress in implementing the One University initiative to address the demographic, economic, and workforce challenges for public higher education in Maine. As the same time, we ask that the report prepared for the Spring 2019 focused evaluation visit demonstrate how the initiative affects UMFK's ability to remain in compliance with the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation* as a separately accredited institution. Specifically, we are interested in four dimensions of the initiative: shared positions with University of Maine at Presque Isle (UMPI), academic partnerships with UMPI, cross-listed courses throughout the University of Maine System, and the reporting relationship of the institution's chief financial officer.

First, as UMFK indicated in its report, we understand that UMFK and UMPI will share a Director of Enrollment Management and a Director of Financial Aid; we further understand that by the time of Spring 2019 focused visit there may be additional shared positions in place, planned, or contemplated. The Commission understands the potential advantages of shared positions both in terms of increased capacity for each institution and for the development of additional collaborations, and we look forward to learning about the effectiveness of these shared positions in achieving these goals. At the same time, we recognize that such arrangements are not automatically successful and therefore want to be assured that the institution "demonstrates administrative capacity by assuring provision of support adequate for the appropriate functioning of each organizational component." (*Organization and Governance*, statement of standard).

Second, we understand that the University of Maine System Vice Chancellor has articulated his expectation that UMFK and UMPI develop "meaningful academic partnerships encompassing shared instructional capacity, program design, and course delivery between the two campuses." The cross-institutional programming in teacher education and nursing proposals that were also considered at the Commission's April 2018 meeting, represent one form of such collaboration. Through the report prepared in advance of the Spring 2019 focused visit, we look forward to learning about the success of these programming efforts and any other academic partnerships as they relate to the Commission's standards, including relevant portions of our standard on *Organization and Governance*:

The institution's chief academic officer is directly responsible to the chief executive officer, and in concert with the faculty and other academic administrators, is responsible for the quality of the academic program. The institution's organization and governance structure assure the integrity and quality of academic programming however and wherever offered (3.14)

The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the Curriculum with its faculty. (3.15).

Third, the developing plans for cross-listing courses represents another form of collaboration. We concur that cross-listing courses between and among institutions in the University of Maine System has considerable potential for increasing collaboration among campuses and expanding the educational opportunities available to the people of Maine. At the same time, there is also the potential for students to take a very limited number of credits in their major from the institution at which they have matriculated thereby creating considerable challenges for the institution to ensure that students achieve the learning goals specified by the program. It also has the potential to challenge the Commission, for example, in holding the institution accountable for the quality of its graduates. We ask that UMFK, in Spring 2019, report its progress in cross-listing courses, including quantitative measures and the results of its own assessment conducted to measure their effectiveness, as well as any plans for additional cross-listed courses, as informed by our standards on *Planning and Evaluation, Organization and Governance, The Academic Program, and Educational Effectiveness*.

Institutional research is sufficient to support planning and evaluation. The institution systematically collects and uses data necessary to support its planning efforts and to enhance institutional effectiveness (2.2).

The institution's principal evaluation focus is the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of its academic programs. Evaluation endeavors and systematic assessment are demonstrably effective in the improvement of academic offerings, student learning, and the student experience. Systematic feedback from students, former students, and other relevant constituencies is a demonstrable factor in institutional improvement (2.7).

The institution using contractual arrangements, consortial or other written agreements involving credits and degrees, the delivery of coursework, the assessment of student achievement, or the recruitment or support of students periodically reviews the effectiveness of such arrangements and negotiates appropriate changes. Consistent with Commission policy, the institution maintains sufficient control over the arrangements to ensure quality in the academic program and services for students and prospective students, including the ability to modify the agreements as needed. Written agreements provide for the termination or phasing out of such arrangements as circumstances warrant, and the institution develops appropriation exit strategies as needed (3.18)

The institution's academic programs are consistent with and serve to fulfill its mission and purposes. The institution works systematically and effectively to plan, provide, oversee, evaluate, improve, and assure the academic quality and integrity of its academic programs and the credits and degrees awarded. The institution sets a standard of student achievement appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded and develops the systematic means to understand how and what students are learning and to use the evidence obtained to improve the academic program. (*The Academic Program*, statement of the standard.)

The institution offering multiple academic programs ensures that all programs meet or exceed the basic quality standards of the institution and that there is a reasonable consistency in quality among them. The institution provides sufficient resources to sustain and improve its academic programs (4.4).

Through its system of academic administration and faculty participation, the institution demonstrates an effective system of academic oversight, assuring the quality of the academic program wherever and however it is offered (4.5).

The institution develops, approves, administers, and on a regular cycle reviews its academic programs under institutional policies that are implemented by designated bodies

with established channels of communication and control. Review of academic programs includes evidence of student success and program effectiveness and incorporates an external perspective. Faculty have a substantive voice in these matters (4.6).

The major area of concentration affords the student the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills in a specific disciplinary or clearly articulated interdisciplinary area above the introductory level through properly sequences course work or competencies... Through the major or concentration, the student develops an understanding of the complex structure of knowledge germane to an area of inquiry and its interrelatedness to other areas of inquiry....Graduates demonstrate an in-depth understanding of an area of knowledge or practice, its principal information resources, and its interrelatedness with other areas (4.19).

The institution demonstrates its clear and ongoing authority and administrative oversight for the academic elements of all courses for which it awards institutional credit or credentials. These responsibilities include course content, the specification of required competencies, and the delivery of the instructional program; selection, approval, professional development, and the evaluation of faculty; admission, registration, and retention of students; evaluation of prior learning; and evaluation of student progress, including the awarding and recording of credit. The institution retains, even with contractual, dual enrollment, or other arrangements, responsibility for the design, content, and delivery of courses for which academic credit or degrees are awarded. The institution awarding a joint, dual, or concurrent degree demonstrates that the program is consistent with Commission policy and that the student learning outcomes meet the institution's own standards and those of the Commission (4.32).

Students complete at least one-fourth of their undergraduate credits, including substantial advanced work in the major or concentration, at the institution awarding the degree (4.36).

The institution that advances students through their academic programs through transfer or articulation agreements, prior learning assessment, credit recommendation services, or other extra-institutional arrangements evaluates the effectiveness of such arrangements to ensure student achievement in institutionally offered coursework validates the suitability of the credit awards (4.37).

Based on verifiable information, the institution understands what its students have gained as a result of their education and has useful evidence about the success of its recent graduates. This information is used for planning and improvement, resource allocation, and to inform the public about the institution. Student achievement is at a level Appropriate for the degree awarded. (*Educational Effectiveness*, statement of the standard)

Assessment of learning is based on verifiable statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. The process of understanding what and how students are learning focuses on the course, competency, program, and institutional level. Assessment has the support of the institution's academic and institutional leadership and the systematic involvement of faculty and appropriate staff (8.3).

The institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods and direct and Indirect measures to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students,

employing external perspectives including, as appropriate, benchmarks and peer comparisons (8.5).

The institution integrates the findings of its assessment process and measures of student success into its program evaluation activities and uses the findings to inform its planning and resource allocation and to establish claims the institution makes to students and prospective students (8.10).

Fourth, we note that at the time the Spring 2018 report was prepared, the institution's Chief Business Officer had a direct reporting relationship to the System Vice President of Financial Affairs and a secondary reporting relationship to the institution's President. In the report prepared for the Spring 2019 visit, we ask that UMFK demonstrate that it effectively meets the relevant portion of our standard on *Institutional Resources*: "The institution ensures that it has sufficient professional qualified finance staff, led by a chief financial officer whose primary responsibility to the institution is reflected in the organizational chart" (7.11).

In addition to the matters above related to the One University initiative, the Commission asks that UMFK, in its Spring 2019 report, demonstrate the institution's progress in ensuring the academic integrity of the Rural U Early College and dual enrollment program. We understand that institutional capacity to oversee the program has been challenged by "tremendous growth in both the number of students and size of the geographic area served." We are pleased to note the use of National Alliance for Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) Standards as a way to benchmark the quality of the program, and also are aware that the institution anticipates receiving support for its dual enrollment program through an initiative of the Governor. We ask that the University provide evidence in its Spring 2019 report that it has systems in place to address the following dimensions associated with quality dual enrollment program: approval by UMFK of the syllabi for dual enrollment courses to ensure consistency with the same courses taught on campus; selection and orientation of high school teachers to ensure their qualifications and preparation; professional development for high school teachers, including discipline-specific opportunities; regular site visits by UMFK faculty to program locations; evaluation of high school faculty members' instructional effectiveness; and validation that the achievement of the high school students is comparable to that of UMFK matriculated students completing the same course.

Relevant to these matters are our standards on *The Academic Program and Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*:

The institution retains, even with contractual, dual enrollment, or other arrangements, responsibility for the design, content, and delivery of courses for which academic credit or degrees are awarded (4.32).

Courses and programs offered for credit off campus, through dual enrollment, through distance or correspondence education, or through continuing education, evening, or weekend divisions are consistent with the educational objectives to the institution. Such activities are integral parts of the institution and maintain the same academic standards as courses and programs offered on campus. Faculty and students receive sufficient support for instructional and other needs. Students have ready access to and support in using appropriate learning resources. The institution maintains direct and sole responsibility for the academic quality of all aspects of all programs and assures adequate resources to maintain quality (4.46).

The institution supports teaching and learning through a well-qualified faculty and academic staff, who, in structures and processes appropriate to the institution, collectively

ensure the quality of instruction and support for student learning. (*Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*, statement of standard)

Commission policy requires an interim (fifth-year) report of all institutions on a decennial evaluation cycle. Its purpose is to provide the Commission an opportunity to appraise the institution's current status in keeping with the policy on Periodic Review. In addition to the information included in all interim reports and the items specified for attention in the Commission's letter of April 13, 2016, the University is asked, in Fall 2020, to report on a matter related to our standard on *Institutional Resources*.

We are gratified to learn that the 2017 *University of Maine at Fort Kent Master Plan Report* has informed planning, decision-making, and resource allocation related to the implementation of the One University initiative, and we note the progress the institution has been able to make with respect to its physical facilities funded in part by a \$1 million increase in UMFK's annual state appropriation and tuition increases. Improvements have included roof replacements, technology upgrades, and classroom and laboratory upgrades. Still, there is continuing need, as reflected in the modest increase in Net Asset Value indicator from a low of 57.99 in 2013 to 58.41 in 2017, and we therefore view favorably the potential availability of an additional \$3.7 million for capital improvements should a proposed bond referendum be successful. Through the interim report due in Fall 2020, we ask that UMFK report its continued progress in continuing to address the needs outlined in its Master Plan and any subsequently identified deferred maintenance priorities. Our standard on *Institutional Resources* provides this guidance:

The institution's multi-year financial planning is realistic and reflects the capacity of the institution to depend on identified sources of revenue and ensure the advancement of educational quality and services for students (7.6).

The institution establishes and implements its budget after appropriate consultation with relevant constituencies in accord with realistic overall planning that provides for the appropriate integration of academic, student service, fiscal, development, information, technology, and physical resource priorities to advance its educational objectives (7.13).

Facilities are constructed and maintained in accordance with legal requirements to ensure access, safety, security, and a healthy environment with consideration for environmental and ecological concerns (7.23).

Finally, the scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2025 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once in every ten years.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by University of Maine at Fort Kent and hopes that its preparation has contributed to institutional improvement. It appreciates your cooperation with the effort to provide public assurance of the quality of higher education in New England.

You are encouraged to share this letter with all of the institution's constituencies. It is Commission policy to inform the chairperson of the institution's governing board of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to James Erwin, chair. The institution is free to release information about the report and the Commission's action to

Dr. John Short

August 7, 2018

Page 7

others, in accordance with the enclosed policy on Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions.

If you have any questions about the Commission's actions, please contact Barbara Brittingham, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Angel", written in a cursive style.

David P. Angel

DPA/sjp

Enclosures

cc: James Erwin