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

July 18, 2016

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Dr. James H. Page
Chancellor
University of Maine System
16 Central Street
Bangor, ME 04401-5106

Dear Chancellor Page:

I write to inform you that at its meeting on April 22, 2016, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the report submitted by University of Maine System and voted the following:

that action on the report submitted by University of Maine System regarding its plans to integrate the seven universities in the System into one institution be deferred, pending the receipt of additional information, specifically: clarification about how the System's plans to (1) develop multi-institutional academic programs and (2) develop a single financial management structure for the System comply with the 2016 *Standards for Accreditation*;

that the requested information be submitted by September 2, 2016 for consideration at the Commission's September 2016 meeting.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The Commission appreciates the report submitted by University of Maine System (UMS) regarding progress on its One University Initiative. We understand that the initiative is based on three foundational elements: (1) strategic unity through campus diversity; (2) administrative reduction and reform; and (3) academic collaboration and integration. It also informs UMS' 2014 Strategic Outcomes document. The report provides some detail about two initiatives underway: development of multi-institutional academic programs and implementation of a unified financial management structure. Before taking action on the report submitted by University of Maine System, however, the Commission seeks further clarification about how these initiatives are compliant with the 2016 *Standards for Accreditation*.

The report submitted by University of Maine System included the System's policy on Administration of Multiple-Campus Degree Programs for AY2016 as well as an Executive Summary describing a multi-institutional baccalaureate program in cybersecurity which we understand is currently operational and has enrolled 60 students. We understand that the System will

likely develop other multi-institutional programs that may involve a "single academic department" that spans several institutions. The material submitted, however, does not provide sufficient detail about the System's plans to provide the Commission with confidence that the proposed model will be compliant with the 2016 *Standards for Accreditation*, specifically:

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. Off-campus, continuing education, distance education, correspondence education, international, evening, and weekend programs are clearly integrated and incorporated into the policy formation, academic oversight, and evaluation system of the institution (3.14).

The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum with its faculty. Faculty have a substantive voice in matters of educational programs, faculty personnel, and other aspects of institutional policy that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise (3.15).

Programs leading to degrees or other awards have a coherent design and are characterized by appropriate breadth, depth, continuity, sequential progression, and synthesis of learning. Coherence is demonstrated through learning goals, structure, and content; policies and procedures for admission, retention, and completion; instructional methods and procedures; and the nature, quality, and extent of student learning and achievement (4.3).

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).

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).

We ask that the System provide clarification about how its plans for multi-institutional programs fulfill the expectations articulated in the standards cited above or, as stated in the preamble to the standards, "are appropriate to higher education, consistent with the institution's mission and purposes, and effective in meeting the intent of the Commission's Standards."

The report submitted by University of Maine System also describes the unified financial structure for the System and notes that a group is working on six "key areas": tuition and fees, the resource allocation model, institutional aid/waivers, reserves, outcomes based funding, and capital project funding. The report includes the System's judgment that the current structure and the contemplated changes do not "conflict" with Standard 7, *Institutional Resources*, but the Commission lacks sufficient information to make that determination. We seek further information about the responsibilities of the campus Chief Business Officer (CBO) to be assured that these are consistent with those typically assigned to a "chief financial officer" as specified in paragraph 7.11 of the *Institutional Resources* standard. The role of the System CFO in relation to the campus CBOs and campus presidents is likewise unclear to us./UMS' report notes that campus presidents will have "considerable (but not complete) autonomy" in allocating resources deployed to their campus but it does not specify what the limits to presidential autonomy will be. In addition, the report notes the expectation that "certain resources will be allocated by function" and by System priorities rather than by campus but it does not specify what those functions are or what role the campuses would have in determining System priorities. Consequently, we do not

yet have assurance that the proposed model would enable each institution to demonstrate that it "preserves and enhances available financial resources sufficient to support its mission (and) manages its financial resources and allocates them in a way that reflects its mission and purposes" (7.4).

The Commission asks that University of Maine System submit the requested information by September 2, 2016. Please send four paper copies and one electronic copy (single, searchable pdf file) to the NEASC offices.

You are encouraged to share this letter with all of the System and Universities' constituencies. It is Commission policy to inform the governing board chairperson of action on the accreditation status of affiliated institutions. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Samuel E. Collins. The System and Universities are free to release information about the report and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with the enclosed policy on Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions.

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

Sincerely,



Patricia Maguire Meservey

PMM/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Samuel E. Collins
Dr. James F. Conneely
Dr. Glenn A. Cummings
Dr. Kathryn A. Foster
Dr. Susan J. Hunter
Dr. Raymond Joseph Rice
Dr. John Short
Mr. Stuart G. Swain



**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

3 Burlington Woods, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514
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**Public Disclosure of Information
About Affiliated Institutions**

The following policy governs the release of information regarding the status of affiliated colleges and universities by institutions and by the Commission.

**1. Release of Information by Institutions Regarding Their Accreditation
Following Commission Action**

At the conclusion of the evaluation process institutions are encouraged to make publicly available information about their accreditation status including the findings of team reports and any obligations or requirements established by Commission action, as well as any plans to address stated concerns. Because of the potential to be misleading, institutions are asked not to publish or otherwise disseminate excerpts from these materials.

While the Commission does not release copies of self-studies, progress reports, evaluation reports, or other documents related to the accreditation of individual institutions, it believes it to be good practice for institutions to make these materials available, in their entirety, after notification of Commission action.

While the Commission does not initiate public release of information on actions of show cause or deferral, if such information is released by the institution in question or is otherwise made public, the Commission will respond to related inquiries and may issue a public statement.

If an institution releases or otherwise disseminates information which misrepresents or distorts its accreditation status, the institution will be notified and asked to take corrective action publicly correcting any misleading information it may have disseminated, including but not limited to the accreditation status of the institution, the contents of evaluation reports, and the Commission actions with respect to the institution. Should it fail to do so, the Commission, acting through its President, will release a public statement in such form and content as it deems desirable providing correct information. This may include release of notification letters sent by the Commission to the institution, and/or a press release.

_____ College (University) is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.

Inquiries regarding the accreditation status by the Commission should be directed to the administrative staff of the institution. Individuals may also contact:

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
 New England Association of Schools and Colleges
 3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514
 (781) 425 7785
 E-Mail: cihe@neasc.org

Accreditation by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education has reference to the institution as a whole. Therefore, statements like "fully accredited" or "this program is accredited by the Commission" or "this degree is accredited by the Commission" are incorrect and should not be used.

3. Published Statement on Candidate Status

An institution granted Candidate for Accreditation status must use the following statement whenever it makes reference to its affiliation with the New England Association:

_____ College (University) has been granted Candidate for Accreditation status by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. Candidacy for

Accreditation is a status of affiliation with the Commission which indicates that the institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward accreditation.

Candidacy is not accreditation nor does it assure eventual accreditation.

Inquiries regarding the status of an institution affiliated with the Commission should be directed to the administrative staff of the college or university. Individuals may also contact:

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
 New England Association of Schools and Colleges
 3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514
 (781) 425 7785
 E-Mail: cihe@neasc.org

4. Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions by the Commission

The Commission publishes the following information about member and candidate institutions on its website:

- For institutions whose candidacy or accreditation has been withdrawn, the date of, and reasons for, withdrawal.

The Commission recognizes that, to be fully understood, information about the accredited status of institutions must be placed within the context of the policies and procedures of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. In responding to inquiries, the Commission will endeavor to do so.

The Commission does not generally provide information about deferments of action on candidate or accreditation status, or show-cause orders. However, if such information is released by the institution in question, the Commission will respond to related inquiries and may issue its own statement.

Adverse actions (placement of an institution on probation, denial of candidate status or accreditation, and withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation) are communicated when the decision becomes final (i.e., when the institution does not appeal or when the appeals process is completed and the decision is upheld). The Commission, at its discretion, may make the adverse action public before the decision is final or the appeal is completed. In so doing, the Commission will provide information about the appeal process.

5. Public Disclosure of Institutional Actions

Within 30 days after the action on accreditation status is taken, the Commission will notify the Secretary of Education, New England state higher education officers, appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public. Such actions include:

A final decision to:

Grant candidacy or accreditation

Continue an institution in accreditation

Deny or withdraw the candidacy or accreditation of an institution

Place an institution on probation

Approve substantive change (e.g., moving to a higher degree level)

A decision by an accredited or candidate institution to voluntarily withdraw from affiliation with the Commission.

November 1998

September 2001

April 2010

September 2011

Editorial Changes, March 2014

April 2015