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COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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October 3, 2016

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 of September 23, 2016, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the report submitted by the University of Maine System and took the following action:

that the report submitted by the University of Maine System be accepted;

that the University of Maine System (System) be informed that while the current structure, which includes the campus-based "Chief Business Officer" reporting directly to the System Chief Financial Officer with an indirect reporting relationship to the respective University President, is not consistent with the Commission's standard on *Institutional Resources*, the Commission will take no further action at this time on the matter;

that the System be informed that it appears to the Commission that the System's contemplated addition of more multi-institutional academic programs could lead to a situation in which the System Chief Academic Officer would function as the Chief Academic Officer for several, if not all, of the Universities in the System, at least for the multi-campus programs, a situation which the Commission would not find satisfactory;

that the System and its Universities be informed that any additional multi-campus programs would be considered a substantive change, subject to prior Commission approval;

that the Chancellor of the University and a representative sample of Presidents within the System be invited to meet with the Commission at one of its Spring 2017 meetings.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

The report submitted by the University of Maine System was accepted because it was responsive to the request in our letter of July 18, 2016. The Commission commends the University of Maine System and the seven Universities within the System for thinking creatively in grappling with the demographic and economic realities of Maine as they affect the seven institutions and the System that encompasses them.

The Commission appreciates the important and legitimate role that the System has in rationalizing the budget planning and development process, as well as the System's responsibilities to oversee the seven Universities on behalf of the Board of Trustees. However, the current structure, in which the campus-based "Chief Business Officers" report directly to the System Chief Financial Officer with an indirect reporting relationship to their respective University President, is not consistent with our standard on *Institutional Resources*, which specifies that the "institution ensures that it has sufficient professionally qualified finance staff, led by a chief financial officer whose primary responsibility to the institution is reflected in the organizational chart" (7.11). The Commission takes no further action about this matter at this time because we understand that discussion of the One University initiative continues, and that further changes toward what was previously described as "one accreditation" for the seven currently separate institutions may be forthcoming. In addition, the Commission understands that those implementing this arrangement are acting in good faith, and that individuals can make arrangements work well in the spirit of the *Standards for Accreditation* even when the "paper" is inconsistent with the Standards. The Commission also finds that this situation will need to be resolved in the longer run by changes within the System to ensure consistency with Commission Standards.

The Commission is also concerned about the contemplated addition of more multi-institutional academic programs. We applaud the fact that the System and its separate institutions are contemplating further cooperation to ensure that students enrolled in any of the Universities have as many academic options as reasonably possible. We understand that each of the current programs is governed by a steering committee with representation from the participating campuses. However, it is not clear to us who the responsible chief academic officer is for each of the multi-institutional programs. While a limited number of such programs may be able to function within such organizational structures, at least in the short run, we find that the contemplated expansion of programs offered by multiple separate Universities will likely lead, in the longer run, to the System's Chief Academic Officer in effect becoming the Chief Academic Officer for individual Universities, at least where programs of multiple campuses are involved. Such a situation would not be satisfactory to the Commission. Except as noted below, the Commission takes no further action at this time because the planning and conversation among the System and the separately accredited Universities regarding One University continues. Our standards on *Organization and Governance* and *The Academic Program* are pertinent to that continuing planning and conversation:

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).

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 (4.6).

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).

So that the Commission can monitor the further development of multi-institutional programs within the System, we ask that any further programs to be offered by more than one separately accredited University within the System be first approved by the Commission under its Policy on Substantive Change (enclosed), and that the request for such substantive changes be accompanied by an explanation of the existing multi-institutional programs of the participating institutions, along with the number of participating faculty and number of enrolled students for each program.

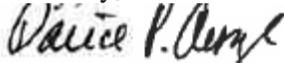
Finally, your offer, communicated orally to Commission staff, to meet with the Commission was much appreciated, and we accept that invitation by asking to meet with you and a representative sample of University of Maine institutional Presidents at either our April 2017 or June 2017 meeting. Commission staff will work with you to find a mutually satisfactory date. We appreciate your continuing communication with the Commission and its staff and look forward to meeting with you and your colleagues in the coming months.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by the University of Maine System and hopes that its preparation has contributed to further planning. We appreciate 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 System's constituencies. It is Commission policy to inform the chairperson of the institutions' governing board of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Sam Collins. The System and the seven Universities are free to release information about the report and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

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

Sincerely,



David Angel

DA/sjp

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Samuel E. Collins
Dr. James F. Conneely, University of Maine at Augusta
Dr. Glenn A. Cummings, University of Southern Maine
Dr. Kathryn A. Foster, University of Maine at Farmington
Dr. Susan J. Hunter, University of Maine
Dr. Sue Ann Huseman, University of Maine at Machias
Dr. Raymond Joseph Rice, University of Maine at Presque Isle
Dr. John Short, University of Maine at Fort Kent