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COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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August 24, 2017

Dr. James H. Page  
Chancellor  
University of Maine System  
267 Estabrooke Hall  
15 Estabrooke Drive  
Orono, ME 04469

Dear Chancellor Page:

I write to inform you that at its meeting of June 9, 2017, 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 System be asked to report in Spring 2018 on how it has resolved:

1. the issue of the Chief Business Officer for each University in the System reporting primarily to the System rather than to the institutional President and how the resolved reporting relationship has been operationalized in the use of the Unified Budget Implementation Plan;
2. policies regarding collaborative programs involving two or more institutions in the System, ensuring they are consistent with the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation*;

that the University of Maine System and Universities within the System be reminded to submit a substantive change request for any further multi-institutional collaborative programs or any programming that has the potential of involving the System in the oversight and decision-making of academic programs beyond single-campus programs;

that the University of Maine at Farmington be notified that the potential focused evaluation referenced in our letter of April 3, 2017, will not be scheduled.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The report submitted by the University of Maine System was accepted because it was responsive to the request in our letter of October 3, 2016. The Commission commends the System for its clear and candid report addressing the matters requested by the Commission. The Commission has developed an understanding of the demographic and financial challenges of the University of Maine System and its six Universities, and appreciates the clear commitment on the part of the System, the Board of Trustees, and the six Universities to serve the people of Maine through high-quality education offered in a manner consistent with the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation*. We are pleased to learn that the report of Aims McGuinness (NCHEMS) has proven useful to the System and the six Universities in the System in addressing the two above-referenced issues. The Commission takes favorable note of the candor and cooperation with which the System communicates with the Commission and its staff.

We ask that the System provide an update in Spring 2018 about two matters related to our standards on *Institutional Resources*, *Organization and Governance*, and *The Academic Program*.

The Commission takes favorable note of the development of a unified budget arrangement, giving the System, Board of Trustees, and the six Universities a more rationalized means of resource allocation. At the same time, the Commission earlier expressed its concern that the model in use by the System in which each University's chief financial officer (Chief Business Officer, in System parlance) reports directly to the System, with an indirect reporting line to the institutional chief executive officer, was not consistent with the Commission's 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). We appreciate the initiative of the System to re-examine the reporting relationship perhaps along the lines suggested in the McGuinness report and look forward to learning in the Spring 2018 report how the System has resolved the issue of reporting relationships and operationalized the new arrangement in the use of the Unified Budget Implementation Plan.

The Commission understands the intention of the System to increase opportunities for students through means that will allow Universities to offer degree programs with other institutions in the System. We applaud the goals of maximizing: access, efficient use of human and financial resources, affordability, shared branding, and the potential for a culture of collaboration. However, as noted in our letter of October 3, 2016, the Commission has been concerned that the 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, at least for some or for all of the multi-campus collaborative programs. We appreciate the System's response that it will "develop methodologies and accompanying documentation to demonstrate adherence to the Commission's Standards," and we look forward to learning of the plans in this regard.

Finally, consistent with our letter of October 3, 2016, we remind the System and Universities that any additional collaborative programs or any programming that has the potential of involving the System in the oversight and decision-making of academic programs beyond single campus programs be considered a substantive change. This is consistent with our standards on *Organization and Governance* and *The Academic Program*:

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 wherever 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. 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).

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).

In its letter of April 3, 2017 to Kathryn A. Foster, President of the University of Maine at Farmington (UMP), the Commission informed the University that depending on the outcome of the meeting referenced in this letter, the Commission might schedule a focused evaluation to address the extent to which the One University undertaking poses a threat to UMF's ability to demonstrate it meets the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation*. Based on the outcomes of the meeting referenced in this letter, the Commission will not be scheduling that focused evaluation, a decision that will also be communicated directly to the institution.

The Commission is gratified by your continuing communication with Commission staff regarding the One University initiative, and encourages the continuation of that communication.

Finally, the Commission understands that the One University initiative continues to develop and notes that in the spirit of promoting communication, either the Commission or the System and its Universities may request an advisory visit or additional reports or another meeting with the Commission.

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.

The Commission appreciated the opportunity to meet with you, James R. Erwin, Chair, Board of Trustees; Robert Neely, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs; Ryan Low, Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance; Susan J. Hunter, President, University of Maine; and Raymond Joseph Rice, President and Provost, University of Maine at Presque Isle.

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 James R. Erwin. The System and the six 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, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



David P. Angel

DPA/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. James R. Erwin, University of Maine System, Board Chair  
Dr. Robert Neely, University of Maine System, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
Mr. Ryan Low, University of Maine System, Chief Financial Officer  
Dr. Kathryn A. Foster, President, University of Maine at Farmington  
Dr. Susan J. Hunter, President, University of Maine  
Dr. Sue Ann Huseman, Interim President, University of Maine at Machias  
Dr. Raymond Joseph Rice, Interim President, University of Maine at Presque Isle  
Dr. John Short, President, University of Maine at Fort Kent  
Dr. Rebecca Wyke, President, University of Maine at Augusta