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JEFFERY J. MCMAHAN (2022)
Burlington, VT

PEGGY NEWELL (2022)
Harvard University

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

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

Vice President of the Commission
CAROL L. ANDERSON
canderson@neche.org

Vice President of the Commission
LAURA M. GAMBINO
lgambino@neche.org

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

Vice President of the Commission
AARON PERKUS
aperkus@neche.org

May 13, 2020

Mr. Dannel P. Malloy
Chancellor
University of Maine System
267 Estabrooke Hall, 15 Estabrooke Drive
Orono, ME 04469

Dear Chancellor Malloy:

I write to inform you that at its meeting on April 23, 2020, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the report submitted by the University of Maine System and voted the following:

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

that as specified in our letter of March 13, 2019, the report prepared for the substantive change request from the University of Maine System that the Commission accredit the System in lieu of the six separately accredited universities:

1. demonstrate how the System meets the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation*;
2. outline how and under what timeline it will further integrate to fulfill its mission;

that the report pay particular attention to:

1. internal governance of the System, consistent with the Commission's standard on *Organization and Governance*;
2. arrangements with specialized accreditors to prevent disruptions for students in these programs.

The report submitted by the University of Maine System was accepted because it was generally responsive to the request made by the Commission in its letter of May 10, 2019. The Commission is gratified to learn of the commitment of the University of Maine System and its Universities to pursue Unified Accreditation as a means of enhancing service to the State of Maine. The appointment of the Academic and

Student Affairs/Advising Committee and the Finance, Administration, and Student Support Services Committee, along with the Unified Accreditation Coordinating Council, demonstrates a comprehensive approach to preparing the substantive change request that the Commission anticipates reviewing at its June 2020 retreat. We are also gratified to learn of the work of the Faculty Senate/Assembly leaders to consider “an appropriate System-wide academic/shared governance model.”

As noted in our letter of March 13, 2019, the substantive change request should demonstrate how the University of Maine System meets the Commission’s *Standards for Accreditation* as well as outline how and under what timeline the System will further integrate to fulfill its mission. The future orientation is consistent with the comments in the current report from the System that while there are currently some multi-campus programs, joint appointments between campuses, and important connections with Maine businesses, “more are needed” to meet “the State of Maine’s public mission for higher education.” The Commission understands that the further integration will necessarily take time.

While, as noted, the report must demonstrate that the System meets each of the Commission’s *Standards for Accreditation*, we draw your attention to two particular issues related to our standards on *Organization and Governance* and *Students*.

The first issue is the Internal Governance section of our standard on *Organization and Governance*. We concur with the report that more joint appointments and multi-university academic programs are key to System accreditation being able to fulfill its promise for the public universities to better serve the people and the economy of Maine. We anticipate this will require that one or more new structures at the System level are operational, and while the entire section on Internal Governance is pertinent, we draw your attention in particular to these paragraphs:

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 (see also 4.5) (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 (see also 6.2) (3.15).

The system of governance makes provisions for consideration of student views and judgments in those matters in which students have a direct and reasonable interest (3.16).

Through its system of board and internal governance, the institution ensures the appropriate consideration of relevant perspectives; decision-making aligned with expertise and responsibility; and timely action on institutional plans, policies, curricular change, and other key considerations (3.17).

Second, we note the significant number of programs among the Universities that have specialized (or programmatic) accreditation, and while we are gratified to see that the System and its Universities have undertaken to ensure that accreditation of the System will not adversely affect program accreditations, we concur with the observation that the “matter merits continued

attention.” We remind you of the expectation in the statement of our standard on *Students*, that

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 Commission decisions regarding public systems of higher education and of accredited institutions. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Mr. James R. Erwin. 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,



David Quigley

DQ/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. James R. Erwin
Dr. Eric Brown, University of Maine at Farmington
Dr. Glenn A. Cummings, University of Southern Maine
Dr. Joan Ferrini-Mundy, University of Maine
Dr. Raymond Joseph Rice, University of Maine at Presque Isle
Dr. John Short, University of Maine at Fort Kent
Dr. Rebecca Wyke, University of Maine at Augusta