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COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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February 10, 2016

Dr. Joseph Bertolino
President
Lyndon State College
1001 College Road, P.O. Box 919
Lyndonville, VT 05851

Dear President Bertolino:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on November 19, 2015 the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Lyndon State College and voted to take the following action:

that the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Lyndon State College be accepted;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2020 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2020 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in:

- 1) continuing to implement its integrated enrollment management plan;
- 2) assuring sufficient resources, faculty, and staff to support its academic programs and student services to enhance retention and persistence to graduation.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Lyndon State College was accepted because it responded to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letters of April 7, 2011 and November 7, 2013, addressed each of the eleven standards, and included a reflective essay on student learning and success.

The Commission commends Lyndon State College (LSC) for its thorough, candid interim report that provides evidence of the College's commitment to its mission "to prepare every student for personal and professional success" during a time of significant change and challenge for the institution. We note that, since the comprehensive evaluation, LSC has experienced changes in

senior leadership, including the appointment of a new president and the retirement or resignation of the provost, dean of administration, dean of advancement, and registrar. The College also experienced a significant downturn in enrollment, and lost TRIO funding after 30 consecutive years of such support. We commend Lyndon State College for its “Yankee ingenuity” in responding to these challenges. We take favorable note of the establishment of an Enrollment Management Task Force, the appointment of an Associate Dean/Associate Provost for Enrollment Management and Institutional Research, the realignment of faculty assignments, and the reorganization of Student Affairs to offer comprehensive services including admissions, financial aid, and the First-Year Experience program. We note that the College is appealing the loss of its TRIO funding and that it also committed to a fundraising campaign to underwrite the ongoing support for student services should the appeal not be successful. We are pleased to learn of the progress that has been made with respect to the assessment of learning outcomes in the general education unit and appreciate LSC’s candid discussion of the challenges that have arisen during this process. We understand the College anticipates stability in the senior administration and enhancements to technology will enable further progress in the future.

The reflective essay submitted by Lyndon State College discusses student success as reflected in placement rates, retention efforts, and the assessment of student learning. We take favorable note of LSC’s overall high placement rate – 94% of graduates are either working or continuing their education six months after graduation – and the “consistently strong to excellent” licensure passage rates of graduates in the College’s education and exercise science programs. Graduation rates of baccalaureate students increased from 30% in 2011 to 40% in 2014, whereas the rates for associate degree students have been more “sporadic,” 42% in 2012, 18% in 2013 and 40% in 2014. We understand that assessment of student learning is conducted cyclically under the Vermont State College system-wide Program Review and Continuous Improvement Process; the first five-year cycle is scheduled for completion in AY2016. LSC faculty are engaged in a variety of pedagogical innovations aimed at effective learning such as the flipped classroom, experiential education, and varying time blocks for course delivery. The College can take pride in its focused attention to first-generation and under-prepared students; notable initiatives include the Red Flag Committee, a “cross-unit, collaborative system” to assist students with the registration process, the Early Promise Program, and the comprehensive services provided by the Academic Support Center.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2020 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. The items the Commission asks to be given special emphasis within the self-study prepared for the comprehensive evaluation are matters related to our standards on *Students*, *Financial Resources*, and *Faculty*.

We are pleased to learn of LSC’s cohesive enrollment management system with the commitment that “everyone at Lyndon is an enrollment manager.” The College’s report highlights strategies the institution will implement to address its enrollment challenges, including initiatives to increase enrollment and enhance retention. The Fall 2020 self-study will afford the institution an opportunity to update the Commission on its continued success in implementing its enrollment management plan, as expressed in our standard on *Students*:

Consistent with its mission, the institution sets and achieves realistic goals to enroll a student body that is broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve and addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity among its students (6.1).

The institution demonstrates its ability to admit students who can be successful in the institution’s academic program, including specifically recruited populations. It ensures a

systematic approach to providing accessible and effective programs and services designed to provide opportunities for enrolled students to be successful in achieving their academic goals. The institution provides students with information and guidance regarding opportunities and experiences that may help ensure their academic success (6.5).

We appreciate the College's candid discussion of its enrollment challenges and acknowledge the "resilience, adaptive management and prioritized investment" that have characterized the institution's response to those challenges. We understand LSC has adopted a "flexible budgeting strategy" and an inclusive budget planning process to inform the campus community and solicit ideas. We are gratified to learn that the College has been able to allocate funds in FY2015 to hire five new faculty, improve student financial services, renovate facilities, improve the technology infrastructure, and implement recommendations from program reviews. We look forward to learning, in Fall 2020, of the College's continued success in securing sufficient resources to support its academic programs and services to enhance student retention and persistence to graduation. This section of the report should be informed by our standards on *Financial Resources, Students and Faculty*:

The institution preserves and enhances available financial resources sufficient to support its mission. It manages its financial resources and allocates them in a way that reflects its mission and purposes. It demonstrates the ability to respond to financial emergencies and unforeseen circumstances (9.1).

The institution offers an array of student services appropriate to its mission and the needs and goals of its students, recognizing the variations in services that are appropriate at the main campus, at off-campus locations, and for programs delivered electronically as well as the differences in circumstances and goals of students pursuing degrees. In all cases, the institution provides academic support services appropriate to the student body. The institution's faculty and professional staff collectively have sufficient interaction with students outside of class to promote students' academic achievement and provide academic and career guidance. In providing services, in accordance with its mission and purposes, the institution adheres to both the spirit and intent of equal opportunity and its own goals for diversity (6.11).

There are an adequate number of faculty whose time commitment to the institution is sufficient to assure the accomplishment of class and out-of-class responsibilities essential for the fulfillment of institutional mission and purposes. Responsibilities of teaching faculty include instruction and the systematic understanding of effective teaching/learning processes and outcomes in courses and programs for which they share responsibility; additional duties may include such functions as student advisement, academic planning, and participation in policy-making, course and curricular development, research, and institutional governance (5.3).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Lyndon State College and hopes that its preparation has contributed to institutional improvement. It appreciates your cooperation in 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 Ms. Martha O'Connor. The institution is 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.

Dr. Joseph Bertolino
February 10, 2016
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If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Barbara Brittingham,
President of the Commission.

Sincerely,


Patricia Maguire Meservey

PMM/sjp

Enclosures

cc: Ms. Martha O'Connor



**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.

2. Published Statement on Accredited Status

The Commission asks that one of the following statements be used for disclosing on its website and in catalogues, brochures, advertisements, etc., that the institution is accredited.

An institution may wish to include within its website, catalogue or other material a statement which will give the consuming public a better idea of the meaning of regional accreditation. When that is the case, the Commission requests that the following statement be used in its entirety:

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

Accreditation of an institution of higher education by Commission indicates that it meets or exceeds criteria for the assessment of institutional quality periodically applied through a peer review process. An accredited college or university is one which has available the necessary resources to achieve its stated purposes through appropriate educational programs, is substantially doing so, and gives reasonable evidence that it will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Institutional integrity is also addressed through accreditation.

Accreditation by the Commission is not partial but applies to the institution as a whole. As such, it is not a guarantee of every course or program offered, or the competence of individual graduates. Rather, it provides reasonable assurance about the quality of opportunities available to students who attend the institution.

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

The shorter statement that an institution may choose for announcing its accredited status follows:

_____ 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
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3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514
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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:

- Name of the institution
- Accreditation status (member or candidate)
- Address
- Phone and fax numbers
- CEO name and title
- Degree levels awarded
- Dates of initial accreditation (or candidacy), last review and next review
- Locations of off-campus instructional sites

The Commission may also publish on its website a public statement about an action taken regarding a member or candidate institution when further information about the action and the Commission's reasons for taking the action would be helpful to members of the public.

Upon inquiry, the Commission will release the following information about affiliated institutions:

- The date of initial accreditation and/or when candidacy was granted;
- The date and nature (comprehensive or focused) of the most recent on-site evaluation and subsequent Commission action on the institution's accredited status;
- The date and nature (comprehensive or focused) of the next scheduled on-site evaluation;
- Submission date and action taken on the most recent written report required by the Commission;
- The extent of, or limitations on, the status of affiliation;
- In cases of adverse action (denial or withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation, placing an institution on probation), the Commission's reasons for that status and, in the case of probation, its plans to monitor the institution. The Commission, in consultation with the institution, will prepare a written statement incorporating the above information. The Commission reserves the right to make the final determination of the nature and content of the statement. The institution will also be offered the opportunity to make its official comment; if the institution does make an official comment, the comment will be made available by the Commission.

- 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