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June 8, 2006

Ms. Barbara E. Murphy  
President  
Johnson State College  
337 College Hill  
Johnson, VT 05656-9464

Dear President Murphy:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on April 21, 2006, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Johnson State College:

that Johnson State College be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit a report in Fall 2008 describing its progress in:

1. continuing the implementation of the strategic plan;
2. developing comprehensive master planning in the academic area, with related planning in enrollment management and assessment;
3. developing the capacity to support its planning and evaluation activities;

that the institution submit a fifth-year interim report for consideration in Fall 2010;

that, in addition to providing the information included in all interim reports, the College give emphasis to its success in:

1. using the results of planning to inform budgeting;
2. implementing the results of its planning in the area of assessment;
3. continuing to enhance its capacity in planning and evaluation;
4. managing the enrollment of the institution consistent with its mission; and

5. updating policy and procedural manuals;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2015.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

Johnson State College is continued in accreditation because it substantially meets the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation*. The institution has as one of its chief assets a highly dedicated faculty and staff who, along with institutional leadership, have established the College as being highly student-centered in its operations. Despite a low level of financial support from the state of Vermont, Johnson State College has created an environment of care and pride for an institution deeply committed to its mission of creating opportunity and access along with effective governance structures, high standards, and mutual respect.

Through the institutional report in Fall 2008, the Commission looks forward to learning of the College's success in matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *Programs and Instruction*. The portions of these standards cited throughout this letter are from the Commission's 1992 *Standards for Accreditation*, reflecting the dates of the comprehensive evaluation, Fall 2005. The institution is reminded that for any reports or visits in 2006 or later it should seek guidance from the 2006 *Standards for Accreditation*. Several of the items specified for attention are addressed more fully in the 2006 standards.

The College has created Design for Our Future: 2003-2006 as its "emergent strategic plan." With a follow-on document in 2004, the institution has identified critical areas needing its attention; additional work will need to ensure that the institution has a set of priorities among the eleven general headings and that responsibility for action is clearly identified so that at the time of the report in Fall 2008, the institution can assess its own progress as specified in our standard on *Planning and Evaluation*:

The institution undertakes both short- and long-term planning, including candid and realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. It responds to financial and other contingencies, establishes feasible priorities, and develops a realistic course of action to achieve identified objectives. Institutional decision-making, particularly the allocation of resources, is consistent with planning priorities (2.3).

With the general strategic directions outlined in the above-referenced plan, the College will be well served to follow with complementary planning in the areas of academics, assessment, and enrollment management. These areas are, of course, linked and together ensure that planning is "systematic, comprehensive, broad-based, integrated, and appropriate to the institution" (2.1). Noting the particularly centrality of academic planning, we remind the institution of this portion of our standard on *Programs and Instruction*:

The institution undertakes academic planning and evaluation to achieve and, where possible, to enhance the achievement of program objectives. These activities are realistic and take into account stated goals and available resources. The institution allocates human, technological, financial, and physical resources on the basis of its academic plans, needs, and objectives. It recognizes and takes account of the increased demands on resources made by programs offered at a higher degree level (4.4).

The above planning and evaluation activities that complete the feedback loop require resources, and we are gratified to see the institutional acknowledgement that greater capacity will be needed in these areas. Currently, for example, there is no one responsible for institutional research. Our standard on *Planning and Evaluation* is relevant here: "The institution allocates sufficient resources for its planning and evaluation efforts" (2.2), and "The institution systematically

collects and uses data necessary to support its planning efforts and to enhance institutional effectiveness” (2.3).

Commission policy requires a fifth-year interim report of all institutions on a decennial evaluation cycle. Its purpose is to provide the Commission an opportunity to appraise the institution’s current status in keeping with the policy on Periodic Review. The items identified for particular attention are related to our standards on *Mission and Purposes*, *Planning and Evaluation*, *Programs and Instruction*, *Financial Resources*, and *Integrity*.

Through the interim report, the institution is asked to address its success in using the results of planning to inform budgeting. The development of the academic, enrollment, and assessment plans – along with a likely renewal of the institution’s strategic plan – should provide the basis for informed budget decisions, consistent with our standard on *Financial Resources*:

The institution establishes and implements its budget after appropriate consultation with relevant constituencies in accord with realistic overall planning that provides for the appropriate integration of academic, student service, fiscal, development, and physical resource priorities to advance its educational objectives (9.3).

Also, through the interim report, the Commission looks forward to learning of the institution’s success in implementing its assessment plan. The Commission’s principal interest in assessment is the generation of information useful for improvement. With that goal in mind, the following guidance is provided about assessment at the undergraduate and graduate levels from our standard on *Programs and Instruction*:

Graduates successfully completing an undergraduate program demonstrate competence in written and oral communication in English; the ability for scientific and quantitative reasoning, for critical analysis and logical thinking; and the capability for continuing learning. They also demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific, historical, and social phenomena, and a knowledge and appreciation of the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of humankind. In addition, graduates demonstrate an in-depth understanding of an area of knowledge or practice and of its interrelatedness with other areas (4.19).

Students who successfully complete a graduate program demonstrate that they have acquired the knowledge and developed the skills that are identified as the program’s objectives (4.25).

The interim report will also afford Johnson State College with the opportunity to further update the Commission on how it is enhancing its capacity in planning and evaluation. By including this item in the interim report as well as the report due in 2008, the Commission recognizes that the development of such capacity is not a matter to be solved in the immediate future but rather one that will require sustained institutional attention to develop the capacity and put it to use benefiting the institution.

Johnson State College has identified enrollment management as a primary concern over the next several years, due to a combination of factors including a relatively low level of state financial support, a student population of limited financial means, and demographic projections in the state of Vermont. Successful enrollment management includes ensuring that the institution has the appropriate array of academic programs, a particular challenge in a small, modestly funded institution. The College will be challenged to assure through admissions and retention that it is successful with “the students it seeks to serve” (1.1), while preserving and enhancing the quality of the academic programs, including ensuring, for example, when programs are discontinued that students “may complete their education with a minimum of disruption” (4.6). Recruitment efforts that more systematically address the potential enrollment of transfer and graduate students

are planned as the institution “endeavors to develop a student body which as a whole is broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve” (4.33). Through the interim report, the Commission looks forward to learning of the institution’s success in its continuing effort to ensure the level of enrollment needed to ensure financial and academic program stability, and the successful fulfillment of its mission.

Finally, we concur with the team’s observation that ensuring that policies and procedures are updated and available to the campus community is important – and often challenging in a small institution. We look forward to the interim report providing an update on the institution’s success in this area, as informed by our standards on *Integrity*: “The institution has established and publicizes clear policies ensuring institutional integrity” (11.7) and *Organization and Governance*: “The board, administration, staff, and faculty understand and fulfill their respective roles as set forth in the institution’s official documents. The institution’s system of governance involves the participation of all appropriate constituencies and includes regular communication among them” (3.2).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2015 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years.

You will note the Commission has specified no length or term of accreditation. Accreditation is a continuing relationship that is reconsidered when necessary. Thus, while the Commission has indicated the timing of the next comprehensive evaluation, the schedule should not be unduly emphasized because it is subject to change.

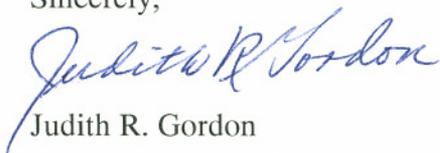
The Commission expressed its appreciation for the self-study prepared by the College and for the evaluation report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you and Dr. Mary Grant, team chair.

You are encouraged to share this letter and the team’s complete report with all of the College’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 Mr. Gary Moore. The institution is free to release information about the evaluation and the Commission’s action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

The Commission hopes that the evaluation process 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.

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

Sincerely,



Judith R. Gordon

JRG/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Gary Moore  
Visiting Team