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COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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November 2, 2010

RECEIVED

NOV - 8 2010

Office of the President
Johnson State College

Ms. Barbara E. Murphy
President
Johnson State College
337 College Hill
Johnson, VT 05656-9898

Dear President Murphy:

I write to inform you that at its meeting on September 16, 2010, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the fifth-year interim report submitted by Johnson State College and voted to take the following action:

that the fifth-year interim report submitted by Johnson State College be accepted;

that the College submit a report for consideration in Fall 2012 that gives emphasis to the institution's success with developing the external degree program including program structures, assessment and other support systems, and financial resources;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2015 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2015 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in:

1. implementing the 2010-15 Strategic Plan;
2. assessing student learning with particular emphasis on the external degree program;
3. continuing the development and evaluation of the external degree program.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The report submitted by Johnson State College was accepted because it was responsive to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letters of June 8, 2006, January 16, 2009 and April 8, 2010, and because it adequately addressed each of the standards.

The Strategic Plan for 2010-15, grounded in the academic mission, serves as a guide for program and funding decisions. The institution has enhanced its capacity in planning and evaluation to include timelines, measurable benchmarks, assessments of progress, and support from external consultants with strategic and facilities master planning. We commend the College for its work in strengthening the program review process at both the state system and institutional level, and we take note that this effort has now received support from the Davis Educational Foundation. Enrollment planning now includes the strategic use of institutional financial aid to support attaining the College's goals for retention and graduation rates. Post-funding continuation of Title III grant initiatives focus on First-Year student success and new transfer-friendly policies. Finally, Vermont State Colleges' policies and procedures are presented on the institution's website and within the student handbook.

The item the institution is asked to report on in Fall 2012 relates to our standards on *The Academic Program, Faculty, Students* and *Financial Resources.*

With the projected growth of the external degree program (5-10 percent per year), the College plans to develop more comprehensive support systems for course management, assessment, student advising, part-time faculty support, and marketing, including working with employers. Through the 2012 report, we look forward to learning about the College's success with reallocating "resources as necessary to achieve its purposes and objectives" (9.8) with particular attention given to the resources needed to support the external degree program with "systematic and broad-based ... assessment of student learning focused on educational improvement" (4.44), "appropriate integration [of part-time faculty] into the department and institution ... [with] opportunities for faculty development" (5.8), and "an array of student services appropriate to its mission and the needs and goals of its students ... [which] recognizes the variations in services that are appropriate at branch campuses, remote instructional locations, and for programs delivered electronically" (6.8).

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. 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 *Planning and Evaluation* and *The Academic Program.*

In implementing the latest strategic plan, "JSC 2010-2015: A Plan for Access, Engagement & Success," the College intends to engage faculty fully with the ongoing assessment of the implementation of the strategic plan. This will include faculty in providing input into annual evaluations of progress with the strategic plan. As part of the self-study prepared for the 2015 comprehensive evaluation, we welcome analyses of how this implementation has progressed in securing "the participation of individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes" (2.1) and in determining "the effectiveness of its planning and evaluation activities on an ongoing basis ... to further enhance the institution's implementation of its purposes and objectives" (2.7).

With regard to Johnson State College's collaboration with the other Vermont state colleges in implementing academic program reviews at the institution and system level, this review process continues to be revised on an annual basis. Presently, the committee of academic deans is implementing improvements in such areas as revising the rubric used for assessing the quality of academic program learning outcomes, using assessment data to inform changes in teaching and learning, and including end-of-program assessments. As part of the self-study for Fall 2015, we look forward to learning of the impact these improvements have had on the academic program review process, and we also welcome information regarding how this supports the external degree program. Our standard on *The Academic Program* will be informative here:

> The institution develops, approves, administers, and on a regular cycle reviews its degree programs under effective institutional policies that are implemented by designated bodies with established channels of communication and control. Faculty have a substantive voice in these matters (4.8).
>
> The institution's approach to understanding student learning focuses on the course, program, and institutional level. Data and other evidence generated through this approach are considered at the appropriate level of focus, with the results being a demonstrable factor in improving the learning opportunities and results for students (4.45).

Finally, we look forward to an update regarding the projected development of the external degree program. We are particularly interested in information regarding student recruitment, academic advising, and the provision of IT support, each of which calls for considerable collaboration with the Community College of Vermont and others throughout the State of Vermont in developing articulation agreements with specific community colleges, and in creating transfer credit evaluation guidelines. Our standards on *The Academic Program* and *Students* (as noted above), *Library and Other Information Resources,* and *Physical and Technological Resources* should be points of reference here:

> ... The institution ensures that students have available and are appropriately directed to sources of information appropriate to support and enrich their academic work, and that throughout their program students gain increasingly sophisticated skills in evaluating the quality of information sources (7.8).
>
> The institution's physical and technological resources, including classrooms, laboratories, network infrastructure, materials, equipment, and buildings and grounds, whether owned or rented, are commensurate with institutional purposes. They are designed, maintained, and managed at both on- and off-campus sites in a manner that serves institutional needs ... (8.1).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Johnson 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 Mr. Gary W. Moore. The institution is 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,

Mary Jo Maydew

MJM/jm
Enclosure

cc: Mr. Gary W. Moore

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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 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. While the Commission does not release copies of self-studies, other institutional reports, evaluation reports, or notification letters, it believes it to be good practice for institutions to make these materials available after notification of action on their status. Because of the potential to be misleading, institutions are asked not to publish or otherwise disseminate excerpts only from these materials. 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, the Commission will respond to related inquiries.

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 New England Association, acting through its Chief Executive Officer, will release a public statement in such form and content as it deems desirable providing correct information.

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2. Published Statement on Accredited Status

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The Commission does not 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. Also, adverse actions (placement of an institution on probation, denial of candidate status or accreditation, revocation of candidacy and termination of accreditation) are not communicated until the available appeals process is completed.

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 and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. In responding to inquiries, the Commission will endeavor to do so.

The Commission does not release copies of self-studies, progress reports, evaluation reports, or other documents related to the accreditation of individual institutions, but institutions are encouraged to make these materials available, in their entirety, after notification of Commission action.

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 terminate the 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