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COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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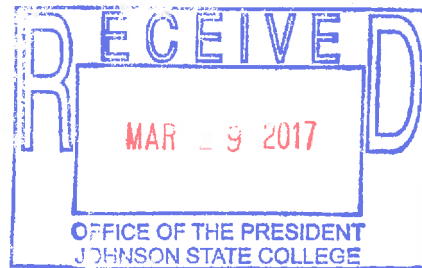
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March 27, 2017

Dr. Elaine Collins
President
Johnson State College
337 College Hill
Johnson, VT 05656-9898



Dear President Collins:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 3, 2017, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the report submitted by Johnson State College regarding its plans to offer Associate in Arts and Bachelor in Fine Arts degree programs in Fine Woodworking and Furniture Design in collaboration with the Vermont Woodworking School and took the following action:

that the report be accepted and the Associate in Arts and Bachelor in Fine Arts degree programs in Fine Woodworking and Furniture Design offered in collaboration with Vermont Woodworking School be encompassed within the institution's accreditation, with an effective date of March 3, 2017;

that a visit to assess implementation of the Fine Woodworking and Furniture Design programs be scheduled for Fall 2018;

that the report prepared in advance of the Fall 2018 site visit give emphasis to the institution's success in:

- 1) implementing the Fine Woodworking and Furniture Design programs with emphasis on any change to the implementation plans that may be required as a result of the merger of Johnson State College and Lyndon State College, including matters related to the academic programs, enrollment, and finances;
- 2) strengthening the Memorandum of Understanding between Johnson State College and the Vermont Woodworking School to include teach-out plans.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The report submitted by Johnson State College was accepted, and the Associate in Arts and Bachelor in Fine Arts degree programs in Fine Woodworking and Furniture Design offered through a collaboration with

Vermont Woodworking School encompassed within the institution's accreditation, because the Commission finds the activity to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation* and relevant Commission policies.

The Commission commends Johnson State College (JSC) for its comprehensive and thoughtful proposal that demonstrates the 62-credit Associate in Arts (A.A.) and 120-credit Bachelor in Fine Arts (B.F.A.) degree programs in Fine Woodworking and Furniture Design offered in collaboration with the Vermont Woodworking School (VWS) are congruent with the College's mission and strategic initiatives. According to the proposal, students will earn 30 credits (48.4%) in the A.A. program through VWS and 32 credits (51.6%) through JSC. Students in the B.F.A. program will earn 51 credits (42.5%) through VWS and 69 credits (57.5%) through JSC. The programs appear to be well-integrated into the institution's governance structure, and we note with approval that JSC retains sole responsibility for the programs, including faculty oversight and approval of the curriculum. We further note positively that, consistent with all programs at JSC, the proposed A.A. and B.F.A. will undergo internal review every five years as part of the Vermont State College's Program Review and Continuous Improvement Process. To further ensure academic quality, the Chair of the Department of Fine Arts and the Academic Dean at JSC worked in collaboration with VWS to align the student learning outcomes in the woodworking programs with those in existing JSC programs, and the assessment of learning outcomes is "tied explicitly to specific assignments and activities." The report assures that the College has a sufficient number of full- and part-time faculty to teach in the woodworking programs, and all faculty either hold terminal degrees or possess other relevant credentials and teaching experience. Finally, students in the woodworking programs will have access to all academic and student support services available through JSC, and the facilities available at the Vermont School of Woodworking include a fully equipped mill shop with professional woodworking machines and equipment to adequately support the A.A. and B.F.A. programs.

In keeping with Commission policy, an on-site evaluation to assess implementation of the Associate in Arts and Bachelor in Fine Arts degree programs in Fine Woodworking and Furniture Design will be scheduled for Fall 2018. A copy of the relevant procedural statement is enclosed for your information and use.

In the report prepared in advance of the Fall 2018 site visit, the institution is asked to give emphasis to two matters related to our standards on *Organization and Governance*, *The Academic Program*, *Students*, and *Institutional Resources*.

We understand from the report that Johnson State College and Lyndon State College are in the process of merging to form a unified institution - Northern Vermont University. This merger will take place "at the executive level" in July 2017 at which time one president, one chief financial officer, one provost, one dean of administration, and one dean of students will preside over both campuses, and the first Northern Vermont University class is scheduled to matriculate in Fall 2018. We look forward, in the report prepared in advance of the Fall 2018 site visit, to an update on the institution's success in implementing the Fine Woodworking and Furniture Design programs with emphasis on any change to the plans that may be required as a result of the merger, including matters related to the academic programs, enrollment, and finances. Our standards on *Organization and Governance*, *The Academic Program*, *Students*, and *Institutional Resources* are pertinent here:

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 (3.14).

The institution undertaking substantive changes (e.g., the initiation of degrees at a higher or lower level, off-campus programs, programs that substantially broaden the scope of the academic offerings, distance learning programs, correspondence education programs, competency- and mastery-based programs, contractual relationships involving courses and programs, academic programs overseas) demonstrates its capacity to undertake and sustain such initiatives and to assure that the new academic programming meets the standards of quality of the institution and the Commission's Standards and policies. In keeping with Commission policy, the institution initiating substantive changes seeks Commission approval prior to implementation. The institution recognizes and takes account of the increased demands on resources made by programs offered at a higher degree level (4.8).

Consistent with its mission, the institution sets and achieves realistic goals to enroll students who are broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve. (Statement of the Standard: *Students*).

The institution's multi-year financial planning is realistic and reflects the capacity of the institution to depend on identified sources of revenue and ensure the advancement of educational quality and services for students (7.6).

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, information, technology, and physical resource priorities to advance its educational objectives (7.13).

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) included in the appendix of the report includes a provision for "severability" and "termination" of the agreement. The MOU does not, however, specify the arrangements that are in place to teach out the A.A. and the B.F.A. degree programs in Fine Woodworking and Furniture Design in the event one or both of the programs is terminated. In keeping with our standards on *Organization and Governance* and *The Academic Program*, we ask that the Fall 2018 report include evidence that the MOU has been updated to include teach-out plans:

The institution using contractual arrangements, consortial or other written agreements involving credits and degrees, the delivery of coursework, the assessment of student achievement, or the recruitment or support of students periodically reviews the effectiveness of such arrangements and negotiates appropriate changes. Consistent with Commission policy, the institution maintains sufficient control over the arrangements to ensure quality in the academic program and services for students and prospective students, including the ability to modify the agreements as needed. Written agreements provide for the termination or phasing out of such arrangements as circumstances warrant, and the institution develops appropriate exit strategies as needed (3.18).

When programs are eliminated or program requirements are changed, the institution makes appropriate arrangements for enrolled students so that they may complete their education with a minimum of disruption (4.9).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Johnson State College and hopes its preparation has contributed to institutional improvement. We appreciate your

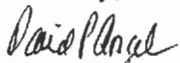
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cooperation with the effort to provide public assurance of the quality of higher education in New England.

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.

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

Sincerely,


David P. Angel

DPA/sjp

Enclosures

cc: Ms. Martha O'Connor