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COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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April 7, 2011

Dr. Carol A. Moore
President
Lyndon State College
PO Box 919
Lyndonville, VT 05851-0919

Dear President Moore:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 3, 2011, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Lyndon State College:

that Lyndon State College be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit a report for consideration in Fall, 2013 that gives emphasis to the institution's success in:

- 1) developing and implementing an integrated enrollment management strategy, with attention to recruitment activities and initiatives designed to enhance student retention and persistence to graduation;
- 2) implementing its revised general education curriculum, including effective mechanisms to assess student learning of the outcomes of the program;

that the College submit a fifth year interim report for consideration in Fall, 2015;

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

- 1) continuing to address the areas specified for attention in the Fall 2013 report;
- 2) implementing its planned academic reorganization;
- 3) generating sufficient revenue to assure the quality of programs and services in light of anticipated reductions to state support and declining enrollment;

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that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall, 2020.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

Lyndon State College is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*. We commend Lyndon State College for the clarity of its mission, which is widely understood by the campus community and which informs the College's decision-making and strategy in all aspects of its work. We note with approval the culture of assessment and continuous improvement that permeates the College, as evidenced by the institution's detailed response to the Student Achievement and Success data forms. We concur with the visiting team that the faculty, staff, and administration of Lyndon State College "consistently exemplify a student-centered approach," and we note with approval the experiential learning opportunities and the strong support programs the College offers to its students. In challenging fiscal times, the institution has effectively managed its library, technological, plant, and fiscal resources to support its core mission and to further institutional improvement. The College has been successful in achieving its goal to be the "institution of access and opportunity for the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont" and is well positioned to continue to do so in the future.

The items the institution is asked to report on in Fall, 2013 are related to our Standards on *Students* and *The Academic Program*.

We concur with the visiting team that Lyndon State College would benefit from the implementation of an "integrated, collaborative" approach to enrollment management that coordinates the good work being done by the offices of admissions, financial aid, athletics, academic advising, and student support services. Demographic projections suggest that reaching the institution's goals for enrollment will be a continuing challenge for the College, as will be improving rates of first-year retention and persistence to graduation. We are pleased to learn that the number of applicants for Fall 2011 has increased and that the College is taking steps to integrate its admissions, advising, and student services functions. We further note with approval the College's initiation of strategies designed to increase enrollment and to improve retention and graduation rates, including a state-supported dual enrollment program and mandatory summer programs for students on academic probation. The Fall 2013 report will afford Lyndon State College the opportunity to update the Commission on its progress in this area, consistent with our standard on *Students*:

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 (6.4).

The institution measures student success, including rates of retention and graduation and other measures of success appropriate to institutional mission. The institution's goals for retention and graduation reflect institutional purposes, and the results are used to inform recruitment and the review of programs and services (6.6).

The Commission is gratified to learn Lyndon State College has completed its review of the general education curriculum and that faculty are developing a plan to implement the new program. We concur with the visiting team that development of this plan provides an excellent

opportunity to “build an assessment plan directly into the design” of the new program. We anticipate being apprized, through the Fall 2013 report, of the College’s success in assuring that it “uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students” (4.50). Our standard on *The Academic Program* provides further guidance concerning the competencies and abilities students are expected to gain through general education:

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, including the skills of information literacy. 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 (4.18).

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. In addition to the information included in all fifth-year reports the College is asked, in Fall, 2015, to report on three matters related to our Standards on *Students*, *The Academic Program*, and *Financial Resources*.

The Commission asks that, in the report submitted for consideration in Fall, 2015, Lyndon State College provide evidence of its continued progress in addressing the issues specified for attention in the Fall 2013 report. We recognize that these matters do not lend themselves to rapid resolution and will require the institution’s continued attention over time. Hence, we ask that further information be provided in the fifth-year report. Our standards on *Students* and *The Academic Program*, cited above, provide guidance for this section of the report.

We understand that Lyndon State College is undertaking an academic reorganization that involves the elimination of some majors and concentrations, the realignment of faculty and staff, the expansion of professional programs, and an analysis of the appropriate role for liberal arts at a College where 83 percent of the students major in a professional field. We are gratified to learn of the widespread participation of faculty, staff, and administrators in this review and look forward to learning, through the Fall 2015 interim report, of College’s success in implementing this reorganization. We remind you of our standard on *The Academic Program*:

The institution’s programs are consistent with and serve to fulfill its mission and purposes (4.1).

The institution undertakes academic planning and evaluation as part of its overall planning and evaluation to enhance the achievement of institutional mission and program objectives. These activities are realistic and take into account stated goals and available resources. The evaluation of existing programs includes an external perspective and assessment of their effectiveness. Additions and deletions of programs are consistent with institutional mission and capacity, faculty expertise, student needs, and the availability of sufficient resources required for the development and improvement of academic programs. The institution allocates resources on the basis of its academic planning, needs, and objectives (4.9).

Both the self-study and the team report note the challenge of generating sufficient revenue to maintain and enhance the quality of the College’s programs and services, given the demographics of the institution’s service region and the expectation that the level of financial support from the

state will continue to be low. Staffing and resource levels, already "lean" in several areas, will be further stretched by the addition of new academic programs. We commend the College's prudent fiscal management, which, during the last five years, has resulted in surpluses that have enabled the College to grow its reserves to \$932,000. Additionally, we are pleased to learn of the institution's success with fundraising, as evidenced by the anticipated successful completion of a \$10 million campaign in December 2011. The Fall 2015 interim report will afford Lyndon State College an opportunity to provide evidence that its "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" (9.3).

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.

You will note that 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 appreciation for the self-study prepared by Lyndon State College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Bruce Berryman and Dr. Cynthia Huggins, team chair, during its deliberations.

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 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 with 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,



Mary Jo Maydew

MJM/srh

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Gary Moore
Visiting team