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- President of the Commission**
BARBARA E. BRITTINGHAM
bbrittingham@neasc.org
- Senior Vice President of the Commission**
PATRICIA M. O'BRIEN, SND
pobrien@neasc.org
- Vice President of the Commission**
CAROL L. ANDERSON
canderson@neasc.org
- Vice President of the Commission**
PAULA A. HARBECKE
pharbecke@neasc.org
- Vice President of the Commission**
IALA KHUDAIRI
tkhudairi@neasc.org

January 26, 2018

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

Dear President Collins:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on November 16, 2017 the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the report submitted by Lyndon State College regarding its instructional location in Lawrence, Massachusetts, as well as the report of the visiting evaluator, and took the following action:

that the report regarding the College's instructional location at Northern Essex Community College, in Lawrence, Massachusetts, be accepted and inclusion of the site within the institution's accreditation be confirmed;

that the site visit to assess implementation of the institution's merger with Johnson State College scheduled for Spring 2019 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the matters specified in our letter of December 7, 2017, the Spring 2019 report provide an update on the Northern Essex Community College location, with particular emphasis on the College's success in:

1. implementing the revised MOU and action plan for the site;
2. resolving issues associated with the transfer of credit between the two institutions.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The Commission accepted the report submitted by Lyndon State College and confirmed inclusion of the instructional location at Northern Essex Community College (NECC) in Lawrence, Massachusetts within the institution's accreditation because the report was responsive to the concerns raised in our letter of July 6, 2016 and provided evidence that the College is implementing the site in a manner consistent with Commission standards and policies.

The Commission commends Lyndon State College (LSC) for its thorough and cogent report. We note with favor the collaborative “creative opportunity” for NECC students with associate degrees to continue their education by enrolling in LSC baccalaureate programs in Visual Communications, Computer Information Systems, and Graphic Design that are designed to meet the workforce needs of the community. We are pleased to learn of the “experienced and responsive” administrators, faculty, and staff who support the programs and note with favor the satisfaction students express with the quality of education and the level of services available to them. We understand that enrollment goals for the programs offered at NECC have not been met and note that the College has chosen to suspend recruitment for the Music Business Industry program. We are gratified to learn that LSC is “more optimistic” about enrollments in the Computer Information Systems and Graphic Design programs and anticipates increasing enrollment from 9 students in Spring 2017 to 11 students in Spring 2018. While the effect on the NECC programs from the merger of Lyndon State College and Johnson State College to become Northern Vermont University is, as noted by the evaluator, “unknown,” we appreciate the College’s statement that no changes are anticipated in the programs offered at NECC as a result of the merger.

The Commission confirms the Spring 2019 site visit to assess implementation of the institution’s merger with Johnson State College to become Northern Vermont University. We refer you to our letter of December 7, 2017 that specifies matters to receive attention in the report prepared in advance of the evaluation, and we ask that the report address two additional matters related to our standards on *The Academic Program* and *Planning and Evaluation*.

We understand that Lyndon State College has revised its MOU with Northern Essex Community College and that major changes to the revised MOU include language regarding the Northern Vermont University merger, clarification of the billing processes, revision of the facility fee structure, and updates to the curriculum maps for the programs. In addition an action plan related to admissions, recruitment, communications, support services, and business processes was developed in July 2017 and will be implemented through Summer 2018. The Spring 2019 report will afford the institution an opportunity to update the Commission on the implementation of the revised MOU and action plan for the NECC site, in keeping with our standards on *The Academic Program* and *Planning and Evaluation*:

If the institution depends on resources outside its direct control (for example, classrooms, information resources, information technology, testing sites), a written agreement ensures the reasonable continued availability of those resources. Clear descriptions of the circumstances and procedures for the use of such resources are readily available to students who require them (4.10).

The institution has a demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning (2.5).

The Commission appreciates the College’s candid acknowledgement that creating a “clean transfer credit report” has been challenging, and we are gratified to learn of the development of a “transfer checklist” to confirm students’ transfer credit as an interim step. We anticipate being apprised in the Spring 2019 report of the institution’s success in resolving issues related to the transfer of credit between Lyndon State College and Northern Essex Community College. Our standard on *The Academic Program* provides guidance here:

The institution protects academic quality and integrity in the acceptance of transfer credit and seeks to establish articulation agreements with institutions from which and to which there is a significant pattern of student transfer. Such agreements are made available to those students affected by them (4.39).

In accepting transfer credit, the institution exercises the responsibility to ensure that students have met its stated learning outcomes of programs at all degree levels. The acceptance of transfer credit does not substantially diminish the proportion of intermediate and advanced coursework in a student's academic program (4.40).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the reports prepared by Lyndon State College and the evaluator and 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.

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

cc: Ms. Martha O'Connor
Visiting evaluator



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3 Burlington Woods, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514

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Procedures for the Substantive Change Evaluation Visit

Commission policy and federal guidelines stipulate that certain types of substantive change require a visit to assess implementation. These include, but are not limited to: moving to the higher degree, establishing a branch campus or additional instructional location, establishing an overseas location, moving to a new location, and undergoing a change in control. The substantive change evaluation provides a means of monitoring the institution's capacity to implement the change at an acceptable level of quality. When the Commission requires a substantive change evaluation, the institution prepares an update on its implementation of the change, and a small team visits the institution to validate the information provided in the update, evaluate the institution's success in implementing the substantive change, and report its findings and recommendations to the Commission. The Commission considers the institutional update, the team report and confidential recommendation, and the institution's response to the team report and takes action.

Notification to the Institution

Several months before the visit, the Commission President sends a reminder to the institution about the upcoming evaluation and works with the chief executive officer on the selection of dates for the visit. Typically, visits to assess a move to the higher degree are two days in length, while visits to assess new U.S. locations may be accomplished in a single day. Depending on the circumstances, such visits may run from morning to night or from noon to noon, in cases where an off-campus location offers evening programming. Visits overseas are typically two days in length, excluding travel time.

The Commission staff selects a prospective team to conduct the evaluation and requests the chief executive officer's comments on the proposed team before appointing its members. The size of the team, typically one to three persons, reflects the complexity of the change, based on Commission experience. When the team is complete, the institution and team members are informed, and appropriate evaluator materials are sent to the team from the Commission office.

Arrangements for the Team Visit

Upon receipt of the team list, the institution contacts the team chairperson/evaluator to discuss the schedule for the visit, accommodations (if needed), and other arrangements. The institution notifies each team member directly about accommodations and communicates with the team chairperson about all other matters related to the visit. The institution arranges to have all hotel accommodations and meals, if possible, billed directly to the institution. After the visit, the Commission bills the institution for the team members' out-of-pocket expenses, primarily travel costs. Reimbursement should be made directly and promptly to the team. In keeping with Association policy, the Commission office bills the institution for the substantive change evaluation fee.

Materials

At least four weeks in advance of the evaluation visit, the institution sends to the visitor(s) a copy of its original substantive change proposal, together with an update regarding steps taken to implement the proposal and any other new information it believes useful. At the same time, the institution sends an electronic copy (single, searchable pdf file) and four (4) paper copies of these same materials to the offices of the Commission.

The update should reflect and assess the institution's experience in implementing the substantive change and should address any areas of emphasis identified by the Commission in its letter approving the institution's plans. Relevant enrollment and financial information should be included. The institution is also asked to include information about its plans for continued implementation of the substantive change under review as well as its plans, if any, for additional substantive changes. Attention should be given to the institution's capacity to implement these plans.

The update should include a cover page with the institution's name and location, the date, and a brief summary of the subject(s) of the report. The update should be single-spaced, printed on both sides of the paper, and neither stapled nor bound. Please do not use three-ring binders or elaborate printing options.

An institution scheduled for a substantive change evaluation is urged to contact Commission staff for assistance in developing its update and making preparations for the evaluation.

Conduct of the Visit

During the on-site evaluation, the visitor(s) meet with institutional representatives who can provide information about the implementation of the substantive change under review. Depending upon the circumstances, these include, but are not limited to: the chief executive officer, chief academic officer, off-campus location site coordinator, faculty, staff, students, and members of the governing board. Depending on the circumstances, visits to assess implementation of off-campus locations may not involve a visit to the institution's main campus. The visit may conclude with a meeting between the team chairperson/evaluator and the institution's chief executive officer to review the major findings of the evaluation.

For most substantive change evaluations, a preliminary visit by the team chairperson/evaluator is unnecessary. However, regular communication by phone should be initiated by the institution, and the chairperson/evaluator should feel free to contact the institution to discuss arrangements in detail or to request additional materials if team members see a need for them.

Preparation of the Evaluation Report

Within a month of the visit, the team/evaluator prepares a narrative report of no more than 5-6 pages that describes the institution's success in implementing the substantive change under review, with particular attention to any areas identified for emphasis by the Commission. The report should conclude with a list of identified strengths and concerns related to the institution's implementation of the substantive change.

The institution is provided an opportunity to review a draft of the evaluation report for factual accuracy and to write a substantive response to the team report.

Team's Confidential Recommendation to the Commission

In keeping with Commission procedures, the team/evaluator develops a confidential recommendation based upon its findings in evaluating the substantive change. The recommendation should contain the following elements:

1. The team's recommendation on whether the substantive change should be included in the institution's accreditation.
2. The team's recommendation on the timing and content of any follow-up reporting on the implementation of the substantive change. A recommendation for subsequent progress reports related to the substantive change is advisable if the team concludes that further monitoring of the specific situation is necessary.
3. The rationale for the recommendations. Reasons should be given in narrative form for both components of the recommendation.

Four (4) paper copies and an electronic copy (single, searchable pdf file) of the team's report and the team's recommendation should be submitted to the Commission office.

Commission Action

The team report and confidential recommendation, along with the institutional materials and response, are considered by the Commission at its earliest possible meeting. Typically, the institutional chief executive officer and team chairperson/evaluator are not requested to attend the meeting when the substantive change evaluation is reviewed. The institution and team member(s) are informed of the Commission's action shortly after the meeting.

July 2009
Editorial Revisions March 2014 June 2015



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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 ordinarily 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.

The Commission will release information on actions of show cause or deferral. If such information is also released by the institution in question or is otherwise made public, the Commission will respond to related inquiries and may issue revised 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 in an immediate and timely way, 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:

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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:

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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:

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(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
- The date of initial accreditation and/or when candidacy was granted
- 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 basis for Commission action affecting candidacy or accreditation status
- 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 date and nature of any show-cause for denial of candidacy or accreditation, probation, or withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation status
- 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 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.

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. The Commission will also make public on its website the basis for these decisions. 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.

Per federal regulation, within 60 days of a final decision to take an adverse action (probation or withdrawal of accreditation), the Commission will submit a copy of the final decision letter to the Secretary of Education. The Secretary will make the letter public.

November 1998

September 2001

April 2010

September 2011

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April 2017