



Received

May 23, 2019

JUN 3 2019

Dr. Elaine Collins
President
Northern Vermont University
337 College Hill
Johnson, VT 05656-9898

Office of the President
Northern Vermont University

Dear President Collins:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on April 12, 2019, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the report submitted by Northern Vermont University regarding its Associate in Arts and Bachelor in Fine Arts degree programs in Fine Woodworking and Furniture Design offered in collaboration with the Vermont Woodworking School, as well as the report of the evaluator, and took the following action:

that the report regarding the University's Associate in Arts and Bachelor in Fine Arts degree programs in Fine Woodworking and Furniture Design offered in collaboration with the Vermont Woodworking School be accepted and inclusion of the programs within the institution's accreditation be confirmed;

that the on-site evaluation to assess implementation of the MS Program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling scheduled for Spring 2020 be confirmed;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2023 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, as well as the matters specified in our letter of December 7, 2017, the Fall 2023 self-study provide an update on the Associate in Arts and Bachelor in Fine Arts degree programs in Fine Woodworking and Furniture Design offered in collaboration with the Vermont Woodworking School, with particular emphasis on the University's success in:

1. achieving its enrollment and financial goals for the program, including addressing the gender imbalance of the student body;
2. implementing a program of assessment with evidence of using the results to improve student achievement.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

DAVID QUIGLEY, Chair (2021)
Boston College
GEORGE W. TETLER, Vice Chair (2019)
Worcester, MA

HARRY E. DUMAY (2019)
College of Our Lady of the Elms

JEFFREY R. GODLEY (2019)
Groton, CT

COLEEN C. PANTALONE (2019)
Northeastern University

MARIKO SILVER (2019)
Bennington College

KASSANDRA S. ARDINGER (2020)
Trustee Member, Concord, NH

RUSSELL CAREY (2020)
Brown University

FRANCESCO C. CESAREO (2020)
Assumption College

F. JAVIER CEVALLOS (2020)
Framingham State University

RICK DANIELS (2020)
Cohasset, MA

DONALD D. DEHAYES (2020)
University of Rhode Island

PAM Y. EDDINGER (2020)
Bunker Hill Community College

THOMAS S. EDWARDS (2020)
Thomas College

KIMBERLY M. GOFF-CREWS (2020)
Yale University

MARTIN J. HOWARD (2020)
Boston University

SUSAN D. HUARD (2020)
Manchester Community College (NH)

JEFFREY S. SOLOMON (2021)
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

ELEANOR BAKER (2021)
Falmouth, ME

KATHERINE BERGERON (2021)
Connecticut College

PETER L. EBB (2021)
Trustee Member, Boston, MA

GREGORY W. FOWLER (2021)
Southern New Hampshire University

DENNIS M. HANNO (2021)
Wheaton College

LILY S. HSU (2021)
Johnson & Wales University

ELLEN L. KENNEDY (2021)
Berkshire Community College

ABDALLAH A. SFEIR (2021)
Lebanese American University

JOHN M. SWEENEY (2021)
Providence College

President of the Commission
BARBARA E. BRITTINGHAM
bbrittingham@neche.org

Sr. Vice President of the Commission
PATRICIA M. O'BRIEN, SND
pobrien@neche.org

Vice President of the Commission
CAROL L. ANDERSON
canderson@neche.org

Vice President of the Commission
LAURA M. GAMBINO
lgambino@neche.org

Vice President of the Commission
PAULA A. HARBECKE
pharbecke@neche.org

The Commission accepted the report submitted by Northern Vermont University and confirmed inclusion of the Associate in Arts and Bachelor in Fine Arts degree programs in Fine Woodworking and Furniture Design offered in collaboration with the Vermont Woodworking School within the institution's accreditation because the report was responsive to the concerns raised in our letter of March 27, 2017 and provided evidence that the University is implementing the programs in a manner consistent with Commission standards and policies.

Along with the evaluator, we commend the shared commitment of Northern Vermont University (NVU) and its partner, the Vermont Woodworking School (VWS), to the arts and crafts of Vermont that provides the foundation for the effective collaboration formed to offer high-quality degree programs – an Associate in Arts (A.A.) and a Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.) in Fine Woodworking and Furniture design. We are pleased to learn communication between the two partners “flows openly and often” with NVU’s Johnson campus taking the lead given its “strong arts focus and history of hands-on experiential learning.” Particularly noteworthy is the supportive environment created for students by the well-qualified practitioner faculty, and we understand that the Chair of NVU-Johnson’s Fine Arts Department has responsibility for advising the students. In addition, the merger of Johnson State College with Lyndon State College to form NVU now provides students access to a greater variety of general education courses that helps students in the woodworking and furniture design degree programs to more easily schedule courses “around the intense time requirement of their studio courses.” We also note with approval that, as requested by the Commission, the Memorandum of Understanding was amended to include teach-out arrangements to ensure students can complete their degrees should either party decide to terminate the agreement.

The Commission confirms the Spring 2020 evaluation to assess Northern Vermont University’s success in implementing its MS Program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling acquired from Southern New Hampshire University. We refer you to our letter of January 23, 2019 that specifies matters to receive attention in the report prepared in advance of the Spring 2020 evaluation.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2023 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. In addition to the information provided in all self-studies and the matters specified in our letter of December 7, 2017, we look forward, in Fall 2023, to learning of the University’s continued success in implementing the Associate in Arts and Bachelor in Fine Arts degree programs in Fine Woodworking and Furniture Design offered in collaboration with the Vermont Woodworking School and to receiving information about two matters related to our standards on *Students*, *Institutional Resources*, and *Educational Effectiveness*.

Whereas projected enrollment in the A.A. and B.F.A. programs offered at VWS was 15 in the first year increasing to 20 in the second year, actual enrollment fell short, reaching only 11 students in Spring 2019. Contributing factors included the delay of receiving VA approval and the departure of the co-owner/co-founder (who has since returned full-time as executive director). At the same time, while revenue projections were less than projected, we note with approval that the programs are generating a positive contribution margin for the University. We are encouraged that efforts to market the programs have increased, including developing new recruitment materials to enhance program visibility and expanding to out-of-state markets. Yet, as observed by the evaluator, recruiting a diversity of students, specifically women, remains a challenge. We ask that the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2023 comprehensive evaluation provide an update on the institution’s success to achieve the enrollment and revenue goals set for the VWS programs, including its efforts to address the gender imbalance of the student body. Our standards on *Students* and *Institutional Resources* provide this guidance:

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. The institution addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity among its students ... (Statement of the Standard, *Students*).

Consistent with its mission, the institution describes the characteristics of the students it seeks to serve. This description informs recruitment and admissions activities and the academic and other support programs and services available to students (5.2).

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).

We understand that completion of a comprehensive assessment program for the A.A. and B.F.A. in Woodworking and Furniture Design offered at the VWS is still in process and will mirror that used to assess NVU's on-campus art programs. As reported by the evaluator, each program's goals have been mapped to the curriculum, and the capstone course for the A.A. has been intentionally designed to align with the B.F.A. program to facilitate the progression of students who elect to continue their work at the baccalaureate level. However, the syllabus for the B.F.A. final project and exhibit is yet to be developed. As specified in our standard on *Educational Effectiveness*, the Fall 2023 self-study will afford NVU an opportunity to report on its progress to implement a program of assessment and to provide evidence that it uses the results to improve student achievement.

Assessment of learning is based on verifiable statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program (8.3).

The institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods and direct and indirect measures to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students, employing external perspectives including, as appropriate, benchmarks and peer comparisons (8.5).

The institution defines measures of student success and levels of achievement appropriate to its mission, modalities and locations of instruction, and student body, including any specifically recruited populations (8.6).

The results of assessment and quantitative measures of student success are a demonstrable factor in the institution's efforts to improve the learning opportunities and results for students (8.8).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the reports prepared by Northern Vermont University 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 and the head of the state system of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Church Hinds and Mr. Jeb Spaulding. 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.

Dr. Elaine Collins
May 23, 2019
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If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Barbara Brittingham,
President of the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Quigley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David Quigley

DQ/sjp

cc: Mr. Church Hinds
Mr. Jeb Spaulding
Evaluator