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October 15, 2020

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

Dear President Collins:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on September 25, 2020, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the report submitted by Northern Vermont University regarding the graduate Program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling acquired from Southern New Hampshire University that it offers at off-campus locations, as well as the report of the evaluator, and took the following action:

that the report be accepted and inclusion of the graduate Program in Clinical Mental Health (PCMH) Counseling and the locations at which it is offered in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Wisconsin, and Alaska within the institution's accreditation 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 letters of January 23, 2019, May 23, 2019, June 18, 2019, and October 28, 2019, the Fall 2023 self-study provide an update on the PCMH, with particular emphasis on the University's success in:

- 1) continuing to incorporate an external perspective into the program review of the PCMH, which may be through accreditation by CACREP;
- 2) achieving its goals with respect to the alignment of the PCMH with the University's Master of Arts program in Counseling.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The Commission accepted the report submitted by Northern Vermont University (NVU) and confirmed inclusion of the graduate Program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and the locations at which it is offered in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Wisconsin, and Alaska within the institution's accreditation because the report was responsive to the concerns raised in our letter of January 23, 2019 and provided evidence that NVU is implementing the program in a manner consistent with Commission standards and policies.

The Commission commends NVU on a seamless transition of the PCMH from Southern New Hampshire University to the University and notes with favor the institution's success in obtaining degree-granting authority from the State of Maine in November 2019. The hybrid model of program delivery is particularly attuned to the needs of the working professional who is the program's core student population. Maintaining steady enrollment was one area of emphasis expressed by the Commission, and we are gratified to learn of the success achieved here with an average of 100 students enrolled over the last two academic years. As a result, NVU was able to meet its budgetary goals with net revenue for the PCMH program of \$376,000 against a projection of \$300,000.

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 matters specified in our letters of January 23, 2019, May 23, 2019, June 18, 2019, and October 28, 2019, the Commission asks that the self-study prepared for the Fall 2023 evaluation give emphasis to NVU's continued success in implementing the PCMH with attention to two items related to our standard on *The Academic Program*.

The Commission notes with approval that NVU intends to include the PCMH into its regular five-year cycle of evaluations conducted by the Vermont State College System which will involve both internal and external reviewers. We understand, however, that the University has yet to decide whether to apply for accreditation of the program through CACREP, an additional form of external review. The Fall 2023 self-study will afford the University the opportunity to apprise the Commission about its success in reviewing the PCMH and its decision with respect to CACREP accreditation, in keeping with our standard on *The Academic Program*:

The institution develops, approves, administers, and on a regular cycle reviews its academic programs under institutional policies that are implemented by designated bodies with established channels of communication and control. Review of academic programs includes evidence of student success and program effectiveness and incorporates an external perspective. Faculty have a substantive voice in these matters (4.6).

The Commission understands that Northern Vermont University has aligned courses in the PCMH with those in its Master of Arts in Counseling program with a possible goal to create a single degree program. As acknowledged in the report of the evaluator, the two programs serve "different modalities, different student populations and different service regions," and there is as of yet no agreement about whether further alignment will take place. We look forward, in Fall 2023, to receiving an update about this matter, in keeping with our standard on *The Academic Program*:

Programs leading to degrees or other awards have a coherent design and are characterized by appropriate breadth, depth, continuity, sequential progression, and synthesis of learning. Coherence is demonstrated through learning goals, structure, and content; policies and procedures for admission, retention, and completion; instructional methods and procedures; and the nature, quality, and extent of student learning and achievement (4.3).

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

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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 Ms. Lynn Dickinson and Ms. Sophie Zdatny. 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 Lawrence Schall, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



George Tetler

GT/jm

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions

cc: Ms. Lynn Dickinson  
Ms. Sophie Zdatny  
Visiting Team