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March 31, 2011

Dr. David F. Hartleb  
President  
Northern Essex Community College  
100 Elliott Street  
Haverhill, MA 01830-2399

Dear President Hartleb:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 4, 2011, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Northern Essex Community College:

that Northern Essex Community College be continued in accreditation;

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) transitioning to a new president while maintaining its strong governance, planning, and advancement capabilities;
- 2) ensuring sufficient numbers of faculty to serve increased student enrollments;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2020.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

Northern Essex Community College is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*. We particularly commend the institution for a candid, comprehensive, and well-done self-study that demonstrated the College is achieving its mission. We concur with the visiting team that the institution can take justifiable pride in its faculty's commitment to a curriculum in which student learning is regularly evaluated as a means of program improvement. We note with approval the institutional commitment to student success, which is

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shown in a variety of ways, including articulation agreements with regional high schools, a streamlined admissions procedure, and optimal credit transfer promotion at regional universities. We take further favorable note of the College's robust program review and outcomes assessment practices and its effective oversight of distance education programs. As validated by the visiting team report, fundraising and grant-writing efforts are also successful, and we note with favor that the institution's fiscal reporting received an award from the Government Finance Officers Association. With its dedicated faculty and staff, prudent resource management, and dynamic senior leadership team, the College is well positioned for future success.

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 two matters related to our Standards on *Planning and Evaluation*, *Organization and Governance* and *Faculty*.

We agree with the visiting team that the College is about to enter a new and uncertain era, given the economic climate and the upcoming retirement of a respected and visionary president. We wish to be assured that the current positive momentum at the College is sustained during and after the transition to new leadership. Through the report in Fall 2015, the College will have the opportunity to demonstrate that it "has a demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning" (2.3). Our standard on *Organization and Governance* provides further guidance:

The chief executive officer through an appropriate administrative structure effectively manages the institution so as to fulfill its purposes and objectives and establishes the means to assess the effectiveness of the institution. The chief executive officer manages and allocates resources in keeping with institutional purpose and objectives and assesses the effectiveness of the institution. In accordance with established institutional mechanisms and procedures, the chief executive officer and the administration consult with faculty, students, other administrators and staff, and are appropriately responsive to their concerns, needs, and initiatives (3.7).

We are gratified to learn that enrollments at Northern Essex Community College grew to almost 4,500 FTE in AY2009-2010 and that the College responded effectively by increasing the variety of course offerings at all sites and hiring additional adjunct faculty. Though the number of full-time faculty (112 at the time of the self-study) has grown 11% over the past three years, we share the team's concern that still more faculty will need to be hired for the rising number of students and to meet the College's goal to have 65% of all daytime courses taught by full-time faculty. We look forward to learning, in the report prepared for Fall 2015, that Northern Essex Community College is successful in meeting its own goals to have sufficient numbers of faculty maintaining and enhancing its academic program. Our standard on *Faculty* is relevant here:

There are an adequate number of faculty whose time commitment to the institution is sufficient to assure the accomplishment of class and out-of-class responsibilities essential for the fulfillment of institutional mission and purposes. Responsibilities of teaching faculty include instruction and the systematic understanding of effective teaching/learning processes and outcomes in courses and programs for which they share responsibility; additional duties may include such functions as student advisement, academic planning, and participation in

policy-making, course and curricular development, research, and institutional governance (5.3).

Faculty assignments and workloads are consistent with the institution's mission and purposes. They are equitably determined to allow faculty adequate time to provide effective instruction, advise and evaluate students, contribute to program and institutional assessment and improvement, continue professional growth, and participate in scholarship, research, creative activities and service compatible with the mission and purposes of the institution. Faculty workloads are reappraised periodically and adjusted as institutional conditions change (5.7).

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 Northern Essex Community College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Dr. Lane Glenn, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Cathryn Addy, 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 Attorney Joseph Edwards. 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: Attorney Joseph Edwards  
Visiting team

