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May 14, 2014

Dr. Robert V. Antonucci
President
Fitchburg State University
160 Pearl Street
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Dear President Antonucci:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on April 24, 2014, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the report submitted by Fitchburg State University and took the following action:

that report submitted by Fitchburg State University be accepted;

that the fifth-year interim report scheduled for consideration in Spring, 2017 be confirmed;

that, as noted in our letter of November 19, 2012, the Spring 2017 report give emphasis to the College's continued success in addressing the matters specified for attention in the Spring 2014 report, namely:

- 1) implementing and assessing its strategic plan and assuring the effective integration of strategic planning, operational planning, and budgeting;
- 2) developing and implementing a process to assess the effectiveness of the Board of Trustees;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Spring 2022 be confirmed.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

The report submitted by Fitchburg State University was accepted because it was generally responsive to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letter of November 19, 2012.

The Commission commends Fitchburg State University (FSU) for making steady progress in achieving its goals related to the two matters specified by the Commission. We appreciate FSU's candid acknowledgement that "planning has been more goals oriented than budget oriented," and we are gratified to learn from the report that the University has established and

implemented a systematic and structured process to ensure that its budget sufficiently supports its strategic initiatives. In particular, we note with favor that FSU now gathers and analyzes data on an annual basis and uses the assessment results to inform budget decisions and operational actions. Also noteworthy is that, to date, 70 of 86 initiatives identified in FSU's Strategic Plan 2009-2014 have been accomplished, with the remainder scheduled for completion during the Spring 2014 semester. Finally, we note with approval that the members of the Board of Trustees received an institutionally developed "self-assessment" instrument on November 7, 2012. Ten of the eleven trustees completed the evaluation and, at its January 14, 2014 meeting, the Board reviewed the "overall positive" results and voted to form a subcommittee to update and improve the self-evaluation process.

Commission policy requires a fifth-year 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. As noted in our letter of November 19, 2012, in addition to the information included in all fifth-year reports, the University is asked, in Spring 2017, to report on its continued progress in addressing the two matters specified for attention in the Spring 2014 report related to strategic planning and assessing the effectiveness of the Board of Trustees. The Commission recognizes that these matters do not lend themselves to rapid resolution and will require the University's sustained attention over time; hence, we ask that further information be provided in the report as evidence that "the institution has a demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning" (2.4).

Finally, the scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2022 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Fitchburg State University and hopes that its preparation 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.

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. Carol Vittorioso. The institution is free to release information about the report and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Barbara Brittingham, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Jean A. Wyld

JAW/sjp

Enclosure

cc: Ms. Carol Vittorioso



**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

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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 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.

While the Commission does not initiate public release of information on actions of show cause or deferral, if such information is released by the institution in question, the Commission will respond to related inquiries.

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, the New England Association, acting through its Chief Executive Officer, will release a public statement in such form and content as it deems desirable providing correct information.

The shorter statement that an institution may choose for announcing its accredited status follows:

_____ College (University) is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc., through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

Inquiries regarding the accreditation status by the New England Association should be directed to the administrative staff of the institution. Individuals may also contact:

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
New England Association of Schools and Colleges
3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514
(781) 425 7785
E-Mail: cihe@neasc.org

Accreditation by the New England Association has reference to the institution as a whole. Therefore, statements like “fully accredited” or “this program is accredited by the New England Association” or “this degree is accredited by the New England Association” 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 New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. 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 New England Association should be directed to the administrative staff of the college or university. Individuals may also contact:

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4. **Public Disclosure of Information About Affiliated Institutions by the Commission**

and procedures of the Commission and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. In responding to inquiries, the Commission will endeavor to do so.

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. Such actions include:

A final decision to:

Grant candidacy or accreditation

Continue an institution in accreditation

Deny or withdraw the 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.

November 1998

September 2001

April 2010

September 2011

Editorial Changes, March 2014