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COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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November 2, 2010

Dr. Jean F. MacCormack  
Chancellor  
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth  
285 Old Westport Road  
North Dartmouth, MA 02747-2300

Dear Chancellor MacCormack:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on September 17, 2010, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to University of Massachusetts Dartmouth:

that University of Massachusetts Dartmouth be continued in accreditation;

that the Fall 2012 evaluation to assess implementation of the School of Law be confirmed;

that, in addition to the matters specified in our letter of March 19, 2010, the report prepared in advance of the Fall 2012 evaluation give emphasis to the University's success in:

1. implementing the common course evaluation and using the results for improvement;
2. implementing the Faculty Governance Constitution and assuring the effectiveness of the University's structures and processes for shared governance;

that the University submit a fifth-year interim report for consideration in Spring 2015;

that, in addition to the information included in all interim reports, the University give emphasis to its success in:

1. achieving its goals to secure classification as a doctoral/research university;
2. strengthening the connection between planning and budgeting and communicating effectively with the University community about planning and budgeting processes;

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3. implementing its plans for program-level assessment of student learning outcomes;
4. maintaining financial stability through the diversification of revenue and the achievement of goals for the enrollment and retention of students;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Spring 2020.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*. We commend the institution for an exemplary self-study that candidly highlights the University's strengths and outlines realistic plans to address needed improvements. We concur with the visiting team that University of Massachusetts Dartmouth is a "dynamic institution" that has been "bold and innovative" in dealing with the challenges facing public institutions of higher education. The dedicated faculty and staff of the University are clearly committed to student success and to serving the region; we take favorable note of the well-deserved respect and support the University enjoys from the citizens, businesses, and organizations of southeastern Massachusetts. We are pleased to learn of the steps taken by the institution to enhance its public disclosure, including recent improvements to the University's website and participation in the Voluntary System of Accountability, which has fostered a focus on student learning outcomes. Finally, we note with approval the successful initial implementation of the School of Law, with an enrollment of 168 students in Fall 2010 and over 1000 inquiries for admission in Fall 2011. We understand that the University intends to seek ABA candidacy in Spring 2012.

As noted in our letter of March 19, 2010, the Fall 2012 focused evaluation to assess implementation of the School of Law is consistent with Commission policy requiring an on-site evaluation of the new program within two years of its initiation. In addition, we ask that the report prepared in advance of the visit address two matters related to our standards on *Faculty* and *Organization and Governance*.

The Commission is pleased to learn that the University has concluded negotiations on a common course evaluation form and has adopted an instrument that is ready for implementation. Through the Fall 2012 focused evaluation, we anticipate being apprised of the institution's success in implementing the common evaluation form, as evidence that the "effectiveness of instruction is periodically and systematically assessed using adequate and reliable procedures; the results are used to improve instruction" (5.16).

The Commission shares the judgment of the visiting team that the University's governance structure is "ambiguous" and appears "contentious" and that a lack of clarity about what is or is not permissible within the faculty contract creates a "disincentive to take action" and contributes to limited faculty engagement in shared decision-making. We understand that, at the request of the University's trustees, the institution has begun to develop a Faculty Governance Constitution and anticipates that the work of drafting the constitution and getting approval from the Faculty Senate, the chancellor, and the board will take at least one full academic year. The Fall 2012 evaluation will provide an opportunity for the University to report on the status of the Faculty Governance Constitution and other efforts to assure the effectiveness of its governance structures. Relevant here is our standard on *Organization and Governance*:

The authority, responsibilities, and relationships among the governing board, administration, faculty, and staff are clearly described in the institution's by-laws, or an equivalent document, and in a table of organization that displays the working order of the institution. The board, administration, staff, and faculty understand and fulfill their



respective roles as set forth in the institution's official documents and are provided with the appropriate information to undertake their respective roles. The institution's organizational structure, decision-making processes, and policies are clear and consistent with its mission and support institutional effectiveness. The institution's system of governance involves the participation of all appropriate constituencies and includes regular communication among them (3.1).

Faculty exercise an important role in assuring the academic integrity of the institution's educational programs. Faculty have a substantive voice in matters of educational programs, faculty personnel, and other aspects of institutional policy that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise (3.10).

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 University is asked, in Spring 2015, to report on four matters related to our standards on *Mission and Purposes*, *Planning and Evaluation*, *The Academic Program*, *Financial Resources*, and *Students*.

As noted in the report of the visiting team, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth has "charted a bold plan" to expand its offerings at the master's and doctoral levels, place greater emphasis on research, and achieve doctoral/research status in the Carnegie classification. The comprehensive evaluation provided evidence that the University is aware of the investments that will be required and the cultural changes that will be necessary to achieve this status. The Spring 2015 interim report will provide an opportunity for the institution to update the Commission on its progress in fulfilling this ambition. Relevant here is our standard on *Mission and Purposes*:

The mission of the institution defines its distinctive character, addresses the needs of society and identifies the students the institution seeks to serve, and reflects both the institution's traditions and its vision for the future. The institution's mission provides the basis upon which the institution identifies its priorities, plans its future and evaluates its endeavors; it provides a basis for the evaluation of the institution against the Commission's Standards (1.1).

We are gratified to learn of the University's plans to supplement its use of town halls and University-wide memos with websites to enhance communication about planning, budgeting, and facilities. We understand that the recently hired Budget Director will create a Budget Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from all units to strengthen the connection between planning and budgeting. We anticipate being apprised, in Spring 2015, of the University's success in assuring that its "financial planning, including contingency planning, is integrated with overall planning and evaluation processes" (9.8) and that the "[r]esults of planning and evaluation are regularly communicated to appropriate institutional constituencies" (2.1).

The Commission commends University of Massachusetts Dartmouth for its progress in establishing an assessment-based culture. We note with favor that all academic departments have established program-level student learning outcomes and assessment plans, but we concur with the visiting team that the quality and implementation of these plans are "uneven." Programs with specialized accreditation, typically, have more developed plans and more sophisticated mechanisms for the collection, evaluation, and use of assessment data. We are pleased to learn that the University is committed to advancing assessment efforts in departments that do not hold specialized accreditation, and we look forward to hearing, in Spring 2015, of the institution's success in this regard. We remind you of our standard on *The Academic Program*:



The institution's approach to understanding student learning focuses on the course, program, and institutional level. Data and other evidence generated through this approach are considered at the appropriate level of focus, with the results being a demonstrable factor in improving the learning opportunities and results for students (4.45).

The institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students. Inquiry may focus on a variety of perspectives, including understanding the process of learning, being able to describe student experiences and learning outcomes in normative terms, and gaining feedback from alumni, employers, and others situated to help in the description and assessment of student learning. The institution devotes appropriate attention to ensuring that its methods of understanding student learning are trustworthy and provide information useful in the continuing improvement of programs and services for students (4.50).

Finally, the Commission notes with approval that the University has strengthened its financial position during the last decade through a combination of prudent financial management, enrollment growth, growth in sponsored research and private funding, and the use of ARRA funds. We are pleased to learn of the University's plans to maintain its financial health through targeted enrollment growth, improved student retention, and the diversification of revenue. The Spring 2015 report will afford the opportunity for the University to report on the success of these initiatives, in keeping with our standards on *Financial Resources* and *Students*:

The institution preserves and enhances available financial resources sufficient to support its academic and other activities. It manages its financial resources and allocates them in a way that reflects its mission and purposes. It demonstrates the ability to respond to financial emergencies and unforeseen circumstances (9.1).

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. The governing board reviews and approves the institution's financial plans (9.3).

The institution measures student success, including rates of retention and graduation and other measures of success appropriate to institutional mission. The institution's goals for retention and graduation reflect institutional purposes, and the results are used to inform recruitment and the review of programs and services (6.6).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 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 University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you and Dr. John W. Miller, team chair, during its deliberations.

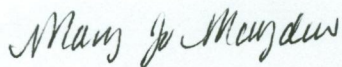


You are encouraged to share this letter with all of the institution's constituencies. It is Commission policy to inform the chairperson of the institution's governing board of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Robert Manning. The institution 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/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Robert Manning  
Visiting team

Strathmore  
WRITING 75% COTTON  
RECYCLED





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

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**Public Disclosure of Information  
About Affiliated Institutions**

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The following policy governs the release of information regarding the status of affiliated colleges and universities by institutions and 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. While the Commission does not release copies of self-studies, other institutional reports, evaluation reports, or notification letters, it believes it to be good practice for institutions to make these materials available after notification of action on their status. Because of the potential to be misleading, institutions are asked not to publish or otherwise disseminate excerpts only from these materials. 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.



## 2. Published Statement on Accredited Status

The Commission asks that one of the following statements be used for disclosing in catalogues, brochures, advertisements, etc., that the institution is accredited.

An institution may wish to include within its 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 New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

Accreditation of an institution of higher education by the New England Association 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 New England Association 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 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  
209 Burlington Road  
Bedford, MA 01730-1433  
(781) 271-0022  
E-Mail: [cihe@neasc.org](mailto:cihe@neasc.org)**



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:

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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 is not accreditation nor does it assure eventual accreditation. 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.

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**

Upon inquiry, the Commission will release the following information about affiliated institutions:

- The date of initial accreditation and/or when candidacy was granted;
- 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 extent of, or limitations on, the status of affiliation;
- In cases of adverse action (denial or termination of candidacy or accreditation, placing an institution on probation), the Commission's reasons for recommending 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.
- For institutions whose candidacy or accreditation has been terminated, the date of, and reasons for, termination.



The Commission does not provide information about deferments of action on candidate or accreditation status, or show-cause orders. However, if such information is released by the institution in question, the Commission will respond to related inquiries. Also, adverse actions (placement of an institution on probation, denial of candidate status or accreditation, revocation of candidacy and termination of accreditation) are not communicated until the available appeals process is completed.

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

The Commission does not release copies of self-studies, progress reports, evaluation reports, or other documents related to the accreditation of individual institutions, but institutions are encouraged to make these materials available, in their entirety, after notification of Commission action.

## **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 terminate 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*