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COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

February 12, 2013

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Dr. Gena Glickman
President
Manchester Community College
PO Box 1046
Manchester, CT 06045-1046

Dear President Glickman:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on November 15, 2012, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Manchester Community College:

that Manchester Community College be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit a report for consideration in Spring, 2014 that gives emphasis to the institution's progress in:

1. ensuring a sufficient number of full-time faculty to support the academic programs and providing appropriate opportunities for their professional development;
2. strengthening advising and developmental instruction, consistent with the new state requirements, to improve student graduation rates;
3. maintaining financial stability while preserving the quality of the academic programs and services provided;
4. implementing the new College website;

that the College submit a fifth year interim report for consideration in Spring, 2107;

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

1. continuing to develop and implement a robust, College-wide system of assessing student learning and using the results for improvement;

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2. effectively managing enrollment to balance capacity with demand and addressing the impact of growth on admission and registration, advising, and financial aid;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Spring, 2022.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

Manchester Community College is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

The Commission commends Manchester Community College (MCC) for its preparation of a well documented self-study that candidly describes the institution's progress since its last comprehensive evaluation. We concur with the visiting team that the commitment of the College's senior administration, faculty, staff and students to "shared responsibility, shared understanding, and shared leadership" creates an environment of integrity and respect that permeates the institution. The collaborative working relationship among Academic Affairs, Students Affairs, and Continuing Education is particularly noteworthy. We are pleased to learn of MCC's focus on student success and the culture of assessment that has begun to develop over the past several years and note with approval the faculty's use of data to improve the institution's academic programs. We take favorable note of the implementation of a revised general education core in Fall 2012, and the College's development of new academic programs designed in response to workforce needs is impressive. In addition, development of an online faculty training program (*iTeach Essentials*) subsequently adopted system-wide, and the peer tutoring program and other services available to students online, provide evidence of the careful planning for and successful implementation of its distance education program. Finally, MCC on Main, the College's new arts and education center in downtown Manchester, a totally philanthropically funded initiative, is commended. Despite decreased state support and economic uncertainty, MCC has found innovative and creative ways to continue its development as a "learning-centered, learner-centered" institution and is well positioned to build on its success in the years ahead.

The four items the institution is asked to report on in Spring, 2014 are related to our standards on *Faculty, Students, Financial Resources, and Public Disclosure*.

We understand that over the past five years, the percentage of full-time faculty at the College has dropped from 40% in 2007 to 32% in 2011. We therefore are pleased to learn that MCC was able to add 12 full-time faculty in Fall 2012 and that it has submitted proposals to the state for two additional full-time positions. We further understand, however, that the "limited budget and number of adjuncts" prevents the College from providing the level of professional development opportunities desired by the administration and needed by the faculty. We anticipate being apprised, in Spring 2014, of the College's progress to ensure it has a sufficient number of full-time faculty to deliver the curriculum and that it is providing appropriate opportunities for their continued professional growth and development. Our standard on *Faculty* provides this guidance:

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. (5.3)

The institution provides its faculty with substantial and equitable opportunities for continued professional development throughout their careers. Such opportunities are

consistent with and enhance the achievement of the institution's mission and purposes. Faculty accept the obligation to take advantage of these opportunities and otherwise take the initiative in ensuring their continued competence and growth as teachers, scholars, and practitioners. (5.13)

We commend MCC for the steps taken since 2007 to make retention and improved graduation rates an institutional priority. We are encouraged to learn that a required Student Group Advising Seminar is being offered, student use of the Academic Support Center has increased 52%, and the creation of peer mentoring programs (Sister-2-Sister and Brother-2-Brother) has helped to improve Fall 2010 to Fall 2011 retention rates for Hispanic (85%) and African American students (90%) significantly above the College's overall average (60%). We understand that the institution monitors its anticipated graduation rates monthly and that it anticipates the 2012-2013 graduation rate will exceed its forecast of 15.4%. At the same time, we are aware the State of Connecticut has enacted legislation limiting students to one semester of traditional remediation after which all remedial work must be embedded in credit-bearing courses. We therefore note with approval MCC's participation on the task force created to develop recommendations for implementing the legislation, and of the College's work with district high schools to align curriculum in both math and English. As informed by our standards on *Faculty* and *Students*, we look forward to learning, through the Spring 2014 report, of the success of these initiatives to strengthen the College's advising and developmental instruction, consistent with the new state requirements, as demonstrated by improved graduation rates.

The institution has in place an effective system of academic advising that meets student needs for information and advice and is compatible with its educational objectives. (5.19)

The institution utilizes appropriate methods of evaluation to identify deficiencies and offers appropriate developmental or remedial support where necessary to prepare students for collegiate study. Such testing and remediation receive sufficient support and are adequate to serve the needs of students admitted. (6.4)

The institution demonstrates its ability to admit students who can be successful in the institution's academic program, including specifically recruited populations. It ensures a systematic approach to providing accessible and effective programs and services designed to provide opportunities for enrolled students to be successful in achieving their academic goals. The institution provides students with information and guidance regarding opportunities and experiences that may help ensure their academic success. (6.5)

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. (6.8)

We understand that MCC's state general fund appropriation base decreased by \$3.5 million over the past four years and that the College has "exhausted" all of its available unrestricted reserves going into FY2013. We therefore are encouraged to learn that MCC is working with the Board of Regents on a system-wide review of the state's community college resource allocation methodology that could possibly permit MCC to retain a greater share of its tuition revenue thereby improving MCC's financial position. We seek assurance, through the Spring 2014 report, of the College's success in maintaining its financial stability while preserving the quality of its academic programs and services. Our standard on *Financial Resources* is relevant here:

The institution preserves and enhances available financial resources sufficient to support its mission. 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 is financially stable. Ostensible financial stability is not achieved at the expense of educational quality. Its stability and viability are not unduly dependent upon vulnerable financial resources or an historically narrow base of support. The institution's governing board retains appropriate autonomy in all budget and finance matters; this includes institutions that depend on financial support from an external agency (state, church, or other private or public entity). (9.2)

Finally, the Spring 2014 report will afford the institution an opportunity to update the Commission on its progress to design and implement a new user-friendly website to ensure its "... electronic publications are complete, accurate, available and current". (10.14)

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 Spring, 2017, to report on two matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*, *The Academic Program*, *Organization and Governance*, and *Students*.

As noted above, the Commission appreciates the work done by Manchester Community College to build a culture of assessment and commends the "absolute support, encouragement, and active involvement of MCC's academic and institutional leadership." The 2009-2011 "One Year, One Question" initiative that was successful in raising faculty ownership of the development of assessment measures is particularly noteworthy. We concur with the visiting team that the numerous examples of faculty analysis and use of assessment results to improve academic programs found in the E-series forms, along with the "strong and enthusiastic" support of Institutional Research to provide additional data to inform these assessment efforts, demonstrate the College's commitment to "... [understand] what its students have gained as a result of their education." (2.7). We ask that the Spring 2017 report give emphasis to the institution's continued progress in developing and implementing a robust, College-wide system of assessing student learning and using the results for improvement. Our standard on *The Academic Program* provides this additional guidance:

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, and includes external perspectives. 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. (4.54)

We understand that the College's enrollment surged by double-digits through the mid-2000's, peaking in academic year 2010-2011. Due to budget constraints, during this period staff were often asked to assume additional responsibilities to meet the demands resulting from these large enrollment increases. While the College intentionally forewent marketing its Fall 2011 offerings in an effort to hold enrollment steady, a comprehensive marketing campaign was reinstated to promote the 2012-13 academic year. To address staffing shortages in a number of student services areas, including admissions and registration, financial aid, and advising, the College has

relied on seasonal staff to work with students during high-demand times. We therefore note with approval that the College has submitted a proposal to the state for a new transfer counselor position and that it plans to retain an external consulting firm to review its delivery of financial aid services. Particularly in light of the state's fiscal realities, we welcome further information, in Spring 2017, of the College's success in effectively balancing its capacity with demand and addressing the impact of growth on admission and registration, advising and financial aid. This section of the report should be informed by our standards on *Planning and Evaluation, Organization and Governance, The Academic Program, and Students*:

The institution plans beyond a short-term horizon, including strategic planning that involves realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. It plans for and responds to financial and other contingencies, establishes feasible priorities, and develops a realistic course of action to achieve identified objectives. (2.3)

The chief executive officer assures that the institution employs staff sufficient in role, number, and qualifications appropriate to the institution's mission, size, and scope. (3.8)

The institution undertakes academic planning and evaluation as part of its overall planning and evaluation to enhance the achievement of institutional mission and program objectives. These activities are realistic and take into account stated goals and available resources. ... Additions and deletions of programs are consistent with institutional mission and capacity, faculty expertise, student needs, and the availability of sufficient resources required for the development and improvement of academic programs. The institution allocates resources on the basis of its academic planning, needs, and objectives. (4.10)

The institution offers an array of student services appropriate to its mission and the needs and goals of its students ... The institution's faculty and professional staff collectively have sufficient interaction with students outside of class to promote students' academic achievement and provide academic and career guidance. (6.11)

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.

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 Manchester Community College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you and John Sbrega, team chair, during its deliberations.

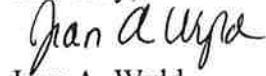
You are encouraged to share this letter with all of the institution's constituencies. It is Commission policy to inform the chairperson of the institution's governing board of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Louis Robinson. The institution is free to release information about the evaluation and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

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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,



Jean A. Wyld

JAW/sjp

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Louis Robinson
Visiting team