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COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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July 12, 2017

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 April 20, 2017, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Manchester Community College and voted to take the following action:

that the interim report submitted by Manchester Community College be accepted;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Spring 2022 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Spring 2022 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in:

1. continuing the review of its governance structure;
2. continuing to develop a College-wide approach to assessment that includes assessment of the general education program and using assessment results for improvement;
3. achieving its goals to increase credit- and non-credit enrollment and to improve student retention;
4. assuring the sufficiency of faculty, including full-time faculty, to meet the needs of the institution;

that the Commission notes the proposal by the President of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system to merge the current twelve community colleges into a single institution and informs Manchester Community College that the advancement of those or similar plans may result in changes to the scheduled monitoring of the College.

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THE PRESIDENT

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The interim report submitted by Manchester Community College was accepted because it responded to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letters of February 13, 2013, April 15, 2014, and October 10, 2014, and addressed each of the nine standards, including a reflective essay for Standard 8: *Educational Effectiveness* on student learning and success.

The Commission commends Manchester Community College (MCC) for a well-written, cogent interim report, detailing the progress it has made since the last comprehensive evaluation. We note with approval the College's planning efforts and its participation in state-wide initiatives, including the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) Accountability Report, CSCU Transfer and Articulation Program (TAP), and the Guided Pathways initiative. MCC's Enrollment Management Committee has been focusing on five key initiatives to improve enrollment management, including reorganizing Student Affairs, increasing credit and non-credit enrollments, improving the first-year experiences and outcomes, developing an academic advising plan, and improving overall student and retention services. The College has improved its student advising services by assigning program-specific academic advisors, instituting Academic Advising Weeks and New Student Orientations, and utilizing the advising software platform, Symplicity, which is customized to track students' participation in advising activities. We are pleased to learn of the "high levels" of student satisfaction with the Academic Support Center, most notably in tutoring. We note with favor that MCC achieved a balanced budget for FY2016 and anticipates a balanced operating budget for FY2017. The College has responded to its financial constraints by stabilizing enrollments, economizing and reallocating resources, and seeking additional funding. We congratulate the College on the award of a \$4 million bond and on the MCC Foundation's fundraising success, with \$14 million raised for the capital campaign. In response to state-mandated changes, the developmental education program has been modified to include one-semester courses, implementation of multiple course placement testing measures, and the inclusion of Smart Start, a free bridge program designed to enhance students' basic college-readiness skills. We are gratified to learn that the College's new website was launched in October 2014, with an industry-standard content management system, which provides improved web navigation for the user. We favorably note that the courses in MCC's dual enrollment program, College Career Pathway, are reviewed by College faculty and that students participating in the program achieved improved performance in college readiness, retention, and graduation when compared to students who did not participate in the program.

Manchester Community College's thoughtful reflective essay highlights the institution's accomplishments with respect to student learning and success and the College's assessment processes. The Commission is pleased to learn that MCC has "adopted a culture of assessment" which is "firmly in place," with student learning outcomes developed at the department, program, and course levels. All academic programs undergo program reviews on a regular basis, as do the general education and developmental education programs, and nine programs hold specialized accreditation. Faculty participate in professional development opportunities to learn assessment strategies; 20 MCC faculty have been trained as scorers for the Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes program. The College's efforts to improve student placement are notable; with the inclusion of a "challenge essay," 15% more students are now placed in a higher-level English class. Assessments at the course level in English, civic engagement, and information literacy have resulted in curriculum improvements. The College's IPEDS graduation rate has improved over the last several years, from 11% for the 2004 cohort to 18% for the 2012 cohort. In addition to IPEDS retention and graduation rates, the College also measures key performance indicators on a Scorecard that shows improvement in several areas, including pass rates of first-year gateway courses (English 101 and college-level math), number of students completing 24 credit hours, and number of degrees awarded (from 556 in 2007 to 851 in 2016). The College engages in indirect assessment methods to measure student success, including the Community College Survey of Student Engagement and Survey of Entering Student

Engagement. We note with favor MCC's plans to assess co-curricular activities, develop additional advising strategies to accelerate student completion, and expand retention initiatives across all majors.

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 items the Commission asks to be given special emphasis within the self-study prepared for the comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2022 are four matters related to our standards on *Organization and Governance*; *Educational Effectiveness*; *The Academic Program*; *Students*; and *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*.

The Commission understands that Manchester Community College appointed a Governance Task Force in Fall 2016 to review its existing governance document, collect input from the College community, and propose necessary changes. The Spring 2022 self-study will afford MCC an opportunity to update the Commission on its review of the College's governance structure, as evidence that the "effectiveness of the institution's organizational structure and system of governance is improved through periodic and systematic review" (3.19).

The Commission appreciates MCC's candid acknowledgment that a "unification" of its assessment efforts is needed, and we take favorable note of the College's plans to make progress in this regard. These include the appointment of a new Dean of Academic Affairs to develop a campus-wide plan of assessment, faculty training on the institution's new assessment software, compensation provided to faculty for assessment activities, development of general education assessments by the TAP Assessment Team, continued review of placement measures, and participation in the Multi-State Collaborative. We understand that the new assessment software, which will be in place by Spring 2017, will be used to "complete the first assessment loop" of general education outcomes. We look forward to learning, in Spring 2022, of the College's success in continuing to develop a College-wide approach to assessment that includes assessment of the general education program and using assessment results for improvement. Our standards on *Educational Effectiveness* and *The Academic Program* are relevant here:

Assessment of learning is based on verifiable statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. The process of understanding what and how students are learning focuses on the course, competency, program, and institutional level. Assessment has the support of the institution's academic and institutional leadership and the systematic involvement of faculty and appropriate staff (8.3).

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, employing external perspectives including, as appropriate, benchmarks and peer comparisons (8.5).

The results of assessment and quantitative measures of student success are a demonstrable factor in the institution's efforts to improve the learning opportunities and results for students (8.8).

The general education requirement is coherent and substantive. It embodies the institution's definition of an educated person and prepares students for the world in which they will live. The requirement informs the design of all general education courses, and provides criteria for its evaluation, including the assessment of what students learn (4.16).

As noted in the report, Manchester Community College's enrollment management plans include increasing credit and non-credit enrollment and improving retention through initiatives such as a

strategic academic schedule with fewer sections and increased class capacity, enhanced community outreach events, targeted online marketing, and grant-funded partnerships. In addition, while we are pleased to learn of increased retention among first-year under-prepared students participating in targeted retention programs, we concur with the College's assessment that there is room for improvement in overall retention rates. Therefore, we are gratified to learn of the College's efforts to support student retention, including Guided Pathways, meta-majors, and expansion of the FIRST (Foundations in Retention, Success, and Transition) program. We look forward to learning, in the Spring 2022 self-study, of Manchester Community College's success in achieving its goals to increase credit- and non-credit enrollment and to improve student retention. Our standard on *Students* provides this guidance:

Consistent with its mission, the institution sets and achieves realistic goals to enroll students who are broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve (*Students*, statement of the Standard).

The institution demonstrates its ability to admit students who can be successful in the institution's academic program, including specifically recruited populations. 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 (5.6).

We appreciate the College's candid observation that, despite hiring 28 new full-time faculty members in the last five years, "real gains in the full-time faculty ranks continue to be elusive." We note that the College experienced a decrease in the percentage of full-time faculty from 20% in Fall 2012 to 16% in Fall 2015 and understand that seven faculty positions went unfilled as of Fall 2016. We are, therefore, pleased to learn that the College plans to hire three full-time tenure track faculty by Fall 2018. We ask that the Spring 2022 self-study provide an update on MCC's continued efforts to assure the sufficiency of faculty, including full-time faculty, to meet the needs of the institution, as expressed in our standard on *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*:

There are an adequate number of faculty and academic staff, including librarians, advisors, and instructional designers, 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 include instruction, accessibility to students, and the systematic understanding of effective teaching/learning processes and outcomes in courses and programs for which they share responsibility; additional duties may include, e.g., student advisement, academic planning, and participation in policy-making, course and curricular development, research, and institutional governance (6.2).

The institution periodically evaluates the sufficiency of and support for academic staff and their effectiveness in teaching and advising, scholarship, service, and as appropriate to institutional mission, research and creative activity. The results of these evaluations are used to enhance fulfillment of the institution's mission (6.14).

The Commission notes the proposal by the President of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system to merge the current twelve community colleges into a single institution as soon as July 1, 2017. Such a change, or another significant re-organization, could result in a change in the schedule of monitoring of Manchester Community College. As you know, the Commission met with the president at its June meeting and will keep community college presidents, as well as the system, informed of its decisions.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Manchester Community College and hopes that its preparation has contributed to institutional 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 of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Matt Fleury. 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 Barbara Brittingham, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



David P. Angel

DPA/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Matt Fleury