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11/16/10

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November 10, 2010

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 September 16, 2010, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the report submitted by Manchester Community College regarding its plans to offer distance education programming and took the following action:

that the report on distance education submitted by Manchester Community College be accepted and distance education programming be included within the institution's accreditation, with an effective date of January 1, 2011;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Spring 2012 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, as well as the items specified for inclusion in our letter of May 30, 2007, the self-study prepared in advance of the Spring 2012 evaluation give emphasis to the College's success in:

- 1) implementing its plans to assess performance of distance education students through embedded learning outcomes;
- 2) providing academic and information support services to students studying at a distance;
- 3) offering appropriate training for both students and faculty in the use of technology necessary for distance learning;
- 4) ensuring continued financial support for its distance education programming.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

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The report submitted by Manchester Community College was accepted and distance education programming encompassed within the institution's accreditation because the Commission finds the activity to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

We take favorable note that Manchester Community College has located responsibility for distance learning with the Dean of Academic Affairs. The College has crafted a robust technical infrastructure to deliver its distance education programming, as well as procedures to verify the identity of its distance learning students. We find laudatory the College's collaborative efforts with three other Connecticut community colleges which have resulted in the receipt of a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) to pilot an Online Adult Success Center.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2012 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. In addition to the matters normally addressed in a self-study, as well as the items enumerated in our letter of May 30, 2007, we ask that Manchester Community College emphasize its success in four matters relating to its distance education programming. These matters are informed by our standards on *The Academic Program, Faculty, Students, and Library and Other Information Resources*.

We note with approval that online courses have the same objectives and student learning outcomes as those offered face-to-face and that the College has implemented embedded assessments to determine students' achievement of these. In the self-study prepared in advance of the Spring 2012 comprehensive evaluation, we look forward to learning of the results of these assessment activities. We find guidance here in our standard on *The Academic Program*:

The institution offering programs and courses ... via distance learning demonstrates that students completing these programs or courses acquire levels of knowledge, understanding, and competencies equivalent to those achieved in similar programs offered in more traditional time periods and modalities (4.37).

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).

We commend the College for the number and variety of services that it makes available remotely, including course registration, applying for and checking financial aid, and voting in student elections. The College has engaged the services of two external entities to provide additional services to its online students. Through InfoAnytime, students can receive reference assistance from a professional librarian; eTutoring.org provides tutoring assistance in writing, math, accounting and statistics. We wish to be apprised, through the information provided in the Spring 2012 self-study, of the effectiveness of these arrangements in providing the requisite support to the College's distance learning students. We are informed by our standards on *Library and Other Information Resources, Students, and Faculty*:

The institution ensures appropriate access to library and information resources and services for all students regardless of program location or mode of delivery (7.9).

The institution offers an array of student services appropriate to its mission and the needs and goals of its students. The Commission recognizes the variations in services that are appropriate ... for programs delivered electronically. In all cases, the institution provides academic support services appropriate to the student body...and provides available and responsive information resources and services ... (6.8).

Faculty and other personnel responsible for academic advising are adequately informed and prepared to discharge their advising functions. Resources are adequate to ensure the quality of advising for students regardless of the location of instruction or the mode of delivery (5.17).

We understand that students, upon registering for an online class, are automatically enrolled in an orientation shell within BlackBoard Vista. Faculty can enroll in the nine-week iTeachEssentials course and can also receive one-on-one support from the College's Department of Educational Technology and Distance Learning. We look forward to learning, in the self-study prepared for the Spring 2012 comprehensive evaluation, of the College's appraisal of the effectiveness of these types of support. Relevant here are our standards on *The Academic Program* and *Faculty*:

The institution ensures that students use information resources and information technology as an integral part of their education. The institution provides appropriate orientation and training for use of these resources, as well as instruction and support in information literacy and information technology appropriate to the degree level and field of study (4.6).

The institution endeavors to enhance the quality of teaching and learning wherever and however courses and programs are offered (5.16).

Finally, the Spring 2012 comprehensive evaluation will afford the College the opportunity to demonstrate that it continues to provide sufficient financial support so that its distance education programming "meets the standards of quality of the institution and the Commission's Standards and policies (4.10)."

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Manchester Community College and hopes its preparation has contributed to institutional improvement. We appreciate 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 Dr. Louise S. Berry. The institution is free to release information about the evaluation 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, Director of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Mary Jo Maydew

MJM/slo

Enclosure

cc: Dr. Louise S. Berry