

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES, INC.
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

February 15, 2013

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Dr. Adam F. Falk
President
Williams College
880 Main Street
Williamstown, MA 01267

Dear President Falk:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on November 15, 2012, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the fifth-year interim report submitted by Williams College and voted to take the following action:

that the fifth-year interim report submitted by Williams College be accepted;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2017 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2017 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in:

1. continuing to address its goals to diversify the faculty and student body as specified for attention in the Fall 2012 interim report;
2. implementing its plans to develop a retirement plan that involves a phased reduction in workload and differential payouts according to age.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The Commission commends Williams College for its continued efforts to implement the priorities of its "2020 Project" while at the same time addressing the impact of the financial crisis. During this period, Williams experienced a substantial reduction in its endowment, which has recovered since then to its July 2007 level (\$1.8 billion). Also since 2007, the administration of the institution was reorganized with increased attention given to the needs of the staff community. The College also implemented a number of initiatives that addressed its goals for diversity, which among students increased from 36% to 41%, supported significantly by

increases in financial aid from \$25.6 million in 2006-07 to \$42.9 million in 2010-11. Finally, we note with approval that, despite budget challenges, library and information resources, and physical and technological resources have expanded including the addition of new buildings and the renewal and maintenance of others.

Through the third section of the report, "Assessment, Retention, and Student Success," Williams describes its implementation of a comprehensive approach to the assessment of student learning, primarily through the implementation of a series of structured and sophisticated student surveys to determine what and how students learn. In addition, external reviews of 18 departments and programs have resulted in significant changes to the curriculum, including the addition of a dance department, as well as three new majors (two in Environmental Studies and one in Arabic Studies).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2017 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. We ask that the self-study address two matters related to our standards on *Faculty, Students, and Integrity*.

We understand that Williams College has continued to address its goals to diversify the faculty and student body, with its "Diversity Action Research Team" identifying challenges, proposing data analysis and interventions, and developing ways to measure results. However, the diversity of faculty has increased only slightly since 2006-2007 from 19 to 21%. We note favorably that an associate dean for institutional diversity, a tenured faculty member, has helped focus more attention during the hiring process, identifying and recruiting minority candidates. We note that the Bolin Fellowship program, which appoints emerging scholars and teachers from underrepresented groups, increased from two to four per year, and that since 2008-09 six former Bolin fellows have achieved tenured or tenure-track positions. As part of the self-study for the Fall 2017 review, we look forward to learning about the institution's continued progress to achieve its goals for diversity, with particular attention given to the diversity among faculty. The Standards on *Faculty, Students and Integrity* should continue to inform this work:

The institution employs an open and orderly process for recruiting and appointing its faculty. Faculty participate in the search process for new members of the instructional staff. The institution ensures equal employment opportunity consistent with legal requirements and any other dimensions of its own choosing; compatible with its mission and purposes, it addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity among its faculty. (5.4)

Consistent with its mission, the institution sets and achieves realistic goals to enroll a student body that is broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve and addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity among its students. (6.1)

The institution offers an array of student services appropriate to its mission and the needs and goals of its students... In providing services, in accordance with its mission and purposes, the institution adheres to both the spirit and intent of equal opportunity and its own goals for diversity. (6.11)

The institution adheres to non-discriminatory policies and practices in recruitment, admissions, employment, evaluation, disciplinary action, and advancement. It fosters an atmosphere within the institutional community that respects and supports people of diverse characteristics and backgrounds. (11.5)


The Commission appreciates the institution's candid acknowledgment of challenges associated with both the seniority of the faculty and the high percentage of faculty who are tenured. We note that the "Faculty Compensation Committee" is proposing a retirement plan which involves a phased reduction in workload and differential payouts according to age. We welcome information within the next self-study regarding the College's progress in maintaining "an appropriately qualified instructional staff whose profile is consistent with the institution's mission and purposes." (5.6)

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Williams 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. Gregory A. Mavis. 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, Director of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Jean A. Wyld

JAW/sjp

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Gregory A. Mavis