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



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April 24, 2018

Dr. Protik K. Majumder
Interim President/Barclay Jermain Professor of Natural Philosophy
Williams College
PO Box 687
Williamstown, MA 01267

Dear President Majumder:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 2, 2018, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Williams College:

that Williams College be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit an interim (fifth-year) report for consideration in Fall 2022;

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

1. developing a comprehensive and integrated approach to strategic planning with attention to strengthening the use of data to inform planning and decision-making;
2. establishing a comprehensive approach to assessing student learning outcomes at the institutional level and in the General Education program;
3. diversifying its faculty and academic staff and assuring appropriate resources are available to support its increasingly diverse student body;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2027.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

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

We join the visiting team in congratulating Williams College (Williams) for submitting an excellent self-study that documents the College's many strengths and highlights its accomplishments over the last decade. Noteworthy is the College's active and engaged Board of Trustees, accomplished faculty and staff who are deeply committed to student learning, and diverse and highly motivated student body. Consistently high graduation rates of 94% to 96% and the growth in Williams' financial assets to over \$3.5 billion over the last ten years are especially impressive. As Williams prepares to welcome a new president, we support the judgment of the College that this is an opportune "moment in time" to reflect on the institution's mission and goals and evaluate the challenges and opportunities presented by a world that is "changing at a different frequency" than Williams. As an extraordinary institution that has built upon its long history as a distinguished liberal arts institution, Williams College is well positioned to continue achieving its mission as it "thinks seriously about its future."

Commission policy requires an interim (fifth-year) 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 interim reports the College is asked, in Fall 2022, to report on three matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*; *Educational Effectiveness*; *Students*; and *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*.

We understand from the visiting team that, while Williams engages in robust decentralized planning activities, the College has not yet established a comprehensive strategic plan, institutional data are not systematically used to inform planning, and decisions are typically made by individual departments or "sectors." We therefore appreciate the institution's insight that, once the new president is on board, the opportunity will be ripe for Williams to evaluate its approach to strategic planning and decision-making. Accordingly, we look forward, in the interim report submitted for consideration in Fall 2022, to receiving information about this matter as evidence that "[t]he institution systematically collects and uses data necessary to support its planning efforts and to enhance institutional effectiveness" (2.2). Our standard on *Planning and Evaluation* provides this additional guidance:

Planning and evaluation are systematic, comprehensive, broad-based, integrated, and appropriate to the institution. They involve the participation of individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes and include external perspectives. Results of planning and evaluation are regularly communicated to appropriate institutional constituencies. The institution allocates sufficient resources for its planning and evaluation efforts (2.1).

While we note with approval that Williams has made great strides in assessing student learning outcomes, particularly at the course and program levels, we also recognize that the College has not yet established a comprehensive approach to systematically assess student learning outcomes at an institutional level or in the General Education program. We are therefore encouraged to learn that Williams has convened groups to discuss the assessment of general education skills and competencies, demonstrating the institution's commitment to strengthening its assessment practices. We ask that the Fall 2022 interim report update the Commission on its progress in this area as informed by our standard on *Educational Effectiveness*:

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 defines measures of student success and levels of achievement appropriate to its mission, modalities and locations of instruction, and student body, including any specifically recruited populations. These measures include rates of progression, retention, transfer, and graduation; default and loan repayment rates; licensure passage rates; and employment (8.6).

Finally, we note that Williams is planning for the pending retirement of 100 faculty members, and we concur that this is a “transitional moment” in the institution’s history. In addition to hiring faculty who will play a strong role in the College’s evolving academic enterprise, Williams plans to be intentional in its efforts to select faculty members who reflect the diversity of its student population, “bring more diverse voices to campus,” and demonstrate a “special balance of teacher/scholar/citizen.” We further support the observation from the College’s self-study that as its student body becomes more diverse “along many dimensions,” Williams will need to assure it has “appropriate institutional structures in place to support all students.” We look forward, in the Fall 2022 interim report, to learning of the institution’s success in these matters, consistent with our standards on *Students and Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*:

The institution 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 educational goals. The institution provides students with information and guidance regarding opportunities and experiences that may help ensure their educational success (5.7).

The institution ... addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity among its faculty and academic staff (6.5).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2027 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 Williams College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Dukes Love, Provost and Professor of Economics, and Robert Zimmer, 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. Michael Eisenson. The institution is free to release information about the evaluation and the Commission’s action to others, in accordance with the enclosed policy on Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions.

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.

Dr. Protik K. Majumder
April 24, 2018
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If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Barbara Brittingham,
President of the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David P. Angel".

David P. Angel

DPA/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Michael Eisenson
Visiting Team



COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

3 Burlington Woods, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514

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Public Disclosure of Information About Affiliated Institutions

The following policy governs the release of information regarding the status of affiliated colleges and universities by institutions and by 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. Because of the potential to be misleading, institutions are asked not to publish or otherwise disseminate excerpts from these materials.

While the Commission does not ordinarily release copies of self-studies, progress reports, evaluation reports, or other documents related to the accreditation of individual institutions, it believes it to be good practice for institutions to make these materials available, in their entirety, after notification of Commission action.

The Commission will release information on actions of show cause or deferral. If such information is also released by the institution in question or is otherwise made public, the Commission will respond to related inquiries and may issue revised public statement.

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 in an immediate and timely way, the Commission, acting through its President, will release a public statement in such form and content as it deems desirable providing correct information. This may include release of notification letters sent by the Commission to the institution, and/or a press release.

2. Published Statement on Accredited Status

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

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

Accreditation of an institution of higher education by Commission 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 Commission 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 Commission 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
3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514
(781) 425 7785
E-Mail: cihe@neasc.org

The shorter statement that an institution may choose for announcing its accredited status follows:

_____ College (University) is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.

Inquiries regarding the accreditation status by the Commission should be directed to the administrative staff of the institution. Individuals may also contact:

**Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
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(781) 425 7785
E-Mail: cihe@neasc.org**

Accreditation by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education has reference to the institution as a whole. Therefore, statements like “fully accredited” or “this program is accredited by the Commission” or “this degree is accredited by the Commission” 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 Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. 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.

Candidacy is not accreditation nor does it assure eventual accreditation.

Inquiries regarding the status of an institution affiliated with the Commission should be directed to the administrative staff of the college or university. Individuals may also contact:

**Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
New England Association of Schools and Colleges
3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514
(781) 425 7785
E-Mail: cihe@neasc.org**

4. **Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions by the Commission**

The Commission publishes the following information about member and candidate institutions on its website:

- Name of the institution
- The date of initial accreditation and/or when candidacy was granted
- Accreditation status (member or candidate)
- Address
- Phone and fax numbers
- CEO name and title
- Degree levels awarded
- Dates of initial accreditation (or candidacy), last review and next review
- Locations of off-campus instructional sites
- The basis for Commission action affecting candidacy or accreditation status
- 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 date and nature of any show-cause for denial of candidacy or accreditation, probation, or withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation status
- The extent of, or limitations on, the status of affiliation
- In cases of adverse action (denial or withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation, placing an institution on probation), the Commission's reasons for 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. The institution will also be offered the opportunity to make its official comment; if the institution does make

an official comment, the comment will be made available by the Commission

- For institutions whose candidacy or accreditation has been withdrawn, the date of, and reasons for, withdrawal.

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 on Institutions of Higher Education. In responding to inquiries, the Commission will endeavor to do so.

The Commission may also publish on its website a public statement about an action taken regarding a member or candidate institution when further information about the action and the Commission's reasons for taking the action would be helpful to members of the public.

Adverse actions (placement of an institution on probation, denial of candidate status or accreditation, and withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation) are communicated when the decision becomes final (i.e., when the institution does not appeal or when the appeals process is completed and the decision is upheld). The Commission, at its discretion, may make the adverse action public before the decision is final or the appeal is completed. In so doing, the Commission will provide information about the appeal process.

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. The Commission will also make public on its website the basis for these decisions. Such actions include:

A final decision to:

Grant candidacy or accreditation

Continue an institution in accreditation

Deny or withdraw the candidacy or 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.

Per federal regulation, within 60 days of a final decision to take an adverse action (probation or withdrawal of accreditation), the Commission will submit a copy of the final decision letter to the Secretary of Education. The Secretary will make the letter public.

November 1998

September 2001

April 2010

September 2011

Editorial Changes, March 2014

April 2015

April 2017