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December 6, 2005

Dr. David G. Carter  
President  
Eastern Connecticut State University  
83 Windham Street  
Willimantic, CT 06226

Dear President Carter:

I write to inform you that at its meeting on November 3, 2005, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the fifth-year interim report submitted by Eastern Connecticut State University and voted to take the following action:

that the fifth-year interim report submitted by Eastern Connecticut State University be accepted;

that the institutional report on distance education programming submitted by Eastern Connecticut State University be accepted and the programming be included within the institution's accreditation;

that the scheduling of the next comprehensive evaluation for Fall 2010 be confirmed;

that the self-study undertaken in preparation for the comprehensive evaluation give particular emphasis to the University's continued success in:

aligning its programs and faculty roles with its liberal arts university mission;

implementing the new general education program including a detailed assessment of its experience with the program.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

We commend Eastern Connecticut for a thorough fifth-year report that addresses the concerns framed by the Commission at the conclusion of the University's last comprehensive review. The University has developed better information on retention and graduation rates, and this has contributed to an improved academic profile of entering students as well as improved graduation and retention rates. Eastern Connecticut has demonstrated a strong commitment to its role as a public liberal arts institution as exemplified by some program additions in the arts and sciences, and a lengthy and fruitful dialogue concerning general education. The University has also demonstrated considerable success in addressing assessment that is faculty-based and that provides useful and concrete evidence to enhance academic effectiveness. The University's report on distance education programming specifically pertaining to the new Master's degree program in Educational Technology indicates that the program's objectives are clear and its curriculum is sufficient in both breadth and depth. There is substantial technology infrastructure which includes a 24/7 help desk, appropriate library services, and sufficient support for faculty.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2010 is consistent with Commission policy on Periodic Review requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive visit at least once every ten years.

The areas to be given emphasis in the self-study prepared for the University's next comprehensive evaluation relate to our standards on *Mission and Purposes, Planning and Evaluation, Programs and Instruction, and Faculty*.

Although the institution provides clear evidence of a commitment to its role as the public liberal arts university of Connecticut, many program changes and additions have occurred in professional fields at the graduate level. Within the next self-study, we look forward to learning about the institution's success in aligning its programs and faculty roles with its liberal arts university mission. Our standards on *Mission and Purposes, Programs and Instruction, and Faculty* provide guidance here.

The mission and purposes of the institution are widely understood by its trustees, faculty, and administration. They provide direction to the curricula and other activities. Specific objectives, reflective of the institution's overall mission and purposes, are developed for the institution's individual units (1.3).

The institution's programs are consistent with and serve to fulfill its mission and purposes. Each educational program demonstrates consistency through its goals, structure, and content; policies and procedures for admission and retention; instructional methods and procedures; and the nature, quality, and extent of student learning and achievement . . . (4.2).

Faculty assignments and workloads are consistent with the institution's mission and purposes. They are equitably determined to allow faculty members adequate time to provide effective instruction, participate in scholarship, research, and service compatible with the mission of the institution. Faculty workloads are reappraised periodically and adjusted as institutional conditions change (5.8).

Given that the dialogue regarding general education took place over four years, and that the implementation of the new program will not take effect until the Fall of 2007, we look forward to learning about progress with implementing the new general education program including a detailed assessment of the University's experience with the program. Our standards on *Planning and Evaluation and Programs and Instruction* provide guidance here.

The institution systematically applies information obtained through its evaluation activities to inform institutional planning, thereby enhancing institutional effectiveness especially as it relates to student achievement (2.5).

The general education requirement is coherent and substantive, and it embodies the institution's definition of an educated person. The requirement informs the design of all general education courses, and provides criteria for its evaluation (4.15).

Graduates successfully completing an undergraduate program demonstrate competence in written and oral communication in English; the ability for scientific and quantitative reasoning, for critical analysis and logical thinking; and the capability for continuing learning. They also demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific, historical, and social phenomena, and a knowledge and appreciation of the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of humankind. In addition, graduates demonstrate an in-depth understanding of an area of knowledge or practice and of its interrelatedness with other areas (4.19).

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 hopes that the evaluation process 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 University'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. Lawrence McHugh. 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, Interim Director of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Terrence J. MacTaggart

TJM/slo

cc: Mr. Lawrence McHugh