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December 20, 2018

Dr. Rebecca Wyke
President
University of Maine at Augusta
46 University Drive
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Dear President Wyke:

I write to inform you that at its meeting on November 16, 2018, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the report submitted by University of Maine at Augusta, as well as the report of the visiting team, and took the following action:

that the report submitted by University of Maine at Augusta be accepted;

that the inclusion of the institution's Second Chance Pell sites (Maine State Prison in Warren and Maine Correctional Center in Windham) in its accreditation be confirmed;

that the interim (fifth-year) report scheduled for consideration in Spring 2020 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all interim reports as well as the matters specified in our letters of February 9, 2016, the institution give emphasis to its success in:

- 1) using metrics for student success, including retention and graduation rates, for all students, particularly those students not represented in traditional IPEDS measures;
- 2) decreasing the institution's student loan default rate; and
- 3) continuing the prison program, either through continued federal funding or alternative measures for serving this population of students;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Spring 2025 be confirmed.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

The report submitted by University of Maine at Augusta (UMA) was accepted because it was responsive to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letter of February 9, 2016. As validated by the report of the visiting team, the University has taken a number of steps to improve the retention and graduation rates of its student population, including transferring the Academic Advising Office and Division of Student Development to Academic Affairs, creating a new Division of Enrollment Management and Marketing, and starting a new Class Steward Program. Also, UMA is developing a student-centered mobile app to provide positive behavioral nudges to students, and the institution hopes that its new early college program will contribute to student retention and graduation. We are gratified to learn that the incoming group of students is “better prepared” and “taking more credits” than earlier cohorts. UMA’s U.S. Department of Education three-year rolling average loan default rate has dropped to 17.1%, down from 22.7% in 2011 and 18.6% in 2014. A supplemental Title III grant will help strengthen the institution’s support in this area for personal financial literacy, financial aid award education, and default prevention services. Finally, the Commission commends UMA for its federal pilot Second Chance Pell program scheduled to operate through September 2019, including its strong retention and success rate with 67 degrees awarded in 12 years and virtually no recidivism.

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 and the items specified for attention in the Commission’s letter of February 9, 2016, University of Maine at Augusta is asked, in Spring 2020, to report on three matters related to our standards on *Educational Effectiveness* and *Mission and Purposes*.

The Commission notes the student population served by UMA: the average age is 33, 73% are Pell-eligible, 32% are first generation college students, and 70% attend college part-time; and it understands that lower retention and graduation rates are typical among student bodies with these characteristics. We also note that UMA has multiple centers and locations beyond Augusta that are central to its mission but also challenging with respect to ensuring appropriate student support. We note, too, experiments within the University of Maine System, such as the UMA collaboration with University of Maine Orono to support students whose first choice is the Orono campus but who were not initially accepted. As we note above, UMA has taken several steps to improve the success of its student body. Through the interim report due in Spring 2020, we look forward to learning more about how the University is using metrics of student success for institutional improvement, including retention and graduation rates for all students, particularly those not represented in traditional IPEDS measures. We appreciate UMA’s openness to finding and using measures that are both appropriate for UMA’s student body composition and reflect public expectations of success for higher education institutions, consistent with our standard on *Educational Effectiveness*, which speaks to how the institution “demonstrates its effectiveness by ensuring satisfactory levels of student achievement on mission-appropriate student outcomes.” (statement of the standard)

We commend UMA for the steps that it has taken to reduce the institution’s student loan default rate and for its intention to make further progress in this area. The Commission looks forward to learning of that continued progress through the Spring 2020 interim report. We note that our standard on *Educational Effectiveness* identifies “default and loan repayment rates” (8.6) as a measure of institutional success. Here we note also the more recent availability of loan repayment rates, which UMA may also wish to include in its interim report.

Finally, we commend UMA for its commitment to the prison program and its success as measured by the number of graduates and their low recidivism rates. We understand the uncertainty regarding continuing federal funding for this program, and through the interim report

in Spring 2020, consistent with our standard on *Mission and Purposes*, look forward to learning of the institution's continuing success in this endeavor with the prison population among "the students the institution seeks to serve" (1.1).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2025 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years.

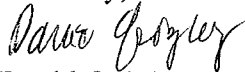
The Commission expressed appreciation for the report prepared by University of Maine at Augusta and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Joseph Szakas, Vice President of Academic Affairs/Provost, Gregory Fahey, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and Hirosuke Honda, Director of Institutional Research, as well as Patricia Meservey, 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 and the head of the state system on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to James Erwin and James Page. 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.

If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Barbara Brittingham, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



David Quigley

DQ/sjp

Enclosures

cc: James Erwin
James Page
Visiting team