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

November 29, 2000

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Dr. Marc A. vanderHeyden
President
Saint Michael's College
Winooski Park
Colchester, VT 05439-0001

Dear President vanderHeyden:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on November 10, 2000, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Saint Michael's College:

that Saint Michael's College be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit a fifth-year report for consideration in the Spring 2005;

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

1. long-range planning efforts, including the development of a clear and realistic set of priorities;
2. assuring the quality of faculty advising students in the undergraduate program, particularly given the institution's mix of full-time and adjunct faculty;
3. improving diversity on campus among faculty, staff, and students, and providing a welcoming environment to ALANA students in keeping with the institution's own goals;
4. continuing to develop and implement its program to assess the learning outcomes of students and using the results for improvement of the academic program;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Spring, 2010.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The continuation of Saint Michael's College in accreditation is based on the Commission's finding that the College substantially meets the *Standards for Accreditation*. The College's mission is clearly stated and well embraced by the College community; it provides a solid foundation for planning and evaluation in all areas of the institution. The decision to move away from the "small university" model and to return to the liberal arts historical mission can focus the institution on developing an agenda for continuing enhancement of its effectiveness. The College has undertaken a vigorous agenda of development and improvement and is to be commended for its progress to date, including successfully integrating the undergraduate and graduate programs and reorganizing the board's committees. The College's strong record in attracting bilingual and trilingual faculty, its history with ESL and EFL programs, and its increasing number of students studying abroad provide a solid foundation for the development of the international aspect of the institution.

The requirement of a fifth-year report is consistent with the Commission's policy on Periodic Review; its purpose is to provide the Commission an opportunity to appraise the institution's current status. The areas to be given emphasis in the College's fifth-year report are matters related to the standards on *Planning and Evaluation, Programs and Instruction, Student Services, and Faculty*.

Saint Michael's College has undertaken an ambitious agenda for institutional improvement and has generated a set of possible initiatives that will require, through continued planning, the establishment of "feasible priorities" (2.3) as well as the generation of additional resources. Beyond attracting strong replacements for retiring faculty members over the next several years, the institution will need to make choices about which initiatives to pursue and how to marshal the resources necessary to pursue those priorities. The Commission looks forward to learning of these choices and how they influence the continuing development of the institution's mission, its future planning, and its overall effectiveness.

Throughout the process of the comprehensive evaluation, as indicated in both the self-study and the team report, there was general agreement that the advising of undergraduate students is an area in need of improvement. Plans to reduce the number of undergraduate students while increasing the number of full-time faculty will ensure that faculty are "sufficiently numerous" (5.3) to carry out their responsibilities in advising, as well as allowing additional time to work on the curriculum, assessment, and scholarly activity. Through the fifth-year report, the Commission can become apprised of the institution's success in this area.

The College has indicated that increasing the diversity, especially among the student body, is a high priority. Particularly given the location challenges of Saint Michael's College, the Commission is pleased to note the creative effort being given to developing a more diverse student body, such as through attracting and supporting cohorts of students, and looks forward to learning of the College's success in this area through the fifth-year report.

The fifth-year report should also give emphasis to how the institution is assessing student learning outcomes and using the results for improvement. The Commission notes that there appears to be a useful foundation in this area, with creative ideas from the faculty, and enhanced investment in having useful data throughout the institution, along with a broad and deep commitment ensuring excellence in the undergraduate program.

Finally, the scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring, 2010, is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive visit at least once every ten years.

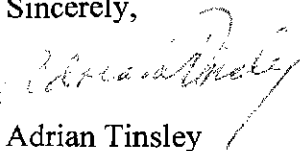
You will note that the Commission has specified no length or term of accreditation. Accreditation is a continuing relationship that is reconsidered when necessary. Thus, while the Commission has indicated the timing of the next comprehensive evaluation, the schedule should not be unduly emphasized because it is subject to change.

The Commission appreciated the opportunity to meet with you and your board chair, Mr. Peter Worrell, and with the team chairperson, Dr. Donald Harward. We also appreciate your cooperation in the effort to provide public assurance of the quality of higher education in New England and hope that the efforts made at continuing self-evaluation will contribute to institutions' self-improvement.

You are encouraged to share this letter with members of the College community. 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. Worrell. The institution is free to release information about the evaluation and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

Please contact Charles M. Cook, Director of the Commission, should you have any questions regarding the Commission's action.

Sincerely,



Adrian Tinsley

AT/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Peter Worrell
Visiting Team