



Founded in 1885

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

RECEIVED

MAR 30 2006

PRESIDENTS OFFICE

TERRENCE J. MAC TAGGART, Chair (2006)  
Research Professor  
University of Maine System

JUDITH R. GORDON, Vice Chair (2007)  
Professor of Management  
Boston College

MARY JO MAYDEW (2005)  
Vice President for Finance and Administration  
Mount Holyoke College

GAI CARPENTER (2006)  
Director  
Library and Information Services  
Hampshire College

ALFRED L. CARTER (2006)  
Dean of Students  
Manchester Community College

JAMES P. LEHENY (2006)  
Associate Chancellor  
University of Massachusetts Amherst

PETER NESSEN (2006)  
Boston, MA

KATHRYN T. SPOEHR (2006)  
Professor of Cognitive & Linguistic Sciences  
Brown University

PAUL J. LeBLANC (2007)  
President  
Southern New Hampshire University

HUBERT D. MAULTSBY (2007)  
Provost  
Norwich University

WILLIAM D. McGARRY (2007)  
President  
Anna Maria College

JAMES L. MORSE (2007)  
Charlotte, VT

ELSA NUNEZ (2007)  
Vice Chancellor for Academic  
and Student Affairs  
University of Maine System

IRVIN BELANGER (2008)  
Gouldsboro, ME

SANDRA FEATHERMAN (2008)  
President  
University of New England

MARY L. FIFIELD (2008)  
President  
Bunker Hill Community College

KARLA H. FOX (2008)  
Professor of Business Administration  
University of Connecticut

WILLIAM A. McINTYRE (2008)  
Director Learning Resources  
New Hampshire Community Technical College

JOSEPH W. McNABB (2008)  
President  
Caritas Laboure College

JILL N. REICH (2008)  
Vice President for Academic Affairs  
and Dean of Faculty  
Bates College

**Director of the Commission**  
BARBARA E. BRITTINGHAM  
E-Mail: bbrittingham@neasc.org

**Deputy Director of the Commission**  
PATRICIA M. O'BRIEN, SND  
E-Mail: pobrien@neasc.org

**Associate Director of the Commission**  
ROBERT C. FROH  
E-Mail: rfroh@neasc.org

March 27, 2006

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

Dear President vanderHeyden:

I write to inform you that at its meeting on March 2, 2006, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the fifth-year interim report submitted by Saint Michael's College and voted to take the following action:

that the fifth-year interim report submitted by Saint Michael's College be accepted;

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

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

1. implementing the institution's strategic plan including revisions and extensions of the plan beyond the year 2010;
2. evaluating and improving advising programs including addressing faculty workload issues so that students are assured appropriate advising;
3. enhancing campus diversity consistent with the institution's own goals which include recruiting a diverse set of students, and developing programs which support ALANA students;
4. implementing student outcomes assessment of academic programs, including external perspectives and using the results of such assessment to improve programs.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

We commend St. Michael's College for adopting a long-range plan extending to the year 2010 and for academic and financial planning which appears well coordinated and reflective of a strong sense of mission and priorities. The newly designed advising program supports the academic principles underlying the curriculum, and advising by faculty is now considered by the institution as a 'teaching' rather than as a 'service' activity. Also, the institution has taken significant steps to clarify and broaden its own definition of diversity, including the appointment of a new Director of Multi-Cultural Affairs and new initiatives with recruitment, financial aid, and diversity programs to support more ALANA students. Moreover, the College continues to make progress in the assessment of student learning.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 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 that the Commission requests be given special emphasis in the self-study prepared for the College's next comprehensive evaluation relate to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*, *The Academic Program*, *Students* and *Faculty*.

St. Michael's has made significant progress in developing and implementing a strategic plan that extends to the year 2010. As part of the comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2010, we look forward to hearing about the progress that the College has made in reaching its identified goals and strategies, and what efforts have been made to extend the strategic plan beyond 2010. Our standard on *Planning and Evaluation* is informative here:

The institution undertakes short- and long-term planning, including realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. The institution systematically collects and uses data necessary to support its planning efforts and to enhance institutional effectiveness. It plans for and responds to financial and other contingencies, establishes feasible priorities, and develops a realistic course of action to achieve identified objectives... (2.2).

The institution determines the effectiveness of its planning and evaluation activities on an ongoing basis. Results of these activities are used to further enhance the institution's implementation of its purposes and objectives (2.7).

We applaud the College for its work in strengthening its academic advising program. However, the evaluation of this newly designed undergraduate advising system relies solely on the use of student evaluations and could benefit by incorporating additional perspectives and methods. Furthermore, the College reports that the distribution of the advising load remains a difficult issue in that there are significant differences among departments in how the advising load is distributed, and this has reinforced the sense that advising remains a secondary responsibility of faculty. As part of the next comprehensive evaluation, we look forward to learning about the institution's continuing efforts to evaluate and strengthen the advising program. Relevant here is our standard on *Faculty*:

... The institution employs effective procedures for the regular evaluation of faculty appointments, performance, and retention. The evaluative criteria reflect the mission and purposes of the institution and the importance it attaches to the various responsibilities of faculty, e.g., teaching, advising, assessment, scholarship, creative activities, research, and professional and community service... (5.10).

The institution has in place an effective system of academic advising that meets student needs for information and advice and is compatible with its educational objectives. Faculty

and other personnel responsible for academic advising are adequately informed and prepared to discharge their advising functions. Resources are adequate to ensure the quality of advising for students regardless of the location of instruction or the mode of delivery (5.17).

The College has taken significant steps with its goals for increasing diversity among students through increased staff and program support for recruiting and retaining ALANA students. However, progress is slow and will require continued attention. We look forward to learning about continued progress as part of the next comprehensive evaluation. Relevant here is our standard on *Students*:

The institution offers an array of student services appropriate to its mission and the needs and goals of its students... The Commission also recognizes the differences in circumstances and goals of students pursuing degrees. In all cases, the institution provides academic support services appropriate to the student body... 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 (6.8).

In implementing outcomes assessment, the College has made considerable progress with student retention and co-curricular programs, and has developed significant survey efforts including senior and alumni surveys and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). However, department-based assessment has been slow to evolve. We look forward to learning about more steady progress with program level assessment as part of the next comprehensive evaluation. Our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *The Academic Program* provide guidance here:

The institution has a system of periodic review of academic and other programs that includes the use of external perspectives (2.5).

The institution undertakes academic planning and evaluation as part of its overall planning and evaluation to enhance the achievement of institutional mission and program objectives. These activities are realistic and take into account stated goals and available resources. The evaluation of existing programs includes an external perspective and assessment of their effectiveness. Additions and deletions of programs are consistent with institutional mission and capacity, faculty expertise, student needs, and the availability of sufficient resources required for the development and improvement of academic programs. The institution allocates resources on the basis of its academic planning, needs, and objectives (4.9).

The institution implements and supports a systematic and broad-based approach to the assessment of student learning focused on educational improvement through understanding what and how students are learning through their academic program and, as appropriate, through experiences outside the classroom... (4.44).

The institution's approach to understanding student learning focuses on the course, program, and institutional level. Data and other evidence generated through this approach are considered at the appropriate level of focus, with the results being a demonstrable factor in improving the learning opportunities and results for students (4.45).

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.

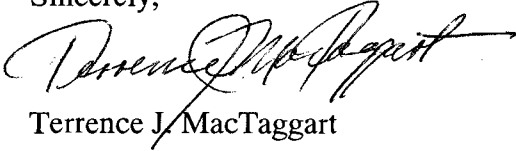
Dr. Marc A. vanderHeyden  
March 27, 2006  
Page 4

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 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. James Wall. 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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Terrence J. MacTaggart".

Terrence J. MacTaggart

TJM/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. James Wall