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November 17, 2009

Dr. Carole A. Cowan  
President  
Middlesex Community College  
591 Springs Road  
Bedford, MA 01730

Dear President Cowan:

I write to inform you that at its meeting on September 18, 2009, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the fifth-year interim report submitted by Middlesex Community College and voted to take the following action:

that the fifth-year interim report submitted by Middlesex Community College be accepted;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2014 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2014 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's continued success with:

1. assessing the effectiveness of the institution's revised program review process;
2. achieving its goals for the diversity of adjunct faculty;
3. expanding support for student services in response to the growing full-time student population;
4. increasing revenue from external sources.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The Commission commends Middlesex Community College for a comprehensive fifth-year report which demonstrates great strides in many areas of the College, particularly those noted as areas of special emphasis in our letter of May 10, 2005. The College achieved the goals articulated in its strategic plan, demonstrated best practices with regard to budget planning by increasing transparency and integration with the strategic planning, and used the budget planning process to develop

initiatives that respond to current financial challenges. Finally, we appreciate how the institution completed the Student Achievement and Success forms and integrated the data from these forms into the narrative of the report.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2014 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. The items the Commission asks to be given special emphasis within the self-study prepared for the comprehensive evaluation are matters related to our standards on *The Academic Program, Faculty, Students and Financial Resources*.

We take favorable note of the College's implementation of a revised program review process that includes a strengthened emphasis on the assessment of student learning. We are gratified to learn that 20 academic and co-curricular programs/departments/areas have completed their first program review, 26 programs are in the process, and 36 additional programs are scheduled to begin the process prior to the 2014 comprehensive review. Through the self-study prepared for this comprehensive evaluation, we look forward to understanding what the institution has learned as it completes a full round of program reviews. Our standard on *The Academic Program* informs us here:

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's system of periodic review of academic programs includes a focus on understanding what and how students learn as a result of the program (4.48).

The College has made diversity a priority and has experienced significant gains in the diversity of faculty and staff (over the last five years, 8 of 35 new full-time faculty hired were faculty of color). However, we understand the percentage of adjunct faculty of color has decreased (from 5.7%, 21 of 363, in 2004 to 3.1%, 13 of 415, in 2008). Within the self-study for the 2014 comprehensive review, we look forward to learning about the University's efforts to increase the diversity of part-time faculty as directed by the College's goals, and with guidance from our standard on *Faculty*:

The institution employs an open and orderly process for recruiting and appointing its faculty. Faculty participate in the search process for new members of the instructional staff. The institution ensures equal employment opportunity consistent with legal requirements and any other dimensions of its own choosing; compatible with its mission and purposes, it addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity of race, gender, and ethnicity. Faculty selection reflects the effectiveness of this process and results in a variety of intellectual backgrounds and training. Each prospective faculty member is provided with a written contract that states explicitly the nature and term of the initial appointment and, when applicable, institutional considerations that might preclude or limit future appointments (5.4).

The Commission takes favorable note of how the College has increased its support of student services to respond to the growing student population. Given that Title III grant support has contributed to enabling this increased support, as part of the next self-study, we look forward to learning how the College will continue to sustain this commitment when the grant is completed. Our standard on *Students* provides direction:

The institution offers an array of student services appropriate to its mission and the needs and goals of its students ... (6.8).

We find laudable the College's success in securing external funding as the budget allocation from the State has decreased. As part of the next self-study, we look forward to learning of the institution's success with the continued development of the annual fund, and with grants from private foundations, businesses, corporations, and state and federal agencies. We remind you of our standard on *Financial Resources*:

The institution preserves and enhances available financial resources sufficient to support its academic and other activities. It manages its financial resources and allocates them in a way that reflects its mission and purposes. It demonstrates the ability to respond to financial emergencies and unforeseen circumstances (9.1).

The institution is financially stable. Ostensible financial stability is not achieved at the expense of educational quality. Its stability and viability are not unduly dependent upon vulnerable financial resources or an historically narrow base of support. The institution's governing board retains appropriate autonomy in all budget and finance matters; this includes institutions that depend on financial support from an external agency (state, church, or other private or public entity) (9.2).

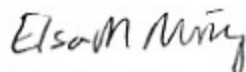
Opportunities identified for new sources of revenue are reviewed by the administration and board to ensure the integrity of the institution and the quality of the academic program are maintained and enhanced. The institution planning a substantive change demonstrates the financial capacity to ensure that the new initiative meets the standards of quality of the institution and the Commission's Standards (9.9).

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

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Middlesex Community College hopes that its preparation 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.

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

Sincerely,



Elsa M. Nuñez

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Enclosure

cc: Mr. William J. Chemelli