

Founded in 1885

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

PENINA M. GLAZER Chair (2003)
Marilyn Levin Professor of History
Hampshire College

TERRENCE J. MacTAGGART Vice Chair (2003)
Research Professor
University of Maine System

IRVIN BELANGER (2002)
Caribou, Maine

MARY L. FIFIELD (2002)
President
Bunker Hill Community College

KARLA H. FOX (2002)
Associate Vice Chancellor for University Affairs
University of Connecticut

BEVERLEY J. ANDERSON (2003)
Dean of Arts and Sciences
Eastern Connecticut State University

ALFRED L. CARTER (2003)
Dean of Students
Manchester Community College

JONATHAN K. FARNUM (2003)
Coventry, Rhode Island

ATTILA O. KLEIN (2003)
Professor of Biology
Brandeis University

MERRILY E. TAYLOR (2003)
University Librarian
Brown University

JUDITH R. GORDON (2004)
Associate Professor of Management
Boston College

PAUL LeBLANC (2004)
President
Marlboro College

WILLIAM D. McGARRY (2004)
President
Anna Maria College

JONATHAN DeFELICE, O.S.B. (2005)
President
Saint Anselm College

KATHARINE A. ENEGUESS (2005)
Concord, New Hampshire

SANDRA FEATHERMAN (2005)
President
University of New England

HELEN OUELLETTE (2005)
Vice President for Administration and Treasurer
Williams College

STANLEY J. YAROSEWICK (2005)
President
Keene State College

Director of the Commission
CHARLES M. COOK
E-Mail: ccook@neasc.org

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

Associate Director of the Commission
JUDITH B. WITTENBERG
E-Mail: jwittenberg@neasc.org

Associate Director for Assessment
ROBERT C. FROH
E-Mail: rfroh@neasc.org

March 26, 2003

Dr. Robert L. Carothers
President
University of Rhode Island
Green Hall, 35 Campus Avenue
Kingston, RI 02881-1303

Dear President Carothers:

I write to inform you that at its meeting on March 7, 2003, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the fifth-year interim report submitted by the University of Rhode Island and took the following action:

that the fifth-year interim report submitted by the University of Rhode Island be accepted;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall, 2007, be confirmed;

that the self-study developed in preparation for the comprehensive evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in:

continuing to assess student learning outcomes with particular reference to learning goals, the general education requirement specifically focusing upon how the University ensures that students master the eight critical skills and supports faculty in developing assessment skills;

undertaking financial planning in relation to changing economic conditions.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The interim report submitted by the University of Rhode Island was very responsive to the Commission's request for information and otherwise helpful in understanding the University's current state of development.

The Commission commends the University on its success toward assessing educational outcomes. It appears that progress has been made in extending assessment of educational outcomes from those

areas required to do so by professional accrediting bodies to other areas of the University. Additionally, the Commission applauds the establishment of a Commission on General Education to assess student learning outcomes through the definition of eight critical skills integrated into general education courses.

The Commission also recognizes the progress that has been made with a \$64 million renovation project for rehabilitated, modern student housing. Such plans for construction of apartment-style residences and the creation of residential learning communities represent a forward step. Additionally, the process of becoming a smoke-free campus, the renovated dining hall, a new ice rink, and a convocation center also contribute to an improvement of the quality of student life.

Finally, the Commission notes that the University has been on solid financial footing for the past five years with state appropriations increasing at an average of 5.7 percent per year. Increased grant funding, the completion of a capital campaign, and strong enrollment also indicate the fiscal strength of the institution.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall, 2007, is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive visit at least once every ten years. In addition to information provided in all self-studies prepared for comprehensive evaluations, the areas to be given emphasis in the University's report are matters of particular relevance to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *Financial Resources*.

Above we noted with favor the institution's substantial progress extending assessment of educational outcomes throughout the University. We note in particular the efforts toward assessing general education outcomes through the work of the University College and General Education Committee giving emphasis to the eight critical skills integrated into general education courses. While much has been achieved, both in revising the general education requirement and in fashioning mechanisms to assess the achievement of its learning goals, it is unclear to us how the institution monitors student work to assure that all the eight skills are achieved in each student's educational experience. More broadly, as it continues to define and improve its assessment activities throughout the institution, we urge that attention be given to enhancing the expertise of individual faculty in applying assessment principles in their courses. Doing so, we believe, will strengthen and deepen the culture of assessment at the institution. Through the comprehensive evaluation, we will wish to review the institution's progress in each of these areas in keeping with our standard on *Planning and Evaluation* which states in part:

The institution evaluates the achievement of its mission and purposes, giving primary focus to the realization of its educational objectives (2.4).

Additionally, as mentioned in your report, due to the current economic downturn, the University is facing additional fiscal challenges, whether through decreased state appropriations or increased expenditures for the institution. The Commission will also be interested to learn through the comprehensive evaluation how the institution has continued to utilize effective fiscal planning as well as to augment current financial resources in keeping with our standard on *Financial Resources* which states in part:

The institution is financially stable. The institution's financial resources are sufficient to sustain the achievement of its educational objectives and to further institutional improvement now and in the foreseeable future. The institution reallocates resources as necessary to achieve its purposes and objectives. The institution has the ability to respond to financial emergencies and unforeseen circumstances (9.1).

The institution controls its financial resources and allocates them in a way which reflects its mission and purposes. Its stability and viability are not unduly dependent upon vulnerable financial resources or a historically narrow base of support (9.2).

Overall, the Commission commends the University of Rhode Island for developing assessment systems and making improvements in programs and resources that will help to ensure continued progress.

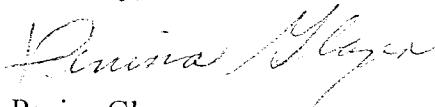
The date of the next comprehensive evaluation has been set consistent with Commission policy that such visits be scheduled at least every ten years.

You are encouraged to share this letter with members of the University of Rhode Island community. It is Commission policy to inform the chairperson of the institution's governing board of action on requested reports. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Frank Caprio. The institution is free to release information about the report and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

The Commission appreciates your cooperation in the effort to provide public assurance of the quality of higher education in New England and hopes that the efforts made at continuing self-evaluation will contribute to the institution's self-improvement.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Penina Glazer".

Penina Glazer

PG/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Frank Caprio



**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

209 Burlington Road, Bedford, MA 01730

Voice: (781) 271-0022

Fax: (781) 271-0950

Web: <http://www.neasc.org>

**Public Disclosure of Information
About Affiliated Institutions**

The following policy governs the release of information regarding the status of affiliated colleges and universities by institutions and the Commission.

**1. Release of Information by Institutions Regarding Their Accreditation
Following Commission Action**

At the conclusion of the evaluation process institutions are encouraged to make publicly available information about their accreditation status including the findings of team reports and any obligations or requirements established by Commission action, as well as any plans to address stated concerns. While the Commission does not release copies of self-studies, other institutional reports, evaluation reports, or notification letters, it believes it to be good practice for institutions to make these materials available after notification of action on their status. Because of the potential to be misleading, institutions are asked not to publish or otherwise disseminate excerpts only from these materials. While the Commission does not initiate public release of information on actions of show cause or deferral, if such information is released by the institution in question, the Commission will respond to related inquiries.

If an institution releases or otherwise disseminates information which misrepresents or distorts its accreditation status, the institution will be notified and asked to take corrective action publicly correcting any misleading information it may have disseminated, including but not limited to the accreditation status of the institution, the contents of evaluation reports, and the Commission actions with respect to the institution. Should it fail to do so, the New England Association, acting through its Chief Executive Officer, will release a public statement in such form and content as it deems desirable providing correct information.

2. Published Statement on Accredited Status

The Commission asks that one of the following statements be used for disclosing in catalogues, brochures, advertisements, etc., that the institution is accredited.

An institution may wish to include within its catalogue or other material a statement which will give the consuming public a better idea of the meaning of regional accreditation. When that is the case, the Commission requests that the following statement be used in its entirety:

_____ College (University) is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

Accreditation of an institution of higher education by the New England Association indicates that it meets or exceeds criteria for the assessment of institutional quality periodically applied through a peer review process. An accredited college or university is one which has available the necessary resources to achieve its stated purposes through appropriate educational programs, is substantially doing so, and gives reasonable evidence that it will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Institutional integrity is also addressed through accreditation.

Accreditation by the New England Association is not partial but applies to the institution as a whole. As such, it is not a guarantee of every course or program offered, or the competence of individual graduates. Rather, it provides reasonable assurance about the quality of opportunities available to students who attend the institution.

Inquiries regarding the accreditation status by the New England Association should be directed to the administrative staff of the institution. Individuals may also contact:

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
New England Association of Schools and Colleges
209 Burlington Road
Bedford, MA 01730-1433
(781) 271-0022
E-Mail: cihe@neasc.org

The shorter statement that an institution may choose for announcing its accredited status follows:

_____ College (University) is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc., through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

Inquiries regarding the accreditation status by the New England Association should be directed to the administrative staff of the institution. Individuals may also contact:

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
New England Association of Schools and Colleges
209 Burlington Road
Bedford, MA 01730-1433
(781) 271-0022
E-Mail: cihe@neasc.org

Accreditation by the New England Association has reference to the institution as a whole. Therefore, statements like “fully accredited” or “this program is accredited by the New England Association” or “this degree is accredited by the New England Association” are incorrect and should not be used.

3. **Published Statement on Candidate Status**

An institution granted Candidate for Accreditation status must use the following statement whenever it makes reference to its affiliation with the New England Association:

_____ College (University) has been granted Candidate for Accreditation status by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. Candidacy is not accreditation nor does it assure eventual accreditation. Candidacy for Accreditation is a status of affiliation with the Commission which indicates that the institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward accreditation.

Inquiries regarding the status of an institution affiliated with the New England Association should be directed to the administrative staff of the college or university. Individuals may also contact:

The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
New England Association of Schools and Colleges
209 Burlington Road
Bedford, MA 01730-1433
(781) 271-0022
E-Mail: cihe@neasc.org

4. Public Disclosure of Information About Affiliated Institutions by the Commission

Upon inquiry, the Commission will release the following information about affiliated institutions:

- The date of initial accreditation and/or when candidacy was granted;
- The date and nature (comprehensive or focused) of the most recent on-site evaluation and subsequent Commission action on the institution's accredited status;
- The date and nature (comprehensive or focused) of the next scheduled on-site evaluation;
- Submission date and action taken on the most recent written report required by the Commission;
- The extent of, or limitations on, the status of affiliation;
- In cases of adverse action (denial or termination of candidacy or accreditation, placing an institution on probation), the Commission's reasons for recommending that status and, in the case of probation, its plans to monitor the institution. The Commission, in consultation with the institution, will prepare a written statement incorporating the above information. The Commission reserves the right to make the final determination of the nature and content of the statement.
- For institutions whose candidacy or accreditation has been terminated, the date of, and reasons for, termination.

The Commission does not provide information about deferments of action on candidate or accreditation status, or show-cause orders. However, if such information is released by the institution in question, the Commission will respond to related inquiries. Also, adverse actions (placement of an institution on probation, denial of candidate status or accreditation, revocation of candidacy and termination of accreditation) are not communicated until the available appeals process is completed.

The Commission recognizes that, to be fully understood, information about the accredited status of institutions must be placed within the context of the policies and procedures of the Commission and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. In responding to inquiries, the Commission will endeavor to do so.

The Commission does not release copies of self-studies, progress reports, evaluation reports, or other documents related to the accreditation of individual institutions, but institutions are encouraged to make these materials available, in their entirety, after notification of Commission action.

5. **Public Disclosure of Institutional Actions**

Within 30 days after the action on accreditation status is taken, the Commission will notify the Secretary of Education, New England state higher education officers, appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public. Such actions include:

A final decision to:

Grant candidacy or accreditation

Continue an institution in accreditation

Deny or terminate the accreditation of an institution

Place an institution on probation

Approve substantive change (e.g., moving to a higher degree level)

A decision by an accredited or candidate institution to voluntarily withdraw from affiliation with the Commission.

*November, 1998
September, 2001*