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May 4, 2018

Mr. Jonathan Lash
President
Hampshire College
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The Charles W. Cole Science Center, Room 110
Amherst, MA 01002-3359

Dear President Lash:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 2, 2018, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Hampshire College:

that Hampshire College be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit a report for consideration in Spring 2019 that gives emphasis to the institution's success in:

1. hiring a new president;
2. improving the College's financial position and engaging in multi-year financial planning;
3. meeting its goals for enrollment, retention, and discount rate;
4. achieving its goals with respect to faculty and staff compensation;
5. implementing its plans to address issues related to campus climate and morale;
6. continuing to implement data-informed outcomes assessment across the curriculum, with particular emphasis on Division II and Division III;

that the College submit an interim (fifth-year) report for consideration in Fall 2022;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2027.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

Hampshire College is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

The Commission commends Hampshire College for its preparation of a thoughtful, candid self-study, and we join the visiting team in acknowledging the institution's many strengths, including the College's mission which serves as a "powerful, unifying imperative," a Board of Trustees characterized by an "uncommon degree of commitment," a focus on student-centered learning, and its successful, participatory planning processes. The opening of the Kern Building, a multi-purpose building designed with substantial involvement of students under the Living Building Challenge, is particularly noteworthy. We are gratified to learn of the success of Hampshire graduates with respect to earning advanced degrees – two-thirds of alumni/ae report earning an advanced degree within ten years – and congratulate the institution on its recognition as a "top Fulbright producer." We share the confidence of the visiting team in the ability of the "passionate community of teachers and learners" at Hampshire College to continue the institution's tradition of "educating for change and changing education."

The items the institution is asked to report on in Spring 2019 are related to our standards on *Organization and Governance; Institutional Resources; Students; Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship; Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure; and Educational Effectiveness*.

The Commission understands that, following a "largely stable and successful" seven-year tenure, President Jonathan Lash will retire from Hampshire College on July 1, 2018, and the institution is currently searching for his successor. We look forward to learning, through the Spring 2019 report, of the College's success in appointing a "chief executive officer whose full-time or major responsibility is to the institution" (3.10).

As acknowledged in both the self-study and the report of the visiting team, Hampshire College is experiencing some "financial stresses" resulting in large measure from its dependence on tuition as a source of revenue; we note that 87% of the institution's revenue comes from tuition and student fees. The Commission is gratified to learn that the College appointed an ad-hoc Financial Sustainability Committee (FSC) that, with the support of external consultants and the widespread involvement of the campus community, has developed a long-term financial plan that includes goals, benchmarks, and strategies designed to strengthen the institution's fiscal health. We understand that implementation of the plan is expected to cost \$10 million and that the Board has approved a special \$3 million draw from the endowment to provide initial funding. We anticipate being apprised, in Spring 2019, of Hampshire College's success in implementing its financial plan, consistent with our standard on *Institutional Resources*:

The institution preserves and enhances available financial resources sufficient to support its mission. 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 (7.4).

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 (7.5).

The institution's multi-year financial planning is realistic and reflects the capacity of the institution to depend on identified sources of revenue and ensure the advancement of educational quality and services for students (7.6).

Given the College's dependence on student-generated revenue, recent declines in enrollment and retention have exacerbated the institution's financial challenges. We note that enrollment has

decreased by 10% during the last two years and first-year retention declined from 82% for the 2014 cohort to 78% for the 2016 cohort. The financial plan developed by the FSC includes several initiatives related to recruitment and retention of students, including “focused digital and programmatic marketing,” development of a “comprehensive” first-year experience, and exploration of new academic programs. We understand Hampshire has set goals to increase first-year retention by eight points and second- and third-year retention by three points; to increase the entering class to 400 first-time students and 65 transfer students; and to reduce the discount rate immediately to 55% and subsequently to 50%. The Spring 2019 report will afford the College an opportunity to update the Commission on its progress toward achieving these goals. Relevant here are our standards on *Students* and *Institutional Resources* (cited above and below):

Consistent with its mission, the institution sets and achieves realistic goals to enroll students who are broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve (*Students*, Statement of the Standard).

The institution demonstrates its ability to admit students who can be successful in the institution’s academic program, including specifically recruited populations. The institution’s goals for retention and graduation reflect institutional purposes, and the results are used to inform recruitment and the review of programs and services (5.6).

The institution and its governing board regularly and systematically review the effectiveness of the institution’s financial aid policy and practices in advancing the institution’s mission and helping to ensure that the institution enrolls and supports the student body it seeks to serve (7.10).

The Commission concurs with the visiting team that low levels of compensation are “a pervasive and serious concern among faculty and staff at Hampshire,” and we share the concern that low compensation may have a negative impact on Hampshire College’s ability to attract and retain employees. We are therefore heartened to learn that, despite the College’s financial challenges, compensation improvement “is a strategic and fundraising priority.” We look forward to learning, in Spring 2019, of the College’s progress toward bringing salaries and benefits to “levels that ensure the institution’s continued ability to attract and retain appropriately qualified faculty and academic staff whose profiles are consistent with the institution’s mission and purposes” (6.6).

The Commission appreciates Hampshire College’s candid acknowledgment of the negative effect the “social disruption” the campus experienced in 2016 had on campus morale and campus climate as well as on the enrollment and retention of students. We commend the College for its forthright approach to addressing these issues, and we understand that three Advisory Councils appointed by the President are providing leadership for a campus-wide response that is reflective of Hampshire’s “renewed commitment to [its] shared enterprise, together fostering a climate of integrity, compassion, and honesty.” Through the Spring 2019 report, the Commission welcomes further information about the College’s continued progress in fostering “an inclusive atmosphere within the institutional community that respects and supports people of diverse characteristics and backgrounds” (9.5).

Finally, the Commission shares the judgment of the visiting team that Hampshire College has made “significant progress in establishing a process for supporting reflective assessment on the student experience,” and we are gratified to learn of the College’s commitment of resources to appoint a Dean of Curriculum and Assessment, establish and maintain a Center for Teaching and Learning, and support the involvement of faculty in the College’s assessment efforts. We note with favor the use of assessment results, including those from the Thrivers study, the Hampshire Learning (now Research) Project, and the Hampshire Impact Study, to inform admissions

strategies and improve the student experience “across the academic, co-curricular, and student life realms.” The Spring 2019 report will provide the College an opportunity to apprise the Commission of the institution’s continued success in implementing its plans for the assessment of student learning, with particular attention to outcomes in Division II and Division III. We remind you of our standard on *Educational Effectiveness*:

Assessment of learning is based on verifiable statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. The process of understanding what and how students are learning focuses on the course, competency, program, and institutional level. Assessment has the support of the institution’s academic and institutional leadership and the systematic involvement of faculty and appropriate staff (8.3).

The institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods and direct and indirect measures to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students, employing external perspectives including, as appropriate, benchmarks and peer comparisons (8.5).

The results of assessment and quantitative measures of student success are a demonstrable factor in the institution’s efforts to improve the learning opportunities and results for students (8.8).

Commission policy requires an interim (fifth-year) report of all institutions on a decennial evaluation cycle. The purpose of the report scheduled for consideration in Fall 2022 is to provide the Commission an opportunity to appraise the institution’s current status in keeping with the Policy on Periodic Review.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2027 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation 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 expressed appreciation for the self-study prepared by Hampshire College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Gaye Hill, Chair of the Board of Trustees, Eva Rueschmann, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty, and Beth Ward, Secretary of the College, as well as Richard Miller, 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 on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Ms. Gaye Hill. 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.

Mr. Jonathan Lash
May 4, 2018
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If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Barbara Brittingham,
President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



David P. Angel

DPA/jm

Enclosure

cc: Ms. Gaye Hill
Visiting Team