

Dear President Tomlin:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on April 19, 2012, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Quinebaug Valley Community College (QVCC):

- *that Quinebaug Valley Community College be continued in accreditation;*
- *that the College submit a report for consideration in Spring, 2014 that provides an update regarding:*

1) the impact on the institution's operations of the reorganization of higher education governance by the State of Connecticut;

2) the College's success in implementing its strategic plan and aligning the plan to the budget to ensure sufficiency of resources to support programs and services, including its new facilities and off-campus location;

3) progress in implementing a college-wide assessment program;

4) that the College submit a fifth year interim report for consideration in Fall, 2016;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall: 2021.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

Quinebaug Valley Community College (QVCC) is continued in its accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the Standards for Accreditation.

We commend the College for the substantial progress it has made over the last decade in establishing goals to focus planning within the various areas of the College and, more recently, for its excellent work in adjusting to and planning for changes in the Community College System. We take favorable note of several strategic initiatives, including the creation of a council to strengthen relationships with the Middle High School College, and establishing a Green Technology Committee to examine energy cost savings and a Student Success and Retention Committee to research factors contributing to student withdrawals. We are pleased to learn that, under new leadership, the College engaged in a comprehensive and participatory strategic planning process using its guiding principle, "Learners, Leaders, Partners," to develop new mission and vision statements. The College's commitment to ensuring academic leadership, quality, and support as well as the availability of comprehensive student services at the Danielson and Willimantic campuses and online, is noteworthy. We are gratified to learn that faculty who teach online participate in training and implement best practices and we share the visiting team's observation that "quality is a commitment of QVCC's faculty...and that "[s]tudents are happy and extremely complimentary of the faculty and staff at QVCC." The institution's publications are well-presented, and QVCC is committed to the highest degree of integrity through its policies and procedures. We concur with the visiting team that the change in Connecticut's higher education governance structure is strengthening the resolve of the College's leadership, faculty and administrators to meet the needs of their community, and QVCC is well-positioned to build on its success over the next decade.

The items the institution is asked to report on in Spring, 2014 are related to our Standards on Planning and Evaluation, Organization and Governance, The Academic Program, and Financial Resources.

The Commission understands that governance of public higher education in Connecticut is undergoing major changes and, at the time of the comprehensive visit, the state of Connecticut was in the process of appointing a new Board of Regents. We appreciate that the impact of these changes for the campus is not yet fully known, and we look forward to receiving, In the report submitted for review in Spring 2014, an update on this matter. Our standard on Organization and Governance is relevant here:

In multi-campus systems organized under a single governing board, the division of responsibility and authority between the system office and the institution is clear. Where system and campus boards share governance responsibilities or dimensions of authority, system policies and procedures are clearly defined and equitably administered (3.11).

The Commission is gratified to learn of QVCC's inclusive and thoughtful commitment to strategic planning, and we concur with the visiting team that "[e]fforts to seek the voice of all individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes are worthy of note." We also share the team's observation that implementation of the strategic plan will require an alignment between planning and budgeting with careful consideration given to the impact on QVCC's budget of the Willimantic Center and the future Middle High School College building. We ask that the report submitted for review in Spring 2014 give emphasis to the institution's success in implementing its strategic plan and ensuring sufficiency of resources to support programs and services, including its new facilities and off-campus location. Relevant here are our standards on Planning and Evaluation and Financial Resources:

The institution plans beyond a short-term horizon, including strategic planning that involves realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. It plans for and responds to financial and other contingencies, establishes feasible priorities, and develops a realistic course of action to achieve identified objectives. Institutional decision-making, particularly the allocation of resources, is consistent with planning priorities (2.3).

The institution's financial planning, including contingency planning, is integrated with overall planning and evaluation processes. The institution demonstrates its ability to analyze its financial condition and understand the opportunities and constraints that will influence its financial condition and acts accordingly. It reallocates resources as necessary to achieve its purposes and objectives (9.9).

We are pleased to learn that the College administers CCSSE and SENSE student surveys every two to three years and that faculty in several departments, including English, Medical Assisting, Fine Arts and Early Childhood Education, have done extensive work in outcomes assessment. We note with favor that some faculty have worked with eLumen to electronically capture evidence of student learning. However, we also appreciate the College's candid acknowledgement that assessment across all programs is not consistent and "an effective way to use...data has not been found." We look forward, in the report submitted in Spring 2014, to learning of the College's progress in implementing a college-wide, systematic approach to the assessment of student learning. Our standard on The Academic Program is relevant here:

The institution implements and provides support for systematic and broad-based assessment of what and how students are learning through their academic program and experiences outside the classroom. . .(4.48).

The institution's approach to understanding student learning focuses on the course, program, and institutional level. Evidence is considered at the appropriate level of focus, with the results being a demonstrable factor in improving the learning opportunities and results for students (4.49).

The scheduling of an interim report for consideration in Fall 2016 is consistent with Commission policy requiring a fifth year interim report of all institutions on a decennial evaluation cycle. Its purpose 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, 2021 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 Quinebaug Valley Community College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you and Mr. H. John Delile, team representative, 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 Lewis Robinson. The institution is free to release information about the evaluation and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

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.

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

cc: Lewis Robinson

Visiting team