



January 19, 2023

Dr. Karen Hynick
Chief Executive Officer
Quinebaug Valley Community College
742 Upper Maple Street
Danielson, CT 06239-1440

Dear Dr. Hynick:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on November 18, 2022, the New England Commission of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Quinebaug Valley Community College:

that Quinebaug Valley Community College be continued in accreditation;

that, subject to modification pending the outcome of the proposed consolidation of the 12 Connecticut community colleges within the Connecticut State College and University (CSCU) System into Connecticut State Community College, the College submit an interim report for consideration in Spring 2027 and a comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Spring 2032;

that, should the anticipated establishment of Connecticut State Community College not transpire, and Quinebaug Valley Community College (QVCC) remain a separately accredited institution, the Spring 2027 interim report give emphasis to QVCC's success in:

1. creating a comprehensive culture of assessment and data-informed decision-making throughout the College;
2. assuring that staffing is sufficient to support its mission;
3. articulating and achieving its diversity, equity, and inclusion goals;
4. evaluating the effectiveness of its internal governance structure;
5. improving communication throughout the institution.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

Quinebaug Valley Community College is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

The Commission commends Quinebaug Valley Community College for preparing a comprehensive self-study that documents the ways in which the College is sustaining its mission to provide “exceptional opportunities for northeast Connecticut residents to learn in an affordable, challenging, and supportive environment that enables students to become fully engaged citizens in an ever-changing global community” during a time of “significant uncertainty” as the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) System proceeds with its plans to consolidate the state’s 12 community colleges. We join the visiting team in congratulating QVCC on its accomplishments over the past five years that include developing and launching its 2022-2027 Strategic Plan; establishing a new Student Council; and updating its physical plant in a manner that has enhanced teaching, learning, working, and collaborating. QVCC’s exemplary wrap-around student support services and the College’s engagement with the community are commendable; the fundraising efforts of the QVCC foundation are also noted positively. Given the complicated nature of the pending consolidation and the significant disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission praises QVCC faculty, administrators, and staff for their laudable devotion to the College and, most importantly, to its students.

Consistent with its Policy on the Periodic Review of Accredited Institutions, the Commission asks that the College submit an interim report for submission in Spring 2027 and schedules a comprehensive evaluation for Spring 2032. The Commission understands that CSCU anticipates the consolidation of the 12 Connecticut community colleges into Connecticut State Community College (CSCC) will be completed by July 1, 2023, at which time each of the 12 colleges, including Quinebaug Valley Community College, will relinquish its separate accreditation. Quinebaug Valley Community College’s schedule of upcoming reviews may, therefore, be modified pending the outcome of the proposed consolidation.

Should the establishment of Connecticut State Community College not transpire and Quinebaug Valley Community College remain a separately accredited institution, the Commission asks that the Spring 2027 interim report give emphasis to the institution’s success in addressing five matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*; *Institutional Resources*; *Students*; *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*; and *Organization and Governance*.

We appreciate learning that QVCC evaluated data collected on local demographics and enrollment, as well as opinion data from a broad set of constituencies, and that the results were used to inform the development of its 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. To further inform the College’s planning and decision-making, the College has also gathered survey information about its capacity and on student success outcomes and reviewed KPI data distributed by the state on an annual basis. Should the proposed consolidation not take place, the Commission will look forward, through the Spring 2027 interim report, to receiving an update on Quinebaug Valley Community College’s continued success in creating a comprehensive culture of assessment and data-informed decision-making throughout the College. Our standard on *Planning and Evaluation* is relevant here:

Planning and evaluation are systematic, comprehensive, broad-based, integrated, and appropriate to the institution. They involve the participation of individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes and include external perspectives. Results of planning and evaluation are regularly communicated to appropriate institutional constituencies. The institution allocates sufficient resources for its planning and evaluation efforts (2.1).

Institutional research is sufficient to support planning and evaluation. The

institution systematically collects and uses data necessary to support its planning efforts and to enhance institutional effectiveness (2.2).

The Commission recognizes that the consolidation process has had an impact on the College in many ways, including leadership transitions and employee departures that have left some positions vacant. We further acknowledge that retaining employees and filling vacant positions will continue to be a challenge during the consolidation process. In the event the proposed consolidation does not take place, the Spring 2027 interim report will provide QVCC an opportunity to assure the Commission that vacant positions have been filled and that the College “employs sufficient and qualified personnel to fulfill its mission” (7.1).

According to the visiting team, the demographics of Quinebaug Valley Community College’s faculty reflects the make-up of the College’s student body on its main campus (about 74% Caucasian), but on the Willimantic campus, the student population is much more diverse with only 46% reporting as Caucasian. We further understand that although QVCC has made concerted efforts to advertise in a wide range of publications and has included a diversity and inclusion specialist on search committees to ensure equity, the College has not made notable progress in diversifying its faculty. Should QVCC remain a separately accredited institution, the Spring 2027 interim report will afford the College an opportunity to include evidence that it “addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity, equity, and inclusion among its students” (*Students*, Statement of the Standard) and that it “addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity, equity, and inclusion among its faculty and academic staff and assesses the effectiveness of its efforts to achieve those goals” (6.5).

The Commission notes that strengthening shared governance is a priority in QVCC’s 2022-2027 Strategic Plan and that data gathered from a recent college-wide survey will be used to “re-envision” the College’s shared governance model to ensure that it aligns with the CSCU System structure. For instance, although QVCC will maintain its existing committee structure (i.e., Academic Senate and Student Government Association), the College will shift from a Faculty Senate to a Campus Senate which will “allow input from a broad range of employees.” If the proposed consolidation does not take place, we ask that the interim report submitted for consideration in Spring 2027 include an update on the institution’s success in evaluating the effectiveness of its internal governance structure as assurance that “the institution’s organizational structure and system of governance is improved through regular and systematic review” (3.19).

As Quinebaug Valley Community College candidly acknowledges, “ongoing, multi-pronged, and transparent communication are necessary to college operations and outcomes.” In addition to conducting five all-staff required meetings a year to share information, QVCC distributes a weekly electronic newsletter that updates the campus community on current and upcoming campus events, recent achievements, college data, policy and staff changes, and System news. In the event the consolidation does not take place, we look forward to receiving an update on QVCC’s continued progress in improving communication among all members of the campus community as evidence that its “internal governance provides for the appropriate participation of its constituencies, promotes communications, and effectively advances the quality of the institution” (3.13).

Finally, the scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2032 is consistent with Commission policy. As noted above, this schedule may be modified pending the outcome of the proposed consolidation of the Connecticut community colleges.

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 Christina Royal, 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 and the head of the system of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to JoAnn Ryan and Terrence Chang. 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.

If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Lawrence M. Schall, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russell Carey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Russell Carey

RC/sjp

cc: JoAnn Ryan
Terrence Chang
Visiting team

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions