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April 28, 2014

Dr. James Dlugos
President
Saint Joseph's College of Maine
278 White's Bridge Road
Standish, ME 04084-5263

Dear President Dlugos:

I write to inform you that at its meeting on March 7, 2014, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Saint Joseph's College of Maine:

that the report submitted by Saint Joseph's College of Maine be accepted;

that the College be granted general approval to offer distance education programming within the scope of its mission;

that the proposal to offer an online B.S. in Information Systems (BSIS) degree be accepted and the program be encompassed within the institution's accreditation with an effective date of March 7, 2014;

that a site visit to assess implementation of the B.S. in Information Systems be scheduled for Spring 2016;

that the report prepared in advance of the Spring 2016 evaluation give emphasis to the College's success in achieving its enrollment and revenue goals for the BSIS program;

that the fifth-year interim report scheduled for consideration in Fall 2016 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all interim reports, as well as the matters specified in our letter of June 15, 2012, the institution give emphasis, in the Fall 2016 report, to its continued success in addressing the matters specified for attention in the Spring 2014 report, specifically:

- 1. implementing initiatives of the new strategic plan;

2. continuing to develop an integrated academic structure, with clear lines of responsibility, that provides effective oversight of all academic programs however delivered;
3. continuing to develop the governing board, ensuring the expertise and experience needed to fulfill its responsibilities;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2021 be confirmed.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The report submitted by Saint Joseph's College of Maine (SJCM) was accepted because it was generally responsive to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letter of June 15, 2012.

The Commission is gratified to learn of the progress Saint Joseph's College of Maine has made in addressing the three areas specified for attention in the report. Following the appointment of a new president in 2012, the College undertook a participatory strategic planning process informed by data generated by the Institutional Research Office. We understand that the final plan is expected to be approved by the Board of Trustees in May 2014. In January 2013, SJCM implemented a "new organization" for the College that reduced the number of senior leadership positions reporting to the President from nine to four and redefined the roles and responsibilities of the four vice presidents to be "institutional" rather than "functional" in nature. The position of Chief Academic Officer has been "reframed" to "Chief Learning Officer," and Graduate and Professional Studies has been renamed "College Online." We are pleased to learn that, under the new structure, the deans of Undergraduate Studies and Graduate Studies are responsible for "all learning programs offered in any modality at their respective levels." Finally, we note with favor the implementation of a number of initiatives designed to enhance the effectiveness of the governing board, including the development of an online board portal, standardization and consolidation of board committees, more timely distribution of materials in advance of board meetings, and the inclusion of professional development experiences for board members at all meetings. In addition, the Board has undertaken an initiative to "bolster" Board membership and capacity and anticipates the addition of three or four new trustees per year for the "next several years."

Saint Joseph's College of Maine is granted general approval to offer distance education programming within the scope of its mission because the College has demonstrated its capacity to offer high-quality online programs and to provide effective oversight of learning experiences in all modalities. The College has appropriate technical infrastructure, policies, and procedures in place to support distance education and, as noted above, online programming has been integrated into the governance system of the institution.

The proposal to offer an online B.S. in Information Systems program was accepted and the program encompassed within the institution's accreditation because the Commission finds the activity to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

The Commission commends Saint Joseph's College of Maine for the careful planning that led to the proposal for the B.S. in Information Systems program, the first offered by the College in this field. We understand that the program was developed in response to research indicating that "demand far exceeded availability of trained computer professionals" in the Northeast. The program, which comprises 128 credits, includes 13 core courses and five elective courses in one of four specializations (Networking and Telecommunications, Database Management, Information and System Security, and Application Development) or in a generalist MIS specialization. Courses will be offered asynchronously, and students will complete a series of assessments mapped to learning objectives. SJCM has contracted with 13 "course developers,"

all of whom will be retained to teach the courses they develop; all have appropriate qualifications and experience. We note with favor that students will receive support from trained academic advisors and that the College's library staff is modifying its provision of information literacy instruction to ensure that students receive such instruction throughout their academic career. The budget for the BSIS program includes a "start-up fund" to increase library holdings in the field.

Commission policy requires an on-site evaluation of the new program within two years of its initiation and before the first class is graduated. The report prepared for the visit in Spring 2016 should update the Commission to reflect and assess actual experience in implementing the degree program. A copy of the relevant policy and procedures is enclosed for your information.

In addition, the institution is asked, in its report, to give emphasis to its success in meeting its enrollment and revenue goals for the B.S. in Information Systems program. The proposal submitted by SJCM indicates the College anticipates enrollment and "profit" of 90 students and \$112,000 respectively in 2014, growing to 160 students and \$395,000 in 2015, 230 students and \$524,000 in 2016, and 250 students and \$574,000 in 2017. Our standards on *Students* and *Financial Resources* provide guidance for this section of the report:

Consistent with its mission, the institution sets and achieves realistic goals to enroll a student body that is broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve ... (6.1).

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 (9.3).

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 (9.10).

Commission policy requires 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. In addition to the information included in all fifth-year reports and the items specified for attention in the Commission's letter of June 15, 2012, the College is asked, in Fall 2016, to give emphasis to its continued success in addressing the areas specified above for attention in the Spring 2014 report. The Commission recognizes that these matters do not lend themselves to rapid resolution and will require the College's sustained attention over time; hence, we ask that further information be provided in the Fall 2016 interim report.

Finally, 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.


The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Saint Joseph's College of Maine and hopes that its preparation 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.

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. Claire Fraser Bowen. The institution is free to release information about the report and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

Dr. James Dlugos
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If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Barbara Brittingham,
President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Jean A. Wyld

JAW/jm

Enclosure

cc: Ms. Claire Fraser Bowen