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June 6, 2018

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

Dear President Dlugos:

I write to inform you that at its meeting on April 19, 2018, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the additional information submitted by Saint Joseph's College of Maine and took the following action:

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

that the institution submit an Annual Report on Finance and Enrollment (ARFE) by December 1, 2018 for consideration in Spring 2019 and that the College include with its submission an update on the status of its Bachelor of Science in Information Technology Program and updated year-to-date FY2019 actual results with budget projections;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2021 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2021 comprehensive evaluation include an update on the College's progress in integrating its financial and strategic plans into all units of the institution.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The information 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 March 15, 2018. In particular, we appreciate receiving information about the continued progress the College is making in the area of assessment. Examples include the assessment of the First-Year Experience course; piloting the use of e-Portfolios to assess learning outcomes in the core curriculum; implementing the Gradleaders Outcomes Survey to more "intentionally" evaluate the success of SJCM graduates; implementing a Persistence Plan and Student Intervention Team to improve retention rates; and using the results of program reviews and assessment activities to improve student success.

At the same time, along with the institution, the Commission is concerned that the past three fiscal years have shown a “widening gap between the strategic plan model and the achieved [financial] results at the institutional level” that we understand is due almost entirely to declines in online program revenue. While we appreciate that the institution has been successful in diversifying its revenue streams by growing its “current year gifts” (\$331,393 in FY2015 to \$475,432 in FY2017) and auxiliary revenue (\$1.1 million in FY2015 to \$1.8 million in FY2018), over this same period SJCM has gone from having a net surplus of \$361,452 to a net deficit of \$1.5 million. We further note that SJCM is awaiting the results of a “portfolio analysis” from an external consultant to determine the future of its Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT) program. At present, we understand that the College is considering options that include: hiring a new program director and reopening admissions once the new director is in place; hiring an appropriately qualified faculty member who can develop an Information Technology concentration within SJCM’s Business Administration program, utilizing some of the BSIT program curricula; or teaching out the remaining BSIT students, and closing the program. Given our concern about the College’s financial stability, we ask that SJCM submit an Annual Report on Finance and Enrollment by December 1, 2018 for consideration in Spring 2019 and that the College include with its submission an update on the status of its BSIT program as well as updated year-to-date FY2019 actual results with budget projections. Submission of the ARFE report will enable the Commission to assess the College’s progress in assuring its fulfillment of the Commission’s standards on *The Academic Program* and *Institutional Resources* which state in relevant part:

The institution undertakes academic planning and evaluation as part of its overall planning and evaluation to enhance the achievement of institutional mission and program objectives. These activities are realistic and take into account stated goals and available resources. Additions and deletions of programs are consistent with institutional mission and capacity, faculty expertise, student needs, and the availability of sufficient resources required for the development and improvement of academic programs. The institution allocates resources on the basis of its academic planning, needs, and objectives (4.7).

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’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).

The institution establishes and implements its budget after appropriate consultation with relevant constituencies in accord with realistic overall planning that provides for the appropriate integration of academic, student service, fiscal, development, information, technology, and physical resource priorities to advance its educational objectives (7.13).

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. The institution implements a realistic plan for addressing issues raised by the existence of any operating deficit (7.14).

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. In addition to the information included in all self-studies the College is asked, in Fall

2021, to report on a matter related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *Institutional Resources*.

We understand from the report that Saint Joseph College of Maine's strategic plan presents a "vision" of the College in 2024, and includes a "strategic progress calendar" of tactics and targets along with an estimate of the costs associated with those tactics. It was not clear to the Commission, however, the extent to which "[t]he results of strategic planning are implemented in all units of the institution through financial, academic, enrollment, and other supporting plans (2.3)." Therefore, the self-study submitted in advance of the Fall 2021 comprehensive evaluation will afford SJCM an opportunity to demonstrate that "[p]lanning and evaluation are systematic, comprehensive, broad-based, integrated, and appropriate to the institution, [t]hey involve the participation of individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes and include external perspectives, [the r]esults of planning and evaluation are regularly communicated to appropriate institutional constituencies, [and t]he institution allocates sufficient resources for its planning and evaluation efforts" (2.1). Also relevant here is our standard on *Institutional Resources* (cited above).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the additional information 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 Dr. Meredith Tipton. The institution is free to release information about the report and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with the enclosed policy on Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions.

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: Dr. Meredith Tipton



## COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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### Public Disclosure of Information About Affiliated Institutions

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The following policy governs the release of information regarding the status of affiliated colleges and universities by institutions and by 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. Because of the potential to be misleading, institutions are asked not to publish or otherwise disseminate excerpts from these materials.

While the Commission does not ordinarily release copies of self-studies, progress reports, evaluation reports, or other documents related to the accreditation of individual institutions, it believes it to be good practice for institutions to make these materials available, in their entirety, after notification of Commission action.

The Commission will release information on actions of show cause or deferral. If such information is also released by the institution in question or is otherwise made public, the Commission will respond to related inquiries and may issue revised public statement.

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 in an immediate and timely way, the Commission, acting through its President, will release a public statement in such form and content as it deems desirable providing correct information. This may include release of notification letters sent by the Commission to the institution, and/or a press release.

## 2. Published Statement on Accredited Status

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

An institution may wish to include within its website, 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 Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.

Accreditation of an institution of higher education by Commission 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 Commission 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 Commission 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**  
**3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514**  
**(781) 425 7785**  
**E-Mail: [cihe@neasc.org](mailto:cihe@neasc.org)**

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

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

Inquiries regarding the accreditation status by the Commission 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  
3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514  
(781) 425 7785  
E-Mail: [cihe@neasc.org](mailto:cihe@neasc.org)**

Accreditation by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education has reference to the institution as a whole. Therefore, statements like “fully accredited” or “this program is accredited by the Commission” or “this degree is accredited by the Commission” 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 Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. 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.

Candidacy is not accreditation nor does it assure eventual accreditation.

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

**Commission on Institutions of Higher Education  
New England Association of Schools and Colleges  
3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514  
(781) 425 7785  
E-Mail: [cihe@neasc.org](mailto:cihe@neasc.org)**

#### 4. **Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions by the Commission**

The Commission publishes the following information about member and candidate institutions on its website:

- Name of the institution
- The date of initial accreditation and/or when candidacy was granted
- Accreditation status (member or candidate)
- Address
- Phone and fax numbers
- CEO name and title
- Degree levels awarded
- Dates of initial accreditation (or candidacy), last review and next review
- Locations of off-campus instructional sites
- The basis for Commission action affecting candidacy or accreditation status
- 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 date and nature of any show-cause for denial of candidacy or accreditation, probation, or withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation status
- The extent of, or limitations on, the status of affiliation
- In cases of adverse action (denial or withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation, placing an institution on probation), the Commission's reasons for 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. The institution will also be offered the opportunity to make its official comment; if the institution does make

an official comment, the comment will be made available by the Commission

- For institutions whose candidacy or accreditation has been withdrawn, the date of, and reasons for, withdrawal.

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 on Institutions of Higher Education. In responding to inquiries, the Commission will endeavor to do so.

The Commission may also publish on its website a public statement about an action taken regarding a member or candidate institution when further information about the action and the Commission's reasons for taking the action would be helpful to members of the public.

Adverse actions (placement of an institution on probation, denial of candidate status or accreditation, and withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation) are communicated when the decision becomes final (i.e., when the institution does not appeal or when the appeals process is completed and the decision is upheld). The Commission, at its discretion, may make the adverse action public before the decision is final or the appeal is completed. In so doing, the Commission will provide information about the appeal process.

## **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. The Commission will also make public on its website the basis for these decisions. Such actions include:

A final decision to:

Grant candidacy or accreditation

Continue an institution in accreditation

Deny or withdraw the candidacy or 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.



Per federal regulation, within 60 days of a final decision to take an adverse action (probation or withdrawal of accreditation), the Commission will submit a copy of the final decision letter to the Secretary of Education. The Secretary will make the letter public.

*November 1998*

*September 2001*

*April 2010*

*September 2011*

*Editorial Changes, March 2014*

*April 2015*

*April 2017*