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November 22, 2005

Dr. Michael F. Collins  
Chancellor  
University of Massachusetts Boston  
100 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, MA 02125

Dear Chancellor Collins:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on November 4, 2005, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to the University of Massachusetts Boston:

that the University of Massachusetts Boston be continued in accreditation;

that the University submit a report in Fall 2008 describing its progress in reversing the deterioration of the foundation mega-structure of the original campus buildings;

that the institution submit a fifth-year interim report for consideration in Spring 2010;

that in addition to matters normally covered in an interim report, the University give special attention to ensuring its success in:

1. reducing its dependence on part-time faculty;
2. ensuring that it is enrolling and retaining the student body it seeks to serve, given its mission to provide access for all qualified students;
3. developing and implementing systematic ways to understand what and how students are learning and use the results to improve the academic program and services for students;
4. developing and balancing sources of revenue including state support, tuition and fees, and private support, appropriate with the institution's mission and realistic opportunities; and

5. undertaking strategic planning, including its integration with financial, academic, and facilities planning;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Spring 2015.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The University of Massachusetts Boston is continued in accreditation because it substantially meets the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation*. The Commission commends the University of Massachusetts Boston for the quality of its self-study, demonstrating both the institution's ability to look carefully at its accomplishments and challenges and the depth and strength of commitment to mission on the part of the University community. Despite difficult financial times, an extraordinarily dedicated faculty and a committed and efficient administration and staff have worked to ensure the quality of education for students and the continuing development of the University. We concur with the team's general observation that the University has addressed important substantive issues in a forthright, collaborative and thoughtful manner and has developed strategies for improvement within the context of available resources. New leadership brings new optimism, and we look forward through the means outlined below of learning of the institution's success in addressing key institutional challenges.

Through the institutional report in Fall 2008, the Commission looks forward to learning of the University's success in matters related to our standard on *Physical Resources*.

The original mega-structure which formed the basis for the University of Massachusetts Boston campus had widely publicized construction problems that, combined with severe deterioration, have represented the primary capital funding issue for the institution in the past decade. Significant problems remain, affecting both how the institution functions and how it is perceived by the broader community. We are heartened to hear of the Governor's pledge of funds to address the problems and the engineering consulting study now underway to determine the exact nature and costs of the required repairs to the basic structure. Through the report in Fall 2008, the Commission looks forward to learning of institutional progress, demonstrating its ability to "ensure access, safety, security, and a healthful environment" (8.2).

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. The items specified for emphasis in the interim report are related to our standards on *Faculty, Programs and Instruction, and Planning and Evaluation*:

Budget cuts and an early retirement incentive program offered by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts resulted in a decrease of 25% of faculty FTE. Pressures on full-time faculty have been significant, not only through loss of positions but also through an increase in demands on faculty time for research, advising, academic planning, and assessment of learning outcomes. We are heartened to learn that the University is now making significant strides in replacing full-time faculty, having hired 37 new faculty for the current year, and that it is doing so with appointments representing a mix of ranks and with the future of the University in mind in terms of diversity, academic focus, and institutional mission. One goal of adding full-time positions is to ensure that the institution "avoids undue dependence on part-time faculty, adjuncts, and graduate assistants to conduct classroom instruction" (5.9). Through the interim report, we look forward to learning of the institution's success in ensuring that "Faculty are sufficiently numerous to carry out duties in addition to instruction, which may include such functions as student advising and academic planning, and to participate appropriately in policy-making, course and curricular development, and institutional governance" (5.3).

Between 2001 and the time of the visit, headcount enrollment decreased by 18% among undergraduates and 11% among graduate students, with most of the decreases explained as part-time students being priced out as tuition was increased to make up for severe reductions in state funding, and the decrease in international student enrollment following September 11, 2001. The institution is taking a variety of steps to ensure that "enrollment thinking" is more prominent. As the University works to increase its enrollment and focus on the access appropriate to its mission, the Commission asks that the interim report include a focus on how well the institution succeeds as it "endeavors to develop a student body which as a whole is broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve" (4.33).

We concur with the team's observation that the lack of regularized and systematic "means to assess student learning outcomes and post-graduate experiences of both undergraduates and graduate students is of very real concern." Our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *Programs and Instruction* are relevant to the concern to be addressed through the interim report:

Graduates successfully completing an undergraduate program demonstrate competence in written and oral communication in English; the ability for scientific and quantitative reasoning, for critical analysis and logical thinking; and the capability for continuing learning. They also demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific, historical, and social phenomena, and a knowledge and appreciation of the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of humankind. In addition, graduates demonstrate an in-depth understanding of an area of knowledge or practice and of its interrelatedness with other areas (4.19).

Students who successfully complete a graduate program demonstrate that they have acquired the knowledge and developed the skills that are identified as the program's objectives (4.25).

The institution systematically applies information obtained through its evaluation activities to inform institutional planning, thereby enhancing institutional effectiveness especially as it relates to student achievement (2.5).

Between 2001 and the time of the visit, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts reduced its support of the University's general operating and library budgets by 34%. To accommodate this rapid change, the institution increased its educational operations fee to students by 110%. Now under new leadership, the institution will work to re-balance its sources of revenue, seeking greater public support in targeted areas and working to increase private and voluntary support through its development efforts. At the time of the interim report, the Commission looks forward to learning of the institution's success in achieving levels of support consistent with its mission and the student body it seeks to serve, as it demonstrates that the University "establishes feasible priorities, and develops a realistic course of action to achieve identified objectives" (2.3).

Finally, we are gratified to note that the institution is spending the current year establishing the foundation for a new strategic planning effort and anticipate that the interim report will afford the opportunity for the institution to describe its success in integrating strategic planning with financial, academic, and facilities planning so that "decision-making, particularly the allocation of resources, is consistent with planning priorities" (2.3).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2015 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation once every ten years.

You will note 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.

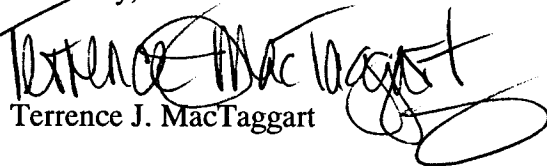
The Commission expressed its appreciation for the self-study prepared by the University and for the evaluation report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs and Provost Paul Fonteyn, Vice Chancellor of Administration and Finance Ellen M. O'Connor, and team chair Dr. Michael Schwartz.

You are encouraged to share this letter and the team's complete report with all of the University'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 Mr. James Karam. 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 in 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, Interim Director of the Commission.

Sincerely,

  
Terrence J. MacTaggart

TJM/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. James Karam  
Visiting Team