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NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES, INC.  
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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March 24, 2004

Dr. Daniel Mark Fogel  
President  
University of Vermont  
85 South Prospect Street  
Burlington, VT 05405-0160

Dear President Fogel:

It is my pleasure to inform you that at its meeting on March 4, 2004 the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the fifth-year interim report submitted by the University of Vermont and voted to take the following action:

that the fifth-year report submitted by the University of Vermont be accepted;

that the scheduling of the next comprehensive evaluation for Spring, 2009 be confirmed.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

We commend the University of Vermont for its fifth-year report that presents significant progress in numerous areas since the last comprehensive review in Spring, 1999. We take favorable note of the steps the University has taken to address concerns articulated as a part of its last comprehensive review regarding the strategic plan, capital campaign, assessment efforts to validate educational effectiveness, and enhanced enrollment and retention.

The Commission is gratified to learn through the fifth-year interim report that over the past five years and spanning two University presidents a robust structure has been developed to support the strategic planning process. This includes the framing of objectives and action steps at the university-level, and the intent to support the development of unit and department plans for internal review. However, it was difficult to assess the institution's success at implementing the plan as no information was provided regarding achievements and challenges that have resulted from implementing the plan.

We take favorable note of the launching in October, 2003 of a comprehensive campaign with a target goal of \$250 million to be

attained by 2007. As of December, 2003, \$140 million had been accrued towards that goal. The University has also been successful in increasing its success with externally funded research: during the past five years, awards have increased nearly \$50 million (an average of 15 percent per year) and these awards exceeded \$117 million in Fiscal 2003. Using bonded resources, the University has also begun work on a \$120 million renovation and expansion of its residence halls. Since 1999 the University has also opened a new 118,000 square foot medical research facility and has purchased an adjacent campus (Trinity College).

The Commission is pleased to acknowledge initiatives taken in the development of assessment activities relating to budget, program support, and student learning. In December, 2000 the Faculty Senate approved a formal review and assessment process for academic programs. This process provides for cyclical five-year reviews and its stated purpose is to ensure that these programs deliver "the highest possible level of quality." In March, 2003 the Provost, working with the deans, recommended the adoption of a budget process that incorporates a performance matrix with annual reviews and planning adjustments. It will allocate resources based upon productivity, quality, cost effectiveness, and strategic priority. In Spring, 1999 the Center for Teaching and Learning was opened with a mission to "promote, encourage and support a culture of excellence in teaching and learning." The report describes the administration of national surveys at the university-level and several efforts by academic units to participate in surveying and benchmarking efforts that provide comparative data for similar programs at other selected institutions. However, the report does not present findings in relation to these efforts or how the efforts have led to initiatives addressing institutional effectiveness.

We recognize the considerable progress the University has made in addressing issues of enrollment, retention, and diversity. Undergraduate enrollments have increased approximately 10 percent in the past five years, and the academic profile of entering students has improved slightly (2 percent increase in combined SAT scores). First-to-second year retention and six-year graduation rates have each improved about 4 percent. The headcount percentage of ALANA students has increased over 30 percent during the past six years, a time when total enrollment headcount (graduate and undergraduate) increased about 8 percent. Progress in developing the racial and ethnic diversity of the faculty has been modest: Hispanic and non-white faculty increased from 73 to 116 (6 percent) during the period while white, non-Hispanic faculty increased from 887 to 933 (5 percent).

The Commission respects the significant challenges facing the University of Vermont. It continues to receive the lowest level of state support of any comparable institution in America. The President receives a one-year contract with a public annual review by the Board of Trustees. Although very tuition dependent, the University is required by state statute to charge in-state students no more than 40 percent of the tuition charged to out-of-state students.

In summary, the Commission commends the University of Vermont for its many successes and growth over the past five years particularly given significant challenges, and for attending so effectively to areas of concern articulated in the last comprehensive review.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring, 2009 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive visit at least once every ten years.

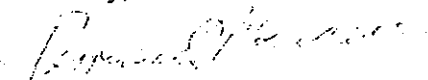
You are encouraged to share this letter with all of the University's constituencies. It is Commission policy to inform the chairperson of the institution's governing board of action following requested reports. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Dean Maglaris. The institution is free to release information about the report and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

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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 Charles M. Cook, Director of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Terrence J. MacTaggart

TJM/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Dean Maglaris

