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December 1, 2012

Dr. Daniel M. Asquino
President
Mount Wachusett Community College
444 Green Street
Gardner, MA 01440-1000

Dear President Asquino:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on September 21, 2012, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Mount Wachusett Community College:

that Mount Wachusett Community College be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit a fifth-year interim report for consideration in Spring, 2017;

that, in addition to the information included in all interim reports, the College give emphasis to its success in:

- 1) developing and executing a communications plan for dissemination of the mission, vision, and values of the institution to all members of the campus community;
- 2) developing and implementing an assessment plan that engages adjunct and part-time faculty in the formulation and assessment of student learning outcomes;
- 3) renovating and restoring aging infrastructure on the Gardner campus;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Spring, 2022.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

We particularly commend the institution for its thorough, candid, and well-written self-study that demonstrates the College is achieving its mission and that its core values are clearly discernible in the College's transparent, collegial, and respectful campus community. We concur with the visiting team that MWCC can take justifiable pride in its multi-level planning processes that are participatory, systematic, and comprehensive. We are pleased to learn of the institution's data driven strategic enrollment plans and initiatives and of its use of assessment data to inform decision-making. We are gratified that the governing board is active, informed, and committed to the College and that the President and Executive Council effectively model communication and accessibility. We note with approval that full-time faculty are highly committed and dedicated as demonstrated by their willingness to participate in activities beyond their teaching assignments to support students and to strengthen the College. The self-study and team report provide evidence of the College's effective oversight of programs offered off-campus and through distance education. MWCC's commitment to student success, as evidenced by its articulation and partnership agreements, student support services, and diverse Student Life programs, is noteworthy. As validated by the visiting team, the College is extraordinarily successful in securing grants and funds, and the Foundation provides impressive financial support to the College and community through scholarship and capital campaigns. In addition, we note with favor that the College exhibits financial strength in its operating budget by having achieved reserves after many years of lean fund balances. With its dedicated faculty and staff, prudent resource management, and capable senior leadership team, the College is well positioned for future success.

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 the College is asked, in Spring, 2017, to report on three matters related to our Standards on *Mission and Purposes*, *The Academic Program*, *Faculty*, *Physical and Technological Resources*, and *Financial Resources*.

The Commission appreciates MWCC's candid acknowledgment that it is "challenged to assure that the significance and ramifications of the mission are formally introduced to and inculcated in all parts of the campus, including temporary and adjunct faculty and staff." We are gratified to learn that the College is developing a communications plan to assure that all faculty and staff are aware of the mission and strategic goals and objectives of the College. We anticipate being apprized, through the Spring 2017 interim report, of the College's success in assuring that MWCC's "mission and purposes...are accepted and widely understood by its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students" (1.4).

We are heartened by MWCC's dedication to the assessment of institutional data as a means to support student success and note with favor the College's commitment to strengthen the involvement of part-time and adjunct faculty in assessment efforts. We are pleased to learn that "the college has developed a repository for all of the assessment efforts across the college" and that "[a]djunct faculty are encouraged to visit the repository and add their own assessment data." Further, we take note that the "adjunct orientation has been strengthened to include information on assessment." We look forward to learning, through the Spring 2017 report, of the success of these initiatives. We remind you of our standards on *The Academic Program* and *Faculty*:

The institution implements and provides support for systematic and broad-based assessment of what and how students are learning through their academic program and experiences outside the classroom. Assessment is based on clear statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. Assessment provides useful information that helps the

institution to improve the experiences provided for students, as well as to assure that the level of student achievement is appropriate for the degree awarded. (4.48)

The institution's approach to understanding student learning focuses on the course, program, and institutional level. Evidence is considered at the appropriate level of focus, with the results being a demonstrable factor in improving the learning opportunities and results for students. (4.49)

Institutions that employ part-time, adjunct, clinical or temporary faculty assure their appropriate integration into the department and institution and provide opportunities for faculty development. (5.8)

We agree with the visiting team that the College has made significant strides in improvements to existing buildings, most notably in the area of sustainability and energy conservation. We also concur that, although MWCC's main and satellite campuses are adequately equipped and managed, the main building on the Gardner campus, which was built in 1974, is aging and in need of refurbishing. We look forward to learning, in the interim report submitted for consideration in Spring 2017, of the College's progress in restoring its Gardner campus infrastructure. Our standards on *Physical and Technological Resources* and *Financial Resources* are relevant here:

The institution undertakes physical resource planning linked to academic and student services, support functions, and financial planning. It determines the adequacy of existing physical and technological resources and identifies and plans the specified resolution of deferred maintenance needs. Space planning occurs on a regular basis as part of physical resource evaluation and planning, and is consistent with the mission and purposes of the institution. (8.4)

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 and technology and physical resources priorities to advance its educational objectives. (9.8)

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring, 2022 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years.

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 Mount Wachusett Community College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Dr. Melissa Fama, Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Ms. B. Lynn Kilchenstein, 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 of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Ms. Tina Sbrega. The institution is free to release information about the evaluation and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

Dr. Daniel M. Asquino

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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 in New England.

If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Barbara Brittingham, Director of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Richard L. Pattenaude

RLP/sjp

Enclosure

cc: Ms. Tina Sbrega
Visiting Team