



Founded in 1885

NOV 9 2012

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

November 6, 2012

RICHARD L. PATTENAUDE, Chair (2013)  
University of Maine System

JEAN A. WYLD, Vice Chair (2015)  
Springfield College

DAVID F. FINNEY (2013)  
Champlain College

WILFREDO NIEVES (2013)  
Capital Community College

LINDA S. WELLS (2013)  
Boston University

ANDREW B. EVANS (2014)  
Wellesley College

DAVID S. GRAVES (2014)  
Laureate Hospitality, Art & Design

R. BRUCE HITCHNER (2014)  
Tufts University

MARY ELLEN JUKOSKI (2014)  
Mitchell College

DAVID L. LEVINSON (2014)  
Norwalk Community College

BRUCE L. MALLORY (2014)  
University of New Hampshire

PATRICIA MAGUIRE MESERVEY (2014)  
Salem State University

CHRISTOPHER J. SULLIVAN (2014)  
Concord, NH

DAVID E.A. CARSON (2015)  
Hartford, CT

THOMAS L.G. DWYER (2015)  
Johnson & Wales University

JOHN F. GABRANSKI (2015)  
Haydenville, MA

WILLIAM F. KENNEDY (2015)  
Boston, MA

JON S. OXMAN (2015)  
Auburn, ME

JACQUELINE D. PETERSON (2015)  
College of the Holy Cross

REV. BRIAN J. SHANLEY, O.P. (2015)  
Providence College

**Director of the Commission**  
BARBARA E. BRITTINGHAM  
bbrittingham@neasc.org

**Deputy Director of the Commission**  
PATRICIA M. O'BRIEN, SND  
pobrien@neasc.org

**Associate Director of the Commission**  
CAROL L. ANDERSON  
canderson@neasc.org

**Associate Director of the Commission**  
ROBERT C. FROH  
rfroh@neasc.org

**Associate Director of the Commission**  
PAULA A. HARBECKE  
pharbecke@neasc.org

Dr. Anthony S. Caprio  
President  
Western New England University  
1215 Wilbraham Road  
Springfield, MA 01119-2684

Dear President Caprio:

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 Western New England University:

that Western New England University be continued in accreditation;

that the Spring 2014 evaluation to assess implementation of the Ph.D. in Engineering Management program be confirmed;

that the University submit a report for consideration in Fall 2014 that gives emphasis to the institution's success in:

1. ensuring the governance structure reflects its university status, promoting the participation of all constituents and providing for regular channels of communication with the board and president;
2. achieving its goals for the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of its faculty and staff;

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

that, in addition to the information included in all interim reports, the University give emphasis to the continued effectiveness of its governance structure in promoting the participation of faculty, students, and staff and in ensuring productive communications;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Spring 2022.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

Western New England University is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

The Commission commends Western New England University (WNEU) for its rigorous and thorough preparation for, and engagement in, the accreditation process. We concur with the visiting team that the 2011 name change from college to university reflects the institution's evolution over the past decade and accurately portrays its "present organizational complexity, growth in graduate degree offerings, and increase in faculty research involvements and expectations." We are pleased to learn of the effective leadership provided by the board and the president and of the individualized attention and strong academic support faculty provide students as evidenced by the 2009 NSSE finding that 92% of seniors rate their relationship with faculty as positive. We note with approval the rigorous processes used to assess student learning that extend to all of the University's programs – undergraduate and graduate – regardless of delivery format. The work of the Online Course Delivery Committee of the Faculty Senate to ensure course equivalency, design, and assessment is commended. The University's innovative General Education program is noteworthy, as is the 100% participation in the institution's first-year information literacy program. In addition, we acknowledge the University's prudent management of its physical and financial resources during a period of economic uncertainty, achieving operating surpluses (\$550,000 in FY2012) while "strategically funding improvements in educational programming" including the construction of the Center for Sciences and Pharmacy and two new residence halls and additions to the Blake Law School Center and D'Amour Library. As WNEU approaches its centennial anniversary in 2019, its *Strategic Plan: Individual Focus, Global Perspectives* positions it well to build on its success as a comprehensive university that provides an "unwavering focus to each student's academic and personal development."

In keeping with the Commission's Policy on Moving to the Higher Degree, the on-site evaluation of the Ph.D. in Engineering Management program scheduled for Spring 2014 is confirmed.

The items the institution is asked to report on in Fall 2014 are related to our standards on *Organization and Governance, Faculty, and Integrity*.

We share the judgment of the team that the institution's administrative structure is clear and comprehensive, and reporting relationships appear to be "appropriate and logical" for a university structure. At the same time, we understand that the Faculty Senate is currently composed of only representatives from the undergraduate colleges. We further note that the team found no evidence of "formal governance mechanisms or process for faculty or students to provide consultation or relevant perspectives to the President or Board of Trustees." We are therefore pleased to learn that the University is committed to working with the faculty over the next three years to "broaden the current Faculty Senate into an institution-wide model" and, while retaining its open campus culture, to find appropriate ways to ensure that the views and judgments of faculty and students "receive attention while providing proactive opportunities for new conversations." The Fall 2014 report will enable the institution to provide evidence that its governance structure reflects its university status and that it promotes the participation of all constituents and provides for regular channels of communication with the board and president. Our standard on *Organization and Governance* provides this guidance:

The institution's organizational structure, decision-making processes, and policies are clear and consistent with its mission and support institutional effectiveness. The institution's system of governance involves the participation of all appropriate constituencies and includes regular communication among them (3.1).

Utilizing the institutional governance structure, the board establishes and maintains appropriate and productive channels of communication among its members and with the institutional community (3.5).

In accordance with established institutional mechanisms and procedures, the chief executive officer and the administration consult with faculty, students, other administrators and staff, and are appropriately responsive to their concerns, needs, and initiatives. The institution's internal governance provides for the appropriate participation of its constituencies, promotes communications, and effectively advances the quality of the institution (3.9).

We commend WNEU for its commitment to "develop and practice [its] vision of diversity and pluralism on campus" by including this commitment as one of the eight major directions of its current strategic plan. We are pleased to learn of the notable progress made to diversify the student body as demonstrated by the Fall 2012 incoming class with 20% of the students representing minority groups. However, as noted by the team and acknowledged by the institution, WNEU has yet to develop a comprehensive plan for diversifying its faculty and staff. We therefore are encouraged by the efforts made by the institution to consider systematic ways to increase the diversity of its faculty, including establishing a minority scholars program. In keeping with our standards on *Faculty* and *Integrity*, the Fall 2014 report will afford the institution an opportunity to update the Commission on the success of this and other initiatives implemented to achieve its goals for the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of its faculty and staff.

The institution employs an open and orderly process for recruiting and appointing its faculty. Faculty participate in the search process for new members of the instructional staff. The institution ensures equal employment opportunity consistent with legal requirements and any other dimensions of its own choosing; compatible with its mission and purposes, it addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity among its faculty. Faculty selection reflects the effectiveness of this process and results in a variety of intellectual backgrounds and training (5.4).

The institution adheres to non-discriminatory policies and practices in recruitment, admissions, employment, evaluation, disciplinary action, and advancement. It fosters an atmosphere within the institutional community that respects and supports people of diverse characteristics and backgrounds (11.5).

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 University is asked to further demonstrate that its "... system of governance involves the participation of all appropriate constituencies and includes regular communication among them" (3.1). We recognize that this matter does not lend itself to rapid resolution and will require the institution's sustained attention over time. Hence, we ask that the fifth-year interim report provide evidence of the University's continued success in this regard.

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 Western New England University and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you and Danielle Ripich, team chair, during its deliberations.

Dr. Anthony S. Caprio  
November 6, 2012  
Page 4

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 Mr. Kevin Delbridge. 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 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/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Kevin Delbridge  
Visiting Team