



DAVID QUIGLEY, Chair (2021)  
Boston College

GEORGE W. TETLER, Vice Chair (2022)  
Worcester, MA

KASSANDRA S. ARDINGER (2020)  
Trustee Member, Concord, NH

RUSSELL CAREY (2020)  
Brown University

FRANCESCO C. CESAREO (2020)  
Assumption College

F. JAVIER CEVALLOS (2020)  
Framingham State University

RICK DANIELS (2020)  
Conassett, MA

DONALD D. DEHAYES (2020)  
University of Rhode Island

PAM Y. EDDINGER (2020)  
Bunker Hill Community College

THOMAS S. EDWARDS (2020)  
Thomas College

KIMBERLY M. COFF-CREWS (2020)  
Yale University

MARTIN J. HOWARD (2020)  
Boston University

SUSAN D. HUARD (2020)  
Manchester Community College (NH)

JEFFREY S. SOLOMON (2020)  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

ELEANOR BAKER (2021)  
Falmouth, ME

KATHERINE BERGERON (2021)  
Connecticut College

PETER L. EBB (2021)  
Trustee Member, Boston, MA

GREGORY W. FOWLER (2021)  
Southern New Hampshire University

DENNIS M. HANNO (2021)  
Wheaton College

ELLEN L. KENNEDY (2021)  
Berkshire Community College

ABDALLAH A. SFEIR (2021)  
Lebanese American University

JOHN M. SWEENEY (2021)  
Providence College

ELAINE COLLINS (2022)  
Northern Vermont University

DAISY COCCO DE FILIPPIS (2022)  
Naugatuck Valley Community College

HARRY E. DUMAY (2022)  
College of Our Lady of the Elms

P. MICHAEL LAHAN (2022)  
Norwich, CT

DANIEL J. MAY (2022)  
University of New Haven

JEFFERY J. MCMAHAN (2022)  
Burlington, VT

President of the Commission  
BARBARA E. BRITTINGHAM  
bbrittingham@neche.org

Senior Vice President of the Commission  
PATRICIA M. O'BRIEN, SND  
pobrien@neche.org

Vice President of the Commission  
CAROL L. ANDERSON  
canderson@neche.org

Vice President of the Commission  
LAURA M. GAMBINO  
lgambino@neche.org

Vice President of the Commission  
PAULA A. HARBECKE  
pharbecke@neche.org

February 12, 2020

Dr. Joan Ferrini-Mundy  
President  
University of Maine  
5703 Alumni Hall, Suite 200  
Orono, ME 04469-5703

Dear President Ferrini-Mundy:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on November 22, 2019, the New England Commission of Higher Education took the following action with respect to University of Maine:

that University of Maine be continued in accreditation;

that the Maine Business School is confirmed as within the University of Maine's accreditation;

that the institution be asked to submit a report for consideration in Fall 2021 that gives emphasis to the institution's success in:

1) continuing the collaboration with and integration of operating procedures of the University of Maine at Machias with the University of Maine;

2) developing the Maine Business School programming and achieving goals for its enrollment;

3) further developing useful assessments of student learning;

that the institution submit an interim (fifth-year) report for consideration in Spring 2024;

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

1) developing and implementing a new strategic plan;

2) strengthening the process of program review for awards at all levels and the integration of program review with assessment;

3) strengthening the funding model for research and increasing research funding and doctoral-level education;

- 4) increasing the diversity of faculty in line with the University's own goals;
- 5) developing and implementing master facilities plans for the campuses in Orono and Machias;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Spring 2029;

that if the Commission approves a substantive change request by the University of Maine System for unified accreditation of the System, the Commission will reassess the reporting requirements for the University of Maine and for other institutions within the System.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

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

The Commission notes several significant strengths of the University of Maine (UMaine). Despite strong demographic headwinds, we are pleased to observe that enrollment of degree-seeking students has increased by 7% following the establishment of a Division of Enrollment Management and creative initiatives that include the Flagship Match tuition program. We concur with the team's positive remarks regarding the success of the faculty and administration in the relationships developed as the University of Maine at Machias became a regional campus of the flagship. We take favorable note of the improved financial position of the University since the time of the last review and of the "well-defined and transparent budget planning process" that includes input from the community.

The Maine Business School was confirmed as included in the accreditation of the University of Maine because it is achieving its immediate purposes and has realistic, if ambitious, goals for further development.

The items the institution is asked to report on Spring 2021 are related to our standards on *Organization and Governance, Planning and Evaluation, Students, and Educational Effectiveness*.

We are pleased to note the reports of collaboration and integration of operating procedures of the University of Maine at Machias with the University of Maine. We concur with the observation of the visiting team that the developing relationship between the two institutions may well serve as a national model. In recognition of the fact that such relationships take time to become fully optimal, we ask that an update be provided as part of the report due in Spring 2021, consistent with our standards on *Organization and Governance* and *Students*:

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 (3.2).

The institution that enrolls multiple student bodies, by degree level, modality, location, or other variables, ensures that it meets the expectations set forth in this Standard for each of its student bodies (5.1).

As noted by the team, the establishment of the Maine Business School is a "bold experiment" to be commended. There are ambitious plans including to offer three dual degrees: the MBA and JD (Law), the MBA and MPH (public health), and the MBA and MS (Nursing) as well as concentrations in the MBA involving at least three other institutions within the System some of which have limited experience with offering graduate education. While the potential for the

contribution of the Maine Business School to the state of Maine is indeed significant, we concur with the team that there are “many wrinkles to be ironed out” and ask that the report due in Spring 2021 provide an update with an emphasis on this portion of our standard on *Planning and Evaluation*: “The institution has a demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning” (2.5).

Assessment of student learning is the third area for the report due in Spring 2021. While we take favorable note of assessment planning and implementation at the Maine Business School and the School of Marine Science, we note that some other units, including the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences “have not yet moved to the implementation stage.” We are pleased to note that “a culture of assessment is growing on campus and gaining momentum” and take particular note of the progress of the General Education subcommittee of the Faculty Senate’s Academic Affairs Committee. This momentum augurs well for the progress to be reported in Spring 2021, as noted in our standard on *Educational Effectiveness*:

Assessment of learning is based on verifiable statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. The process of understanding what and how students are learning focuses on the course, competency, program, and institutional level. Assessment has the support of the institution’s academic and institutional leadership and the systematic involvement of faculty and appropriate staff” (8.3).

Commission policy requires an interim (fifth-year) 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 interim reports the University is asked, in Spring 2024, to report on four matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*; *The Academic Program*; *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*; and *Institutional Resources*.

The University’s most recent strategic plan dates to 2011-12 and served three administrations. Strategies to strengthen net revenue via increased enrollment and improved retention were successfully adopted, though the University did not meet its goal of 15,000 students by 2017. The University envisions a new strategic plan that will include developing goals for UMaine to foster learner success, create and innovate for Maine and beyond, and to grow and advance partnerships. As informed by our standard on *Planning and Evaluation*, the Commission looks forward to learning how the University’s new strategic plan has enabled it to plan “beyond a short-term horizon” involving “realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints” (2.3).

The Commission asks that the interim report also include a focus on the University’s success in strengthening the implementation of its academic program review process for its programs at all levels not having professional or specialized accreditation, including graduate programs, the associate degrees offered at Machias, and the recently created services of badges and credentials for students to highlight specific skill sets. This systemic implementation of the program review process, including drawing on the findings of student learning assessment, is consistent with our standard on *Planning and Evaluation*:

The institution’s principal evaluation focus is the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of its academic programs. Evaluation endeavors and systematic assessment are demonstrably effective in the improvement of academic offerings, student learning, and the student experience. Systematic feedback from students, former students, and other relevant constituencies is a demonstrable factor in institutional improvement (2.7).

The institution develops, approves, administers, and on a regular cycle reviews its academic programs under institutional policies that are implemented by designated bodies

with established channels of communication and control. Review of academic programs includes evidence of student success and program effectiveness and incorporates an external perspective. Faculty have a substantive voice in these matters (4.6).

As the flagship institution in the University of Maine System and the state's only research university and significant source of Ph.D. graduates, the University of Maine's success in the area of research is key to its mission. We take favorable note of the recent reorganization of the research infrastructure, and of the "significant growth in external funding and increased support for the research/scholarship activities of faculty and students." We agree with the team's observation that, at the time of the visit, the University was "still learning how to facilitate the growth of research funding in the most effective manner," and we look forward to an update in the interim report on the institution's success in this area, as informed by our standard on *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*:

Scholarship, research, and creative activities receive support appropriate to the institution's mission (*Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*, Statement of the Standard).

Consistent with its mission and purposes, the institution provides support for scholarship, research, and creative activities. Faculty and students undertake research to an extent reflective of the level and nature of the degrees awarded. Policies and procedures related to research are communicated throughout the institution (6.20).

The self-study reports that the "recruitment of historically underrepresented groups and women for faculty positions at UMaine remains a matter of attention and concern." However, while the Provost's Council for the Advancement of Women is identified as a means of addressing gender-related recruitment, we agree with the visiting team that "no initiatives" are identified to address other aspects of diversity. We take favorable note of the institution's success in increasing the enrollment of underrepresented minority group students from 5% to 7% between 2012 and 2018. Recognizing the challenges of recruiting a demographically diverse faculty in northern New England, we ask that the interim report include information on the institution's success on how "compatible with its mission and purposes, it addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity among its faculty and academic staff" (6.5) as specified in our standard on *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*.

Finally, we ask that the interim report include an update on the anticipated facilities master plan for the campuses in Orono and Machias. We note that the proportion of space with a renovation age greater than 50 years is 59% at UMaine and 48% on the Machias campus. We take favorable note of the System's efforts to increase depreciation funding and of the \$3.05 million that will be available to the Machias campus based on a recent successful bond issue. We understand that the two campuses will undertake master planning within 18 months and look forward to learning of the results as part of the interim report. Our standard on *Institutional Resources* specifies that "Facilities are constructed and maintained in accordance with legal requirements to ensure access, safety, security, and a healthy environment with consideration for environmental and ecological concerns" (7.23).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2029 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years.

The Commission is aware that the University of Maine System may submit a substantive change request for unified accreditation of the System. If this request is approved, the Commission will reassess the reporting requirements for the University of Maine and for other institutions within the System.

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 University of Maine and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Jeffrey St. John, Senior Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, and Kimberly Whitehead, Chief of Staff to the President, and Kumble Subbaswamy, 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 and the head of the system of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Mr. James R. Erwin and Mr. Dannel P. Malloy. The institution is free to release information about the evaluation and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with the enclosed policy on Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions.

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, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



David Quigley

DQ/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. James R. Erwin  
Mr. Dannel P. Malloy  
Visiting Team