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COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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May 4, 2011

Dr. Helen F. Giles-Gee
President
Keene State College
229 Main Street, MS 1504
Keene, NH 03435-1504

Dear President Giles-Gee:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on April 15, 2011, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Keene State College:

that Keene State College be continued in accreditation;

that the substantive change proposal to offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing program be accepted and the program be encompassed within the institution's accreditation, with an effective date of April 15, 2011;

that an on-site evaluation of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program be scheduled for Fall 2012;

that the report prepared in advance of the Fall 2012 evaluation of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program give emphasis to the College's success in:

1. achieving its goals for the program's student:faculty ratio and an appropriate balance between full-time and adjunct faculty;
2. completing construction of the new chemistry and microbiology laboratory;

that the College submit a fifth-year interim report for consideration in Fall 2015;

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

1. resuming the strategic initiatives process, with emphasis on streamlining the process, making it more transparent, and linking operating and strategic funding decisions to the planning process;

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2. achieving its goals to increase the number of full-time, tenure-track faculty members;
3. developing and implementing a more comprehensive approach to enrollment management planning;
4. strengthening the use of data, including assessment data, to support planning and decision making;
5. generating sufficient revenue to assure the quality of programs and services in light of anticipated reductions in state support;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2020.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

Keene State College (KSC) is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*. We commend Keene State College for the participatory process that resulted in a candid, well-written self-study. We note with approval the clarity of KSC's mission as a public liberal arts college and the College's status as a leader among the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) institutions. The College's mission is widely understood and appreciated by all members of the campus community, including students. KSC's Integrative Studies (general education) program is recognized as a LEAP exemplar, and the institution has developed a comprehensive approach to the assessment of student learning that includes participation in the Voluntary System of Accountability, the American Democracy Project, and the New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability. We concur with the visiting team that Keene State College is "student centered with a spirit of community that is palpable" and note with favor the partnerships it has established with the local community. With an experienced, entrepreneurial leadership team, a dedicated faculty and staff, and a supportive Board of Trustees, the institution is well positioned for continued success.

The report submitted by Keene State College concerning its plans to offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing program was accepted, and the program encompassed within the institution's accreditation, because the Commission finds that the proposed program fits within the College's mission and fulfills the relevant *Standards for Accreditation* and Commission policies. We understand that the nursing program will be administered through the College's School of Professional and Graduate Studies, under the leadership of a director who is an experienced nursing educator and administrator. Nursing students will complete the Integrative Studies program required of all KSC students as well as a four-semester didactic and clinical nursing program of study. The rigorous curriculum has been designed to assure that the knowledge, skill, and mastery expectations of the New Hampshire Board of Nursing and Commission on College Nursing Education (CCNE) are achieved. The College has begun the search process for the four-five full-time faculty members it expects will be needed for the program. We are pleased to learn that the College has secured appropriate library and information resources for the program and plans to construct a chemistry and microbiology laboratory in its Technology Design and Safety Center. The budget submitted with the proposal projects that, based on enrollment of a 48-student cohort each year, the program will produce a positive net margin within the first three years of operation.

Commission policy requires an on-site evaluation of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program within two years of its initiation but before the first class is graduated. The report prepared for the visit in Fall 2012 should update the Commission to reflect and assess actual experience in implementing the degree program. A copy of the relevant policy and procedures is enclosed for your information.

In addition, the institution is asked, in its report, to give emphasis to two matters related to our standards on *Faculty* and *Physical and Technological Resources*.

The report submitted by Keene State College notes that, through a combination of full-time and adjunct faculty, it expects to achieve the state-mandated student:faculty ratio of 8:1 in the nursing program. We understand that the College plans to hire three full-time nursing faculty members in FY2012 and another in FY2013 and to support “specialty curriculum needs” of the program through the use of adjunct faculty. The report prepared in advance of the Fall 2012 evaluation will provide an opportunity for the College to update the Commission on its success in achieving these goals. We remind you of our standard on *Faculty*:

There are an adequate number of faculty whose time commitment to the institution is sufficient to assure the accomplishment of class and out-of-class responsibilities essential for the fulfillment of institutional mission and purposes. Responsibilities of teaching faculty include instruction and the systematic understanding of effective teaching/learning processes and outcomes in courses and programs for which they share responsibility; additional duties may include such functions as student advisement, academic planning, and participation in policy-making, course and curricular development, research, and institutional governance (5.3).

Through the Fall 2012 evaluation, the Commission also looks forward to learning of the College’s success in assuring that nursing students and faculty have access to “appropriate physical, technological, and educational resources to support teaching and learning” (8.2), as evidenced by the completion of the new chemistry and microbiology laboratory under construction.

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 Fall 2015, to report on five matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*, *Faculty*, *Students*, and *Financial Resources*.

The Commission commends Keene State College for its successful planning processes, including the Strategic Initiatives Process that has fostered the development of creative ideas across the campus. We understand, however, that the process has been temporarily suspended to permit an evaluation of its effectiveness. We concur with the visiting team that the College would benefit from “refreshing” this process to enhance transparency and strengthen the connections between the planning and budgeting processes. The Fall 2015 interim report will afford KSC the opportunity to demonstrate that its “[i]nstitutional decision-making, particularly the allocation of resources, is consistent with planning priorities” (2.2). Our standard on *Planning and Evaluation* provides additional guidance:

Planning and evaluation are systematic, comprehensive, broad-based, integrated, and appropriate to the institution. They involve the participation of individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes. Results of planning and evaluation are regularly communicated to appropriate institutional constituencies. The institution allocates sufficient resources for its planning and evaluation efforts (2.1).

The institution determines the effectiveness of its planning and evaluation activities on an ongoing basis. Results of these activities are used to further enhance the institution’s implementation of its purposes and objectives (2.7).

In its self-study, Keene State College acknowledges that it is “grappling with its reliance on adjunct faculty” and the concomitant increased demand on full-time tenure-track faculty (FTTT) for advising and service. We understand that the College has established an ambitious goal to have two-thirds of its courses taught by FTTT by 2017 and plans to hire three new FTTT members each year in support of that goal. We anticipate being apprized, through the Fall 2015 interim report, of the College’s progress toward achieving this goal, in keeping with our standard on *Faculty*, cited above and below:

The institution avoids undue dependence on part-time faculty, adjuncts, and graduate assistants to conduct classroom instruction. Institutions that employ a significant proportion of part-time, adjunct, clinical or temporary faculty assure their appropriate integration into the department and institution and provide opportunities for faculty development (5.8).

The Commission concurs with the visiting team that strategic enrollment management at KSC is “in preliminary stages” and that the College would benefit from developing the current budget-driven enrollment process into a comprehensive approach that incorporates recruitment, admissions, and retention. We look forward to learning, in Fall 2015, of the College’s progress in this regard, in keeping with our standard on *Students*:

Consistent with its mission, the institution enrolls a student body that is broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve (6.1).

The institution demonstrates its ability to admit students who can be successful in the institution’s academic program, including specifically recruited populations. It ensures a systematic approach to providing accessible and effective programs and services designed to provide opportunities for enrolled students to be successful in achieving their academic goals. The institution provides students with information and guidance regarding opportunities and experiences that may help ensure their academic success (6.4).

The institution’s goals for retention and graduation reflect institutional purposes, and the results are used to inform recruitment and the review of programs and services (6.6).

The Commission commends Keene State College for its comprehensive approach to the assessment of student learning and its use of multiple measures of student success. We are pleased to learn of the widespread involvement of faculty and staff in assessment efforts and of the institution’s support for professional development related to assessment. As noted in the report of the visiting team, however, “more progress is needed and desired” with regard to the use of data, including assessment data, to inform planning and institutional change. The Fall 2015 interim report will afford KSC the opportunity to demonstrate that it “systematically collects and uses data necessary to support its planning efforts and to enhance institutional effectiveness” (2.2) and that evaluation results “are used systematically for improvement and to inform institutional planning, especially as it relates to student achievement and resource allocation” (2.6).

Both the self-study and the team report note the challenge of generating sufficient revenue to maintain and enhance the quality of the College’s programs and services, given the expectation that the level of financial support from the state will continue to be low. We understand that the State of New Hampshire is considering a proposal that would reduce the institution’s funding by 45 percent and also cut financial aid to students. We note with approval the College’s prudent and strategic resource management that includes the generation of alternative sources of revenue through the creation of an advancement division and increased support for its grants office, as well as measures to contain costs. The Fall 2015 interim report will enable Keene State College to provide evidence that it “preserves and enhances available financial resources sufficient to

support its academic and other activities" (9.1) and that its "multi-year financial planning is realistic and reflects the capacity of the institution to depend on identified sources of revenue and ensure the advancement of educational quality and services for students" (9.3).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2020 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 Keene State College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you and Dr. Emile Netzhammer, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, as well as Dr. Mary Grant, 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 Mr. Edward Dupont. 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,



Mary Jo Maydew

MJM/jm

Enclosures

cc: Mr. Edward Dupont
Visiting Team