



# NECHE

New England Commission  
of Higher Education

December 3, 2018

Dr. Pelema I. Morrice  
President  
Great Bay Community College  
320 Corporate Drive  
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Dear President Morrice:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on September 21, 2018, the New England Commission of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Great Bay Community College:

that Great Bay Community College be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit a report for consideration in Fall 2020 that gives emphasis to the institution's success in:

- 1) assessing learning in its academic, technical, and co-curricular programs with emphasis on the use of direct measures of student learning;
- 2) implementing its plans to enhance the effectiveness of its governance structures with attention to the consistency in the application of processes and procedures;
- 3) undertaking a strategic planning process, including the alignment of financial resources with strategic planning initiatives;
- 4) addressing the viability of the Advanced Technology and Academic Center; recognizing the projected operating budget deficits;

that the College submit an interim (fifth-year) report for consideration in Fall 2022;

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

- 1) continuing to implement its strategic plan with an emphasis on aligning the plan with the College's master plan and the CCSNH strategic plan;

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- 2) assuring the sufficiency of financial resources and implementing strategies for revenue diversification;
- 3) achieving its goals to increase student enrollment, retention, and graduation rates;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2027.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

Great Bay Community College is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

Along with the visiting team, the Commission commends Great Bay Community College (GBCC) for its continued efforts to improve, and for its thoughtful, complete self-study that was written with opportunity for participation by the entire college community. We are pleased to note that GBCC's mission and vision affirm its commitment to excellence and affordability while expanding intellectual and economic opportunity. The Commission is also gratified to learn that GBCC regularly engages in strategic planning and that there is evidence of strong participation in the planning process. We commend GBCC on its success in aligning academic departmental planning with institutional strategic planning by requiring each department to have a three-year strategic plan linked to the College's strategic plan as well as annual progress reports. We are pleased to learn from the visiting team report that the "physical and material condition of the campus is outstanding," and although Great Bay Community College is "operating lean," students "feel supported at every level." Full-time faculty are active in curriculum and policy development through their engagement in College committees. We understand that the College is focused on creating and improving educational programming to support student success and has developed systems to analyze its retention and graduation rates. We are further gratified to learn of the College's steady upward trend in retention and graduation rates – with retention rates for full-time associate degree students increasing from 57% in 2013 to 66% in 2017, and three-year graduation rates from 10% to 12% in that same time period. With its new president, strong leadership team, and committed faculty and staff, Great Bay Community College is well positioned to build on its accomplishments and fulfill its mission well into the future.

The items the institution is asked to report on in Fall 2020 are related to our standards on *The Academic Program, Educational Effectiveness, Organization and Governance, Planning and Evaluation, and Institutional Resources*.

As noted above with approval, GBCC requires each department to submit a three-year strategic plan, linked to the institution's strategic plan, as well as an annual report on progress towards three self-identified academic program goals. While there are some strong examples of program assessment, such as Nursing and Early Childhood Education, the visiting team noted that academic programs do not always include direct measures of student learning in their reviews. We therefore appreciate learning of the plans to align course and program learning outcomes and develop direct assessments, including assessment of GBCC's core attributes, as the College works to create a culture of evidence. The Fall 2020 report will provide Great Bay Community College an opportunity to apprise the Commission on its success in assuring that program reviews include "evidence of student success and program effectiveness (4.6)". We also refer you to our standard on *Educational Effectiveness*:

The institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods and direct and indirect measures to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students,

employing external perspectives including, as appropriate, benchmarks and peer comparisons (8.5).

The results of assessment and quantitative measures of student success are a demonstrable factor in the institution's efforts to improve the learning opportunities and results for students (8.8).

The institution integrates the findings of its assessment process and measures of student success into its program evaluation activities and uses the findings to inform its planning and resource allocation and to establish claims the institution makes to students and prospective students (8.10).

We understand from GBCC's self-study and the visiting team report that the College's revised governance model defines a structure of governance committees and details their functions and relationships. The visiting team noted, however, that there was minimal consistency and a lack of clarity in the application of the governance model processes. With its new president and leadership team in place, GBCC has the opportunity to review the current governance processes and work with faculty, staff, and students to ensure consistency and clarity in the College's governance processes. We look forward, in the report submitted in Fall 2020, to learning of the College's success in this effort. Our standard on *Organization and Governance* is relevant here:

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).

In accordance with established institutional mechanisms and procedures, the chief executive officer and senior administrators 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 (3.13).

The system of governance makes provisions for consideration of student views and judgments in those matters in which students have a direct and reasonable interest (3.16).

The Commission was pleased to learn that Great Bay Community College will be developing a short-term strategic direction as well as a long-term strategic plan that links to its fiscal and master plans. The Commission anticipates being apprised through the Fall 2020 report of the institution's success in these initiatives. We are informed by our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *Institutional Resources* in this regard:

The institution plans beyond a short-term horizon, including strategic planning that involves realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. The results of strategic planning are implemented in all units of the institution through financial, academic, enrollment, and other supporting plans (2.3).

The institution's financial planning, including contingency planning, is integrated with overall planning and evaluation processes. The institution demonstrates its ability to analyze its financial condition and understand the opportunities and constraints that will influence its financial condition and acts accordingly. It reallocates resources as necessary to achieve its purposes and objectives. The institution implements a realistic plan for addressing issues raised by the existence of any operating deficit (7.14).

We appreciate the institution's candor in acknowledging the enrollment and financial concerns related to the Advanced Technology and Academic Center (ATAC). We also note the challenges raised in the self-study and the visiting team report about the long-term viability of this program given that the Trade Adjustment Community College and Career Training grant has ended. We are gratified to learn from the self-study that GBCC is pursuing other program offerings at the ATAC and looking for ways to increase enrollment into the ATAC programs. We welcome further information, through the Fall 2020 report, about the institution's efforts to address the viability of the ATAC. Our standard on *Institutional Resources* will provide guidance for this section of the report:

The institution preserves and enhances available financial resources sufficient to support its mission. It manages its financial resources and allocates them in a way that reflects its mission and purposes. (7.4).

The institution's financial planning, including contingency planning, is integrated with overall planning and evaluation processes. The institution demonstrates its ability to analyze its financial condition and understand the opportunities and constraints that will influence its financial condition and acts accordingly. It reallocates resources as necessary to achieve its purposes and objectives. The institution implements a realistic plan for addressing issues raised by the existence of any operating deficit (7.14).

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 College is asked, in Fall 2022, to report on three matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*, *Institutional Resources*, *Students*, and *Educational Effectiveness*.

In the Fall 2022 report, Great Bay is asked to give emphasis to its continued success in addressing its strategic planning efforts. The Commission understands that this issue does not lend itself to rapid resolution and will require the institution's continued attention over time; hence, we anticipate being apprised, in Fall 2022, of further progress in strategic planning and the alignment of the College's strategic plan with the College's master plan and the CCSNH strategic plan.

As the visiting team noted in its report, while the operating revenue for GBCC was projected to increase in FY2018, the College is "challenged on the expense side" with \$1.0 million in non-academic capital project bond principal and interest payments and projected operating deficits of \$356,176 in FY2018 and \$1.72 million in FY2019 for the ATAC. The Commission is gratified to learn that, through its strategic planning process, Great Bay Community College will explore ways to expand and diversify its revenue streams and develop an enrollment plan. We anticipate being apprised, through the Fall 2022 interim report, of the College's success in strengthening its financial condition as evidence that "[t]he institution is financially stable" (7.5). Our standard on *Institutional Resources* provides this additional guidance:

Opportunities identified for new sources of revenue are reviewed by the administration and board to ensure the integrity of the institution and the quality of the academic program are maintained and enhanced. The institution planning a substantive change demonstrates the financial and administrative capacity to ensure that the new initiative meets the standards of quality of the institution and the Commission's Standards (7.15).

As noted above, GBCC's IPEDs graduation rates have increased from 10% in 2013 to 12% in 2017, and retention rates increased from 57% in to 66% in that same period. We view favorably the College's efforts to continue to improve its retention and graduation rates by implementing targeted academic support services such as co-remediation in mathematics courses. The Fall 2022 interim report will provide GBCC an opportunity to update the Commission on its success in achieving its goals to increase enrollment and improve its retention and graduation rates as evidence that "the institution sets and achieves realistic goals to enroll students who are broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve" (*Students*, Statement of Standard). Our standards on *Students* and *Educational Effectiveness* are also relevant here:

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 (5.6)

The institution defines measures of student success and levels of achievement appropriate to its mission, modalities and locations of instruction, and student body, including any specifically recruited populations. These measures include rates of progression, retention, transfer, and graduation; default and loan repayment rates; licensure passage rates; and employment (8.6).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2027 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. Because Great Bay Community College delayed its comprehensive evaluation by a year, scheduling the next evaluation for Fall 2027 returns the institution to its original evaluation schedule.

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 Great Bay Community College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Lisa McCurley, Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs, Kelly Chapman, Chief Financial Officer, and John L. Cox, 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 and the head of the state system on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Jeremy Hitchcock and Ross Gittell. 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.

Dr. Pelema I. Morrice  
December 3, 2018  
Page 6

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Quigley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

David Quigley

DQ/sjp

Enclosures

cc: Jeremy Hitchcock  
Ross Gittell  
Visiting team