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COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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April 2, 2008

Mr. Wildolfo Arvelo
President
Great Bay Community College
277 Portsmouth Avenue
Stratham, NH 03885-2297

Dear President Arvelo:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on February 29, 2008, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Great Bay Community College:

that Great Bay Community College, formerly New Hampshire Community Technical College – Stratham, be continued in accreditation;

that the institution be reminded that moving to a new location represents a substantive change requiring prior Commission approval;

that the College submit a fifth-year interim report for consideration in Fall 2012;

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

1. developing Great Bay Community College's increasing independence as an institution;
2. implementing its financial reporting and monitoring system;
3. linking planning and budgeting;
4. developing a staffing plan assuring sufficient staffing in critical areas;
5. moving to the new campus facility, including the effect on the institution's budget;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2017.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

Great Bay Community College is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*. We commend the institution for its continued development in the face of rapid change and are pleased to note that the institution now appears to be entering a phase of stability in governance and leadership. The New Hampshire legislation that provided a collegiate structure for the system of public two-year institutions, and the identification with the local community that comes with the separation from the Manchester institution, provide the College an opportunity to strengthen its service to the local community. We commend the College for its strong academic programs and its success in attracting external funding that has contributed to overall institutional development.

Great Bay Community College anticipates moving in Fall 2009 to a new location in Portsmouth. The Commission is gratified to learn that the College will have significantly increased space, new laboratories, and the opportunity provided to students by having other institutions offer courses and programs at the same location. The student experience will be significantly enhanced by a “one-stop” area for student services, an area for student life, and an attractive cafeteria. The College is reminded that moving to a new location is a substantive change; a copy of our eponymous policy is enclosed. We will expect the report in time to be considered at a Fall 2008 meeting. You are encouraged to work closely with Commission staff on the development of this report.

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. The matters identified for special emphasis in Fall 2012 are related to our standards on *Mission and Purposes, Library and Other Information Resources, Financial Resources, Organization and Governance, and Physical and Technological Resources*.

The above-noted increased independence of Great Bay Community College, both through its free-standing status apart from Manchester and through legislative action, provides the institution with enhanced opportunity to focus on how, through its distinct mission, the College can enhance institutional effectiveness. This topic of the interim report is informed by our standard on *Mission and Purposes*:

The mission of the institution defines its distinctive character, addresses the needs of society and identifies the students the institution seeks to serve, and reflects both the institution’s traditions and its vision for the future. The institution’s mission provides the basis upon which the institution identifies its priorities, plans its future and evaluates its endeavors; it provides a basis for the evaluation of the institution against the Commission’s Standards (1.1).

The institution’s purposes are concrete and realistic and further define its educational and other dimensions, including scholarship, research, and public service. Consistent with its mission, the institution endeavors to enhance the communities it serves (1.3).

With state legislation establishing a collegiate system comes the need for increased capacity for the institution to understand and respond to its financial condition. The Commission is heartened to know that the College’s ability to monitor and analyze its financial position is being enhanced through the implementation of a sophisticated system of financial software, so that the College will have “information technology sufficient to ensure its efficient ability to plan, administer, and evaluate its program and services” (7.11). The interim report will afford the institution an opportunity to report to the Commission how this increased capacity helps the institution address key aspects of our standard on *Financial Resources*:

The institution's 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. The governing board reviews and approves the institution's financial plans (9.3).

The institution ensures the integrity of its finances through prudent financial management and organization, a well-organized budget process, appropriate internal control mechanisms, risk assessment, and timely financial reporting, providing a basis for sound financial decision-making (9.6).

Frequent changes in organizational structure and institutional leadership have challenged the institution's ability to plan systematically for its future. At the same time, the increased independence of the College highlights the need for reliable and timely information to inform planning and institutional decision-making. Increased capacity provided through financial software will also allow the institution to more effectively link planning to budgeting, a topic of the interim report pertinent to our standards on *Financial Resources* and *Planning and Evaluation*:

The institution systematically collects and uses data necessary to support its planning efforts and to enhance institutional effectiveness. It plans for and responds to financial and other contingencies, establishes feasible priorities, and develops a realistic course of action to achieve identified objectives. Institutional decision-making, particularly the allocation of resources, is consistent with planning priorities (2.2).

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 resource priorities to advance its educational objectives (9.7).

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 (9.8).

We share the team's concern that lean funding has resulted in a thinly staffed organization that is stretched to address ordinary duties, with staff members frequently and admirably working beyond any narrow construction of a job description. We are especially concerned that any additional expectations, such as those occasioned by the move to a new location or other contingencies which may arise, may destabilize key functions. The Commission is particularly concerned that the institution ensure it can attract and retain qualified staff in key areas, including financial management and data security. The interim report will afford Great Bay Community College the opportunity to report its success in assuring that with respect to staffing it "undertakes planning and evaluation appropriate to its needs" (*Planning and Evaluation*, statement of the standard) and "assures provision of support adequate for the appropriate functioning of each organizational component" (*Organization and Governance*, statement of the standard).

As noted above, Great Bay Community College is planning to move in Fall 2009 to a newly renovated facility. While the Commission anticipates reviewing this substantive change in Fall 2008 and visiting the institution shortly after the move, the effects of the move will unfold over a longer time horizon. We also note that the increased size of the facility and newly renovated and

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highly technologically equipped laboratories, among other dimensions, may place unanticipated or at least unbudgeted demands on the institution's finances. We look forward to the institution's report in 2012 of the longer-term consequences of the move, overall, but especially to ensure that "financial resources are sufficient to sustain the achievement of its educational objectives and to further institutional improvement" (*Financial Resources*, statement of the standard).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2017 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation 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 Great Bay Community College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Diane Chin, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Sharon Cronin, Disability Support Specialist and self-study chair, and Dr. Catherine Addy, 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. Paul Holloway. 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,



Judith R. Gordon

JRG/jm

Enclosures

cc: Mr. Paul Holloway
Visiting Team