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December 2, 2014

Mr. Ray M. Di Pasquale  
President  
Community College of Rhode Island  
Knight Campus, Room 3328  
400 East Avenue  
Warwick, RI 02886

Dear President Di Pasquale:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on September 18, 2014, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to the Community College of Rhode Island:

that Community College of Rhode Island be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit a report for consideration in Spring 2017 that gives attention to the institution's progress in assessing student learning outcomes with an emphasis on using the results of assessment for continued improvement;

that the College submit an interim fifth-year report for consideration in Spring 2019;

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

- 1) continuing to implement a comprehensive approach to the assessment of student learning and using the results for improvement;
- 2) addressing ADA compliance issues identified in the College's Master Plan, with attention to considerations regarding space and staffing to meet the needs of students who require special accommodations;
- 3) evaluating the impact of changes in Rhode Island's governance of public higher education on the College;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Spring 2024.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

The Commission commends the Community College of Rhode Island for submitting a thorough and candid self-study demonstrating its many accomplishments. As validated by the visiting team, the College is achieving its mission and strategic initiatives to meet the "wide-ranging educational needs" of its diverse student body through systematic, participatory, and thoughtful planning efforts, including the development of a new Strategic Plan that will guide the direction of the College over the next three years. We are gratified to learn that CCRI's leadership, faculty and staff are dedicated and committed to the success of the College and its students and, under the leadership of the Vice President of Academic Affairs, faculty who are qualified and sufficient in number develop and deliver high-quality academic programming to students in face-to-face and online formats. We are particularly pleased to learn from the team that over the last decade CCRI has made substantial progress toward the development of an effective system of academic oversight for the College's four campuses, two satellite locations, and distance learning programming. The self-study assures that courses offered online and at all of its campuses are equivalent in content and rigor and, as confirmed by the team, guidelines and rubrics for online course peer review have been developed. The College's Student Success Center provides academic and student services sufficient to support student needs, including tutoring, peer mentoring, study skills workshops, and career and educational counseling. An increase in retention among full-time degree-seeking students from 60% in FY2009 to 64% in FY2013 demonstrates the College's commitment to improving retention rates. Further, the results of a study conducted by the College in FY2013 indicating that 90% of CCRI's graduates are "either employed, continuing their education, or a combination of both six to eight months after graduation" support the effectiveness of the College's student success initiatives. Finally, we appreciate learning of the College's success in its fundraising efforts, including \$5 million that was raised to restore the theater and other college projects and the generation of \$4 million in revenue through the Center for Workforce and Community Education. With a competent leadership team in place combined with dedicated staff and faculty and a well-developed strategic plan that supports the institution's mission, the Community College of Rhode Island is well positioned for future success.

The item the institution is asked to report on in Spring 2017 is related to our standard on *The Academic Program*.

We concur with the observation of the visiting team that there is still work to be done in the assessment of student learning outcomes, particularly at the course level. We recognize that the College has made progress in this area and note favorably that "pockets" of faculty throughout the institution are working on program-and course-based learning outcomes. In particular, as part of a multi-state collaboration, about 50 of CCRI's faculty members are now using value rubrics to measure course-level student learning outcomes. In keeping with our standard on *The Academic Program*, we ask that the report submitted for consideration in Spring 2017 provide an update on CCRI's continued success in the assessment of student learning outcomes with an emphasis on using the results of assessment for continued improvement:

The institution's approach to understanding student learning focuses on the course, program, and institutional level. Evidence is considered at the appropriate level of focus, with the results being a demonstrable factor in improving the learning opportunities and results for students (4.49).

The institution's approach to understanding what and how students are learning and using the results for improvement has the support of the institution's academic and institutional leadership and the systematic involvement of faculty (4.51).

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 Spring 2019, to report on three matters related to our standards on *The Academic Program*, *Students*, and *Organization and Governance*.

As noted above, we acknowledge that CCRI is progressing in its efforts toward the assessment of student learning outcomes. The Commission also recognizes that developing and implementing a comprehensive approach to the assessment of student learning outcomes and using the results of assessment to inform decision-making and continued improvement will take the institution's continued attention over time. We look forward, in the interim report submitted for consideration in Spring 2019, to learning of the institution's continued progress in assessing student learning outcomes with an emphasis on using the results of assessment for continued improvement. Our standard on *The Academic Program* (cited above) can be used to inform this portion of the report.

We note with favor that, since the time of the team visit, CCRI has corrected issues noted in the College's Master Plan and in the team report related to compliance with the American with Disability Act (ADA). We are gratified to learn that steps were taken to ensure that space accommodations are sufficient and that full-time staff is in place to support students with special needs. We understand that the College intends to monitor these issues carefully in the future to ensure students' needs are met appropriately, and we look forward to learning, in Spring 2019 of the institution's continued success in assuring compliance with ADA requirements as evidence that "[f]acilities are constructed and maintained in accordance with legal requirements to ensure access, safety, security, and a healthful environment..." (8.3).

As the College candidly acknowledged in its self-study, the Rhode Island Board of Education governance model has "changed repeatedly in the past several years" and the impact on institutions of higher education in the state of Rhode Island "remains to be seen." We ask that the College apprise the Commission, in the Spring 2019 interim report, on the impact of changes in Rhode Island's governance of public higher education on CCRI. Our standard on *Organization and Governance* provides guidance here:

The authority, responsibilities, and relationships among the governing board, administration, faculty, and staff are clearly described in the institution's by-laws, or an equivalent document, and in a table of organization that displays the working order of the institution. The board, administration, staff, and faculty understand and fulfill their respective roles as set forth in the institution's official documents and are provided with the appropriate information to undertake their respective roles. 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).

In multi-campus systems organized under a single governing board, the division of responsibility and authority between the system office and the institution is clear. Where system and campus boards share governance responsibilities or dimensions of authority, system policies and procedures are clearly defined and equitably administered (3.11).

Mr. Ray M. Di Pasquale  
December 2, 2014  
Page 4

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2024 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.

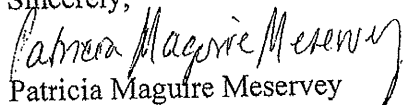
The Commission expressed appreciation for the self-study prepared by Community College of Rhode Island and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Dr. Greg LaMontagne, Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Dr. Carole Cowan, team 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 Ms. Eva-Marie Mancuso. 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,

  
Patricia Maguire Meservey

PMM/sjp

Enclosures

cc: Ms. Eva-Marie Mancuso  
Visiting team