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NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES, INC.  
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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December 22, 2008

Dr. James W. Schmotter  
President  
Western Connecticut State University  
181 White Street  
Danbury, CT 06810-6860

Dear President Schmotter:

It is my pleasure to inform you that at its meeting on November 20, 2008, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the fifth-year interim report submitted by Western Connecticut State University and voted to take the following action:

that the fifth-year interim report submitted by Western Connecticut State University be accepted;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2013 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2013 evaluation provide evidence of the institution's continued success in addressing the matters identified for emphasis in the 2008 report as well as the institution's progress with its goals for the six-year graduation rate.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The Commission commends Western Connecticut State University (WCSU) for progress made in addressing the areas of emphasis identified in Commission letters of March 23, 2004 and December 21, 2006. We note with approval that WCSU has implemented an assessment plan across academic units with 11 of 37 academic majors engaging in active student assessment processes at this point. The Doctoral Program in Instructional Leadership has designed a program evaluation process with established target dates for measuring specific objectives. We are pleased to learn of the inclusive strategic planning process that included the development of a master plan. The University has strengthened the support of part-time faculty that includes improved compensation and job stability, and more engagement in academic decision making and professional development. Finally, the Commission appreciates the care with which the University addressed student success

through the new forms provided. However, we encourage more referencing of these forms as part of the narrative of the next self-study, as the value to be gained from the forms comes from the institution's use of the information compiled.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2013 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. In addition to the information provided in all self-studies, we look forward, in Fall 2013, to receiving evidence that additional progress has been made in addressing the matters identified for emphasis in the 2004 and 2006 reports. We recognize that these issues do not lend themselves to rapid resolution and will require the institution's continued attention over time; thus we ask that further information be provided in the self-study. In addition, the University is asked to report on a matter related to our standard on *Students*.

The University's six-year graduation rate is 35% as contrasted with a 51% average for a group of ten peer institutions chosen by the institution. WCSU has set a five-year goal for achieving the peer group average which, as noted by the institution in its report, represents a significant challenge. In addressing this goal WCSU seeks to understand the reasons behind these low graduation rates and then to make improvements on the basis of this information. Through the self-study prepared for the Fall 2013 comprehensive evaluation, we look forward to learning about the institution's success in attaining its goal for the six-year graduation rate as guided by our standard on *Students*:

The institution measures student success, including rates of retention and graduation and other measures of success appropriate to institutional mission. 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. Rates of retention and graduation are separately determined for any group that the institution specifically recruits, and those rates are used in evaluating the success of specialized recruitment and the services and opportunities provided for the recruited students (6.6).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Western Connecticut State University and hopes that its preparation has contributed to institutional improvement. It appreciates your cooperation in the effort to provide public assurance of the quality of higher education in New England.

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. Lawrence D. McHugh. The institution is free to release information about the report and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

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

Sincerely,



Elsa M. Nuñez

EMN/slo  
Enclosure

cc: Mr. Lawrence D. McHugh



**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES  
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

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**Public Disclosure of Information  
About Affiliated Institutions**

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The following policy governs the release of information regarding the status of affiliated colleges and universities by institutions and the Commission.

**1. Release of Information by Institutions Regarding Their Accreditation  
Following Commission Action**

At the conclusion of the evaluation process institutions are encouraged to make publicly available information about their accreditation status including the findings of team reports and any obligations or requirements established by Commission action, as well as any plans to address stated concerns. While the Commission does not release copies of self-studies, other institutional reports, evaluation reports, or notification letters, it believes it to be good practice for institutions to make these materials available after notification of action on their status. Because of the potential to be misleading, institutions are asked not to publish or otherwise disseminate excerpts only from these materials. While the Commission does not initiate public release of information on actions of show cause or deferral, if such information is released by the institution in question, the Commission will respond to related inquiries.

If an institution releases or otherwise disseminates information which misrepresents or distorts its accreditation status, the institution will be notified and asked to take corrective action publicly correcting any misleading information it may have disseminated, including but not limited to the accreditation status of the institution, the contents of evaluation reports, and the Commission actions with respect to the institution. Should it fail to do so, the New England Association, acting through its Chief Executive Officer, will release a public statement in such form and content as it deems desirable providing correct information.

## 2. Published Statement on Accredited Status

The Commission asks that one of the following statements be used for disclosing in catalogues, brochures, advertisements, etc., that the institution is accredited.

An institution may wish to include within its catalogue or other material a statement which will give the consuming public a better idea of the meaning of regional accreditation. When that is the case, the Commission requests that the following statement be used in its entirety:

\_\_\_\_\_ College (University) is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

Accreditation of an institution of higher education by the New England Association indicates that it meets or exceeds criteria for the assessment of institutional quality periodically applied through a peer review process. An accredited college or university is one which has available the necessary resources to achieve its stated purposes through appropriate educational programs, is substantially doing so, and gives reasonable evidence that it will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Institutional integrity is also addressed through accreditation.

Accreditation by the New England Association is not partial but applies to the institution as a whole. As such, it is not a guarantee of every course or program offered, or the competence of individual graduates. Rather, it provides reasonable assurance about the quality of opportunities available to students who attend the institution.

Inquiries regarding the accreditation status by the New England Association should be directed to the administrative staff of the institution. Individuals may also contact:

**Commission on Institutions of Higher Education  
New England Association of Schools and Colleges  
209 Burlington Road  
Bedford, MA 01730-1433  
(781) 271-0022  
E-Mail: [cihe@neasc.org](mailto:cihe@neasc.org)**

The shorter statement that an institution may choose for announcing its accredited status follows:

\_\_\_\_\_ College (University) is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc., through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

Inquiries regarding the accreditation status by the New England Association should be directed to the administrative staff of the institution. Individuals may also contact:

**Commission on Institutions of Higher Education**  
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Accreditation by the New England Association has reference to the institution as a whole. Therefore, statements like “fully accredited” or “this program is accredited by the New England Association” or “this degree is accredited by the New England Association” are incorrect and should not be used.

### 3. **Published Statement on Candidate Status**

An institution granted Candidate for Accreditation status must use the following statement whenever it makes reference to its affiliation with the New England Association:

\_\_\_\_\_ College (University) has been granted Candidate for Accreditation status by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. Candidacy is not accreditation nor does it assure eventual accreditation. Candidacy for Accreditation is a status of affiliation with the Commission which indicates that the institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward accreditation.

Inquiries regarding the status of an institution affiliated with the New England Association should be directed to the administrative staff of the college or university. Individuals may also contact:

**The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education  
New England Association of Schools and Colleges  
209 Burlington Road  
Bedford, MA 01730-1433  
(781) 271-0022  
E-Mail: [cihe@neasc.org](mailto:cihe@neasc.org)**

**4. Public Disclosure of Information About Affiliated Institutions by the Commission**

Upon inquiry, the Commission will release the following information about affiliated institutions:

- The date of initial accreditation and/or when candidacy was granted;
- The date and nature (comprehensive or focused) of the most recent on-site evaluation and subsequent Commission action on the institution's accredited status;
- The date and nature (comprehensive or focused) of the next scheduled on-site evaluation;
- Submission date and action taken on the most recent written report required by the Commission;
- The extent of, or limitations on, the status of affiliation;
- In cases of adverse action (denial or termination of candidacy or accreditation, placing an institution on probation), the Commission's reasons for recommending that status and, in the case of probation, its plans to monitor the institution. The Commission, in consultation with the institution, will prepare a written statement incorporating the above information. The Commission reserves the right to make the final determination of the nature and content of the statement.
- For institutions whose candidacy or accreditation has been terminated, the date of, and reasons for, termination.

The Commission does not provide information about deferments of action on candidate or accreditation status, or show-cause orders. However, if such information is released by the institution in question, the Commission will respond to related inquiries. Also, adverse actions (placement of an institution on probation, denial of candidate status or accreditation, revocation of candidacy and termination of accreditation) are not communicated until the available appeals process is completed.

The Commission recognizes that, to be fully understood, information about the accredited status of institutions must be placed within the context of the policies and procedures of the Commission and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. In responding to inquiries, the Commission will endeavor to do so.

The Commission does not release copies of self-studies, progress reports, evaluation reports, or other documents related to the accreditation of individual institutions, but institutions are encouraged to make these materials available, in their entirety, after notification of Commission action.

## 5. **Public Disclosure of Institutional Actions**

Within 30 days after the action on accreditation status is taken, the Commission will notify the Secretary of Education, New England state higher education officers, appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public. Such actions include:

A final decision to:

Grant candidacy or accreditation

Continue an institution in accreditation

Deny or terminate the accreditation of an institution

Place an institution on probation

Approve substantive change (e.g., moving to a higher degree level)

A decision by an accredited or candidate institution to voluntarily withdraw from affiliation with the Commission.

*November, 1998  
September, 2001*