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

April 24, 2008

Dr. Lawrence S. Bacow
President
Tufts University
Ballou Hall, 2nd Floor
Medford, MA 02155

Dear President Bacow:

I write to inform you that at its meeting on February 28, 2008, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the fifth-year interim report submitted by Tufts University and voted to take the following action:

that the fifth-year interim report submitted by Tufts University be accepted;

that the next comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Spring 2013 be confirmed;

that the self-study prepared for this evaluation give emphasis to the institution’s success in:

1. achieving the strategic planning goals of both the institution and the individual schools;

2. clarifying and strengthening the role and status of research, including progress in enhancing outside funding and institutional support for faculty research;

3. measuring student achievement and success in graduate and professional programs in addition to what is being done for undergraduate programs; and using such data to effect programmatic change and improvement.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The Commission commends Tufts University for a comprehensive fifth-year report which addresses the areas of emphasis indicated in the Commission’s letter of November 19, 2003 following Tufts’ last comprehensive evaluation. The report also provides detailed information in relation to each of the standards, particularly at the undergraduate program level.
Dr. Lawrence S. Bacow  
April 24, 2008  
Page 2

With respect to the areas of emphasis, Tufts has facilities master plans for each of its campuses with approximately 900,000 square feet of potential new space identified on one of the campuses. From a governance perspective, Tufts has instituted a number of measures to better coordinate undergraduate programs between the School of Arts and Sciences (A&S) and the School of Engineering. Faculty governance within A&S has been streamlined with fewer faculty committees and with the development of a faculty Executive Committee that meets regularly with the President and Provost.

The Commission expressed its gratitude to Tufts for taking part in the pilot project addressing student assessment and student success. We particularly appreciated the information on how the institution measures the success of its graduates within areas more particular to Tufts such as Peace Corps enrollment and receiving major national and international academic awards and fellowships. Tufts has begun to experiment with administering the CAAP and CLA to its undergraduates to determine useful measures of cognitive outcomes. The Tufts webpage presents undergraduate program mission statements, expected competencies, and “assessment opportunities.”

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2013 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive visit at least once every ten years. The items the Commission asked to be given special emphasis within the self-study prepared for this evaluation are matters related to the Commission’s standards on Planning and Evaluation, The Academic Program, and Faculty.

With regard to implementation of the institution’s strategic plans, we anticipate being apprized of the University’s progress in achieving goals at the institution level as well as for the undergraduate program and graduate schools as guided by our standard on Planning and Evaluation:

The institution undertakes short- and long-term planning, including realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. 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 has a demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning (2.3).

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).

We look forward to learning more about how the institution has clarified and strengthened the role and status of research, including progress in enhancing outside funding and institutional support for faculty research. The report indicates that Tufts has witnessed a growing number of innovative research initiatives that benefit both undergraduate and graduate students, and we would like to better understand how these initiatives support the mission of the institution. Our standard on Faculty should inform this effort:

All faculty pursue scholarship designed to ensure they are current in the theory, knowledge, skills, and pedagogy of their discipline or profession. The institution defines the scholarly expectations for faculty consistent with its mission and purposes and the level of degrees
level of degrees offered. Scholarship and instruction are integrated and mutually supportive (5.19).

Where compatible with the institution’s purposes and reflective of the level of degrees offered, research is undertaken by faculty and students directed toward the creation, revision, or application of knowledge. Physical, technological, and administrative resources together with academic services are adequate to support the institution’s commitment to research and creative activity. Faculty workloads reflect this commitment. Policies and procedures related to research, including ethical considerations, are established and clearly communicated throughout the institution. Faculty exercise a substantive role in the development and administration of research policies and practices (5.20).

The institution periodically evaluates the sufficiency of and support for the faculty and the effectiveness of the faculty in teaching and advising, scholarship, service, and as appropriate to institutional mission, research and creative activity. The results of these evaluations are used to enhance fulfillment of the institution’s mission (5.22).

Finally, we ask that the institution include information on measures of achievement and student success as part of the self-study prepared for Spring 2013. We would like to learn about what is taking place in graduate and professional programs in addition to that which is evolving with the undergraduate programs. Specific to undergraduate programs, the Commission looks forward to learning about the success of the University in articulating learning goals for students and in determining the extent to which the goals are achieved. As part of this section of the report, we would appreciate information regarding how the institution analyzes and interprets the student success indicators it collects and what changes have been made in educational programs as a result of the findings from this analysis. This is in accordance with our standard on The Academic Program:

The institution implements and supports a systematic and broad-based approach to the assessment of student learning focused on educational improvement through understanding what and how students are learning through their academic program and, as appropriate, through experiences outside the classroom. This approach is based on a clear statement or statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program ... (4.44).

The institution’s approach to understanding student learning focuses on the course, program, and institutional level. Data and other evidence generated through this approach are considered at the appropriate level of focus, with the results being a demonstrable factor in improving the learning opportunities and results for students (4.45).

The institution’s system of periodic review of academic programs includes a focus on understanding what and how students learn as a result of the program (4.48).

The institution’s principal evaluation focus is the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of its academic programs. Evaluation endeavors and systematic assessment are demonstrably effective in the improvement of academic offerings and student learning (4.51).

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. James Stern. The institution is
Dr. Lawrence S. Bacow  
April 24, 2008  
Page 4

The institution is free to release information about the report 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 in 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,

[Signature]
Judith R. Gordon  
JRG/jm  
Enclosure  
cc: Mr. James Stern