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

TUFTS UNIVERSITY  
PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

November 4, 2013

NOV 07 2013

Dr. Anthony P. Monaco  
President  
Tufts University  
Ballou Hall, 2nd Floor  
Medford, MA 02155

Refer to \_\_\_\_\_  
Copy to Daniel Harris  
Dawn Tackla

Dear President Monaco:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on September 19, 2013, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Tufts University:

that Tufts University be continued in accreditation;

that the University submit a report for consideration in Fall, 2015 that gives emphasis to the institution's success in assuring clarity concerning the alignment of its award of credit with Commission policies;

that the University submit a fifth year interim report for consideration in Spring, 2018;

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

1. implementing the priorities of its strategic plan, including the adoption of a new mission statement that defines and communicates Tufts University's unique qualities;
2. conducting regular program reviews for all departments and graduate programs and using the results to inform decision-making;
3. articulating and assessing student achievement of general education and institutional level learning outcomes and using the results for improvement;
4. assuring the effectiveness of governance and financial oversight given the organizational separation of Arts and Sciences from Engineering;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Spring, 2023.

JEAN A. WYLD, Chair (2015)  
Springfield College

PATRICIA MAGUIRE MESERVEY, Vice Chair (2014)  
Salem State University

DAVID F. FINNEY (2014)  
Champlain College

DAVID S. GRAVES (2014)  
Laureate Education Inc.

R. BRUCE HITCHNER (2014)  
Tufts University

MARY ELLEN JUKOSKI (2014)  
Mitchell College

DAVID L. LEVINSON (2014)  
Norwalk Community College

BRUCE L. MALLORY (2014)  
University of New Hampshire

CHRISTOPHER J. SULLIVAN (2014)  
Concord, NH

DAVID P. ANGEL (2015)  
Clark University

G. TIMOTHY BOWMAN (2015)  
Harvard University

DAVID E. A. CARSON (2015)  
Hartford, CT

THOMAS L. G. DWYER (2015)  
Johnson & Wales University

JOHN F. GABRANSKI (2015)  
Haydenville, MA

WILLIAM F. KENNEDY (2015)  
Boston, MA

KAREN L. MUNCASTER (2015)  
Boston Architectural College

CHRISTINE ORTIZ (2015)  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

JON S. OXMAN (2015)  
Auburn, ME

JACQUELINE D. PETERSON (2015)  
College of the Holy Cross

ROBERT L. PURA (2015)  
Greenfield Community College

REV. BRIAN J. SHANLEY, O.P. (2015)  
Providence College

TIMOTHY J. DONOVAN (2016)  
Vermont State Colleges

JEFFREY R. GODLEY (2016)  
Groton, CT

LILY S. HSU (2016)  
MCPHS University

JAY V. KAHN (2016)  
Keene State College

WILFREDO NIEVES (2016)  
Capital Community College

LINDA S. WELLS (2016)  
Boston University

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The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

Tufts University is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

The Commission concurs with the visiting team that it is the sense of purpose and passion shared by all members of the Tufts University community – trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, students and alumni – that serves as the driving force behind the institution’s “well-deserved reputation as one of the country’s top research universities” that has as its core an undergraduate program proudly rooted in the liberal arts. Over the past decade since its last comprehensive evaluation, we note with favor that Tufts University has benefitted from robust financial resources and excellent physical and IT resources; the University’s Beyond Boundaries capital campaign that raised \$1.2 billion is commendable. The institution’s professional programs in medicine, dental medicine, and veterinary medicine and its traditional academic graduate programs that include a number of cross-school and cross-disciplinary degree options provide an impressive array of high quality offerings and research opportunities. Undergraduate retention rates, above 95% for the past five years, and six-year graduation rates that remained about 90% for this same period are admirable. We are pleased to learn of the inclusive strategic planning process launched by the new president that has engaged the community “in productive conversation about the university’s future” and of other initiatives such as the university-wide Council on Diversity and the focus on sustainability in capital projects led by the Council on Sustainability. The University’s increased investment in student affairs resources to better serve its diverse, academically accomplished student body is noteworthy, as is the institution’s review of its financial aid policies to increase access and affordability. In addition, we acknowledge the institution’s openness to “reexamining the university’s historical orientation toward decentralization” recognizing that it could lead to greater efficiencies in a number of areas as well as promote a “shared sense of the Tufts experience.” Overall, we share the team’s judgment that Tufts University is “ideally positioned to have a transformational impact on the lives of those it touches directly, and on the world in the years ahead.”

The item the institution is asked to report on in Fall, 2015 is related to our Standards on *The Academic Program*.

The Commission understands that Tufts University uses a system that does not differentiate courses by credit hour, but that most undergraduate courses are instead assigned 1.0 Tufts credit. While the University’s transcript states a Tufts credit is the equivalent of 4.0 semester hours, applying the institution’s policy for the award of academic credit appears to equate a Tufts credit to 3.0 semester hours. We therefore note with favor that the Provost convened a summer meeting with the school deans to discuss the institution’s award of academic credit, that an Arts and Science Task Force has been established to review the award of credit at the undergraduate level, and that a special assistant for graduate education in the provost’s office has responsibility for facilitating the review of graduate credit. Through the Fall 2015 report, we seek clarity about how the University’s award of credit is aligned with the expectations articulated in the Commission’s Policy on Credits and Degrees (enclosed). We remind you of our standard on *The Academic Program*:

The institution’s degrees and other forms of academic recognition are appropriately named, following practices common to American institutions of higher education in terms of length, content, and level of the programs. The institution ensures that minimum degree requirements are 60 semester credits at the associate's level, 120 semester credits at the baccalaureate level, and 30 semester credits at the master's level (4.30).

Credit awards are consistent with Commission policy and the course content, appropriate to the field of study, and reflect the level and amount of student learning. The award of credit is based on policies developed and overseen by the faculty and academic administration. There is demonstrable academic content for all experiences for which credit is awarded, including study abroad, internships, independent study, and service learning. No credit toward graduation is awarded for pre-collegiate level or remedial work designed to prepare the student for collegiate study (4.34).

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. In addition to the information included in all fifth-year reports the University is asked, in Spring, 2018, to report on four matters related to our standards on *Mission and Purposes, Planning and Evaluation, The Academic Program, and Organization and Governance*.

As noted above, we commend the University for its inclusive and transparent process, *Tufts: The Next 10 Years (T10)*, a university-wide strategic planning initiative to set priorities on which the University will focus for the next decade. We understand that the plan is due to the Board in November 2013. While each of Tufts' schools already has a strategic plan and mission statement, we are pleased to learn that a formal university-wide mission statement that reflects the institution's values and unique qualities against which it can assess its accomplishments will be developed as part of this process. We look forward to learning, through the Spring 2018 report, of the success of the University in implementing the priorities of its strategic plan, including the adoption of a new mission statement. Our standards on *Mission and Purposes* and *Planning and Evaluation* provide this guidance:

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 mission is set forth in a concise statement that is formally adopted by the governing board and appears in appropriate institutional publications (1.2).

The institution plans beyond a short-term horizon, including strategic planning that involves realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. 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. (2.3)

The institution has a demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning. (2.4)

As reported on the E-series forms, while several of the graduate schools conduct regular program reviews, as is the case for those programs subject to professional accreditation, other departments/programs have not been reviewed in some time. We therefore note with approval that "the administration is attempting to regularize the review processes." The development of "Guidelines for Review of Academic Centers and Institutes at Tufts University" that set expectations and a timeline for such reviews is commendable. The Spring 2018 report will

enable the institution to provide evidence that all departments and graduate programs conduct program reviews on a regular basis and use the results to inform decision-making. Our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *The Academic Program* are relevant here:

The institution has a system of periodic review of academic and other programs that includes the use of external perspectives (2.6).

The institution develops, approves, administers, and on a regular cycle reviews its degree programs under effective institutional policies that are implemented by designated bodies with established channels of communication and control. Faculty have a substantive voice in these matters (4.9).

The Commission concurs with the team that evidence-based planning and assessment is an important part of the culture at Tufts, and we are gratified to learn of the “outstanding” support provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Evaluation for these activities. The well-defined and faculty-owned learning outcomes and assessment plans for the University’s undergraduate majors are noteworthy. We also understand that there is a “growing commitment to and engagement in” the work that is yet to be done to articulate and assess general education and institution-level learning outcomes. As specified in our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *The Academic Program*, we welcome further information, in the Spring 2018 report, about the institution’s success in completing this work to articulate and assess student achievement of the University’s general education and institutional learning outcomes and to use the results to improve academic programming.

Based on verifiable information, the institution understands what its students have gained as a result of their education and has useful evidence about the success of its recent graduates. This information is used for planning and resource allocation and to inform the public about the institution (2.7).

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).

We share the team’s observation that the School of Arts and Sciences and the School of Engineering have an “unusual relationship” due to the incomplete separation initiated in 2000 to “increase efficiency and to more appropriately meet students’ needs.” While most of the institution’s schools have a school-specific representative body, we understand that these two schools differ in that they share a single faculty and governance body. In addition, we understand that budgetary and administrative oversight is “complexly intertwined” thereby creating management challenges for the two deans. We therefore appreciate that the Provost is reviewing the current relationship of the two schools, including the faculty governance structure and their budgetary and administrative systems. We ask that the Spring 2018 report update the Commission on the results of this review to assure “[t]he institution’s organizational structure, decision-making processes, and policies are clear and consistent with its mission and support institutional effectiveness” (3.1), and “[t]he institution’s internal governance provides for the appropriate participation of its constituencies, promotes communications, and effectively advances the quality of the institution” (3.9).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring, 2023 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years.

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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.

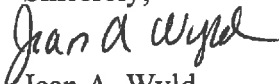
The Commission expressed appreciation for the self-study prepared by Tufts University and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, David Harris, Provost and Senior Vice President, Dawn Terkla, Associate Provost Institutional Research, Assessment and Evaluation, and Carolyn "Biddy" Martin, 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. Peter Dolan. 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, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,

  
Jean A. Wyld

JAW/sjp

Enclosure

cc: Peter Dolan  
Visiting team