



February 6, 2023

Dr. Beverly Tatum
Interim President
Mount Holyoke College
50 College Street
South Hadley, MA 01075-1496

Dear President Tatum:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on November 17, 2021, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Mount Holyoke College and voted to take the following action:

that the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Mount Holyoke College be accepted;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2027 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2027 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's continued success in addressing three matters discussed in the interim report (realizing its plan to reallocate and diversify its faculty; streamlining curricular offerings; and implementing its revised governance processes), as well as its success in two additional matters:

1. completing its presidential search and transitioning to a new senior leadership team;
2. achieving its financial goals, including its continued success in meeting its discount rate goals and addressing deferred maintenance.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Mount Holyoke College was accepted because it responded to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letters of June 18, 2018 and November 18, 2020, and addressed each of the nine standards, including a reflective essay for Standard 8: *Educational Effectiveness* on student learning and success.

The Commission commends Mount Holyoke College for its well-written, comprehensive interim report that highlights the College's efforts to "provide an intellectually adventurous education in the liberal arts and sciences" to its

students. We appreciate that Mount Holyoke College continues to implement its strategic plan, the *Plan for Mount Holyoke 2023*, which includes financial sustainability as one of its four strategic priorities, and we are, therefore, gratified to learn of the College's progress in lowering its tuition discount rate from 50.9% in 2017 to 47.7% in 2021. The Commission further acknowledges that deferred maintenance "continues to be a budget priority" for the institution with over \$90 million invested in buildings across campus over the past five years. The Commission notes with favor the institution's efforts to diversify its faculty including revising its "recruitment practices and policies guiding search committees" and applying resources "aimed at retaining faculty of color." The College also "restructured" two of its central administrative governance groups – the Senior team, responsible for strategic leadership and management, and the Leadership Council, responsible for "strategic and operational leadership and information sharing." Lastly we acknowledge Mount Holyoke College's continued efforts to "streamline the curriculum" through program eliminations and departmental mergers, with plans to continue to consolidate or reduce programs as appropriate.

The Commission further commends Mount Holyoke College for its continued efforts to "deepen a culture of assessment" and "coordinate and systematize assessment of student learning and student success." We appreciate that in institutional surveys and exit interviews, students "regularly recognize the quality of the academic experience" at Mount Holyoke College. The College's ten institutional learning goals are assessed annually through the senior survey. Particularly noteworthy, as evident from the E-Series forms, are the curricular changes that have been implemented at the program level. An "Academic Data Hub" was also recently launched to "centralize the distribution of key data for academic departments." Lastly, the Commission notes with favor Mount Holyoke College's careful attention to its graduation rate (85% in Fall 2021) and its disaggregation of persistence data to ensure all students are successful.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2027 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. The College is asked, in the Fall 2027 self-study, to give emphasis to its continued success in addressing the three areas specified above for attention in the Fall 2022 interim report. The Commission appreciates the progress made in each of these areas, as noted above, and recognizes that these matters do not lend themselves to rapid resolution and will require the College's sustained attention over time; hence, we ask that further information be provided in the self-study. The Commission also asks that two additional items be given emphasis within the self-study prepared for the comprehensive evaluation. These matters relate to our standards on *Organization and Governance* and *Institutional Resources*.

We understand that President Stephens left the College in August 2022 and that Beverly Daniel Tatum is currently serving as interim president while a national search for a permanent president is launched. There have also been several new senior leadership appointments in recent years, including Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost/Dean of the Faculty, Vice President for Student Success and Dean of the College, and Chief of Staff and Secretary of the College. As informed by our standard on *Organization and Governance*, the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2027 comprehensive evaluation will provide Mount Holyoke College an opportunity to apprise the Commission on its success in completing its presidential search and transitioning to a new senior leadership team:

The board appoints and periodically reviews the performance of the chief executive officer whose full-time or major responsibility is to the institution (3.10).

The chief executive officer, through an appropriate administrative structure, effectively manages the institution so as to fulfill its purposes and objectives and establishes the means

to assess the effectiveness of the institution. The chief executive officer manages and allocates resources in keeping with institutional purposes and objectives and assesses the effectiveness of the institution. The chief executive officer assures that the institution employs faculty and staff sufficient in role, number, and qualifications appropriate to the institution's mission, size, and scope (3.12).

In accordance with established institutional mechanisms and procedures, the chief executive officer and senior administrators consult with faculty, students, other administrators, and staff, and are appropriately responsive to their concerns, needs, and initiatives. The institution's internal governance provides for the appropriate participation of its constituencies, promotes communications, and effectively advances the quality of the institution (3.13).

As noted above, the Commission appreciates Mount Holyoke College's progress in managing its discount rate and addressing deferred maintenance. The Commission does note, however, that the discount rate was approximately 53.1% in FY2022 due to a "larger and less well-resourced first-year class." We also understand that the College has a new leader for the facilities management area who will prioritize an assessment of the capital planning process. The Commission is gratified to learn of the institution's "continued commitment" to its financial sustainability and looks forward to learning, through the Fall 2027 self-study, of Mount Holyoke College's continued success in these matters. We are guided here by our standard on *Institutional Resources*:

The institution preserves and enhances available financial resources sufficient to support its mission. It manages its financial resources and allocates them in a way that reflects its mission and purposes. It demonstrates the ability to respond to financial emergencies and unforeseen circumstances (7.4).

The institution is financially stable. Ostensible financial stability is not achieved at the expense of educational quality. Its stability and viability are not unduly dependent upon vulnerable financial resources or an historically narrow base of support (7.5).

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 (7.6).

The institution and its governing board regularly and systematically review the effectiveness of the institution's financial aid policy and practices in advancing the institution's mission and helping to ensure that the institution enrolls and supports the student body it seeks to serve (7.10).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Mount Holyoke College and hopes its preparation has contributed to institutional improvement. It appreciates your cooperation in the effort to provide public assurance of the quality of higher education.

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 Karena Strella. The institution is free to release information about the report and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with the enclosed policy on Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions.

Dr. Beverly Tatum

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If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Lawrence M. Schall, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russell Carey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Russell Carey

RC/sjp

cc: Karena Strella

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions