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June 18, 2018

Dr. Sonya Clare Stephens  
President-elect  
Mount Holyoke College  
50 College Street  
South Hadley, MA 01075

MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE

JUN 20 2018

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Dear President Stephens:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on April 19, 2018, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Mount Holyoke College:

that Mount Holyoke College be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit an interim (fifth-year) report for consideration in Fall 2022;

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

1. implementing its strategic plan with emphasis on reducing its discount rate and addressing capital projects and deferred maintenance issues;
2. realizing its plans to reallocate and diversify its faculty, streamline curricular offerings, articulate learning goals for all the College's academic programs, and create integrated advising and assessment strategies;
3. hiring a permanent president and evaluating the effectiveness of its governance structures;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2027.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

Mount Holyoke College is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

Along with the visiting team, the Commission commends Mount Holyoke College (MHC) for submitting a well-written and candid self-study that articulates the many ways in which the College is achieving its mission. Notable strengths include the institution's revised mission statement that, as the team noted in its report, is emblematic of the transformation taking place at the College, and its commitment to institutional planning as evidenced by the completion of the 2011 to 2016 strategic plan and the development of a new plan – *Mount Holyoke 2021* – that defines four strategic initiatives: to lead with distinction; to secure global excellence; to develop an inclusive community; and to attain financial sustainability. Mount Holyoke's exemplary staff, accomplished and dedicated faculty, and vibrant student body are impressive, as is the breadth and richness of the institution's academic offerings. We are further pleased to note the progress MHC has made, through its Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, to create both excitement and momentum around a "new culture of assessment." Mount Holyoke has upheld its commitment to offer an exceptional education to promising women from around the world for nearly two centuries, and we share the judgment of the visiting team that the College is well-positioned to face its challenges and "provide an intellectually adventurous education in the liberal arts and sciences" to students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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 Fall 2022, to report on three matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation; Institutional Resources; Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship; The Academic Program; Educational Effectiveness; and Organization and Governance*.

According to the visiting team, Mount Holyoke's strategic plan and initiatives reflect the evolution of the institution, and we understand the College has established a scorecard that will be used to track the institution's progress toward achieving its four overarching priorities (noted above). In addition, the recent formation of a Data Analytics Group is evidence of MHC's commitment to making data-informed decisions in support of its goals, one of which is to reduce the College's relatively high discount rate to below 50%, currently 51%, down from a previous high of 56%. Further, while MHC recently invested \$50 million to construct a new community dining center, and a classroom study and an Enterprise Resource Planning review of administrative computing are currently underway, we also understand that the College still has some \$120 million in deferred maintenance to address. We therefore support the team's observation that the College will benefit from prioritizing its capital improvement projects in a manner that will have the greatest impact on admission and retention while also reducing the backlog of deferred maintenance. The Fall 2022 interim report will afford MHC an opportunity to update the Commission on the institution's success in continuing to implement its strategic plan with emphasis on reducing its discount rate and addressing capital projects and deferred maintenance issues as evidence that "[t]he institution has a demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning" (2.5). Our standard on *Institutional Resources* is also relevant here:

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 institution establishes and implements its budget after appropriate consultation with relevant constituencies in accord with realistic overall planning that provides for the appropriate integration of academic, student service, fiscal, development, information, technology, and physical resource priorities to advance its educational objectives (7.13).

We understand from the visiting team that through a combination of retirements and attrition, 45% of the College's faculty will be new by 2020, and to ensure that MHC "addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity among its faculty and academic staff" (6.5), a new Associate Dean of Development, Diversity, and Inclusion is charged with working with academic departments to expand faculty diversity through "target-of-opportunity" hires and strategic development of applicant pools. Further, the Office of the Dean of Faculty has "ramped up efforts" to reallocate faculty positions and to ensure that all departments are clearly articulating the focus of majors and programs, linking these to institutional learning goals, and developing integrated advising and assessment strategies. Finally, we appreciate the institution's candid recognition that to achieve its curriculum-to-career initiatives, the College needs to create nomenclature that "clearly describes the preparation for and participation in internships and careers." As informed by our standards on *The Academic Program; Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*; and *Educational Effectiveness*, we look forward, through the Fall 2022 interim report, to receiving information about the College's success in realizing its plans related to these matters:

The institution undertakes academic planning and evaluation as part of its overall planning and evaluation to enhance the achievement of institutional mission and program objectives. These activities are realistic and take into account stated goals and available resources. Additions and deletions of programs are consistent with institutional mission and capacity, faculty expertise, student needs, and the availability of sufficient resources required for the development and improvement of academic programs. The institution allocates resources on the basis of its academic planning, needs, and objectives (4.7).

The institution's system of academic advising meets student needs for information and advice compatible with its educational objectives (6.19).

The institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods and direct and indirect measures to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students, employing external perspectives including, as appropriate, benchmarks and peer comparisons (8.5).

The institution defines measures of student success and levels of achievement appropriate to its mission, modalities and locations of instruction, and student body, including any specifically recruited populations. These measures include rates of progression, retention, transfer, and graduation; default and loan repayment rates; licensure passage rates; and employment (8.6).

The institution uses additional quantitative measures of success, such as further education, civic participation, religious formation, and others, as appropriate to its mission, to understand the success of its recent graduates. Information from students and former students is regularly considered (8.7).

Finally, we understand that, at the time of the visit, the Board of Trustees had appointed an interim president for a three-year period; however, since then, the Board has "launched an inclusive presidential selection process to ensure continued strong leadership of the College." We ask that the Fall 2022 interim report update the Commission on the College's progress in hiring a permanent president and evaluating its governance structures, as evidence that the "effectiveness of the institution's organizational structure and system of governance is improved through periodic and systematic review" (3.19).

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.

Dr. Sonya Clare Stephens  
June 18, 2018  
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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 Mount Holyoke College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you and Lenore Reilly, Senior Advisor to the President, as well as Katherine Bergeron, 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. Barbara M. Baumann. 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,



David P. Angel

DPA/jm

Enclosure

cc: Ms. Barbara M. Baumann  
Visiting Team