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May 18, 2020

Dr. Patricia A. Gentile  
President  
North Shore Community College  
One Ferncroft Road  
Danvers, MA 01923-0840

Dear President Gentile:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 6, 2020 the New England Commission of Higher Education took the following action with respect to North Shore Community College:

that North Shore Community College be continued in accreditation;

that the institution be asked to submit a progress report for consideration in Spring 2022 that gives emphasis to the institution's success in:

- 1) integrating faculty (full- and part-time) and staff voices into college operations and governance and evaluating the effectiveness of its governance processes;
- 2) enhancing the effectiveness of its Board of Trustees, including providing opportunities for professional development and Board self-evaluation;

that the institution submit an interim (fifth-year) report for consideration in Fall 2024;

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

- 1) continuing to enhance the effectiveness of its Board of Trustees;
- 2) implementing a comprehensive approach to the assessment of student learning, with particular attention to students' achievement of the learning outcomes specified for the general education program, and using assessment results for improvement at the course, program, and institutional levels;

- 3) achieving its enrollment goals and enhancing financial stability;  
that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2029.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

North Shore Community College (NSCC) is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

The Commission commends NSCC on a thoughtful and comprehensive self-study. We concur with the visiting team report that “NSCC is filled with caring, competent professionals who are passionately committed to student and community success.” NSCC has an excellent history of strategic planning which has been commended by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education and held up as an exemplar to other colleges. This tradition has continued under the leadership of President Gentile who has made data-driven decision-making a cornerstone of her administration. We appreciate the successful community outreach programs to integrate the Lynn community, including the CommUniverCity initiative, as well as the continuous improvement of the Lynn Campus as evidenced by the McGee building expansion. The Commission is gratified to learn of the College’s success in building and leveraging community partnerships while enhancing operations with grants and donations. The recently awarded Title III *Pathways to Success* shows great potential to support enrollment and retention activities with evidence-based assessment of student learning outcomes at the course and program level. By systematically examining the persistence and retention of various groups of students, NSCC has incrementally increased its retention rates from 56% in 2014 to 64% in 2019. We appreciate the College’s efforts and success in maintaining financial stability; as noted in the report of the visiting team, the College’s unrestricted net assets increased “dramatically,” from \$11.9 million on June 30, 2018 to \$15.2 million on June 30, 2019. With strong leadership and committed faculty and staff, North Shore Community College is well positioned to build on its accomplishments and fulfill its mission to inspire “students to become engaged citizens and to achieve their personal, academic, and career goals through accessible, affordable, [and] rigorous educational opportunities”.

The items the institution is asked to report on in Spring 2022 are related to our standard on *Organization and Governance*.

The Commission shares the concern of the visiting team regarding the “over-representation of administrators and managers on committees,” as well as a perceived lack of communication and transparency, raised by faculty, in the curricular decision-making process. The Commission is pleased to learn of the activities NSCC has planned and undertaken in response to these concerns, including cross-college manager meetings and forum discussions, trustee discussions, and a college-wide climate study using the Personal Assessment of the College Environment tool. We look forward to being apprised, in the Spring 2022 report, of NSCC’s progress in achieving a more collaborative and representative organizational governance structure and process and in evaluating the effectiveness of its governance processes. Our standard on *Organization and Governance* is pertinent here:

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).

Faculty have a substantive voice in matters of educational programs, faculty personnel, and other aspects of institutional policy that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise (3.15).

The effectiveness of the institution's organizational structure and system of governance is improved through periodic and systematic review (3.19).

The Commission notes with favor the level of commitment and engagement demonstrated by members of the North Shore Community College Board of Trustees. We acknowledge the positive reviews of the video modules used in the onboarding process for new Trustees and are gratified to learn of the familiarity and involvement the Board has with the College's strategic priorities. In the Spring 2022 report, the College will have an opportunity to update the Commission on its progress in enacting a periodic evaluation process and a professional development plan for Board members. This section of the report should be informed by our standard on *Organization and Governance*:

The board systematically develops, ensures, and enhances its own effectiveness through orientation, professional development, and periodic evaluation. Its role and functions are effectively carried out through appropriate committees and meetings (3.8).

Utilizing the institutional governance structure, the board establishes and maintains appropriate and productive channels of communication among its members and with the institutional community (3.9).

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, North Shore Community College is asked, in Fall 2024, to report on three matters related to our standards on *Organization and Governance*, *Educational Effectiveness*, *Students*, and *Institutional Resources*.

The College is asked, in the Fall 2024 interim report, to give emphasis to its continued success in addressing the evaluation of and professional development for the Board of Trustees. The Commission 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 interim report.

The Commission also asks that the Fall 2024 interim report give evidence of North Shore Community College's continued progress in implementing a comprehensive approach to the assessment of student learning. We note with favor that NSCC's work in the area of assessment has been steady and has resulted in changes in nearly every program at the College. The Commission is pleased to learn from the report of the visiting team that a "strong commitment to building a culture of assessment is evident across the college." We note with favor the implementation of Institution-wide Learning Outcomes (ILO) along with the commitment to assess these ILOs on a five-year schedule across all departments and programs. Additionally, we acknowledge the College has developed new general education outcomes, aligned with VALUE rubrics, to facilitate systemic assessment activities. While the work began in the Academic Affairs area of the College, assessment is also taking root in the Student Services area, with improvements to programming and the development of a culture of assessment within the co-curricular and support services departments. We share the judgment of the visiting team that despite the progress that has been made, "loops need to be closed by measuring outcomes, analyzing assessment results and making informed improvements at course-, program-, general-education, and institutional levels." We welcome an update, in the Fall 2024 interim report, on the College's continued progress in this matter. Our standard on *Educational Effectiveness* provides guidance here.

Assessment of learning is based on verifiable statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. The process of understanding what and how students are learning focuses on the course, competency, program, and institutional level. Assessment has the support of the institution's academic and institutional leadership and the systematic involvement of faculty and appropriate staff (8.3).

The results of assessment and quantitative measures of student success are a demonstrable factor in the institution's efforts to improve the learning opportunities and results for students (8.8).

The institution integrates the findings of its assessment process and measures of student success into its program evaluation activities and uses the findings to inform its planning and resource allocation and to establish claims the institution makes to students and prospective students (8.10).

Finally, as acknowledged in both the self-study and the team report, enrollment at North Shore Community College has declined in recent years, down 17% since 2016 and 28% since a high in 2010. Subsequently, NSCC's total revenue has declined from \$36.9 million in FY2017 to \$35 million in FY2018, and to \$33.6 million in FY2019. During these challenging times, the College is to be commended for its ability to improve its financial stability; in addition to the increase in unrestricted net assets noted above, NSCC's current financial ratio increased from 2.52 to 3.00. The Commission is also pleased to learn that the College has received a Title III grant which will be instrumental in supporting student success initiatives like the MALES program designed to target at-risk populations using analytics along with tutoring and advising. We commend NSCC on its efforts towards becoming recognized as an Hispanic-Serving Institution and note with favor that the College has met its enrollment target for students identifying as Hispanic or Latinx. The Fall 2024 report will provide the College with an opportunity to update the Commission on its success in meeting its enrollment projections and maintaining financial stability. This section of the report should be guided by our standards on *Students* and *Institutional Resources*.

Consistent with its mission, the institution sets and achieves realistic goals to enroll students who are broadly representative of the population it wishes to serve. (*Students, Statement of the Standard*).

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 scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2029 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years.

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 North Shore Community College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, and Ronald G. Cantor, 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 and the head of the state

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system of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to J.D. LaRock and Carlos Santiago. 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Quigley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter "D" being large and prominent.

David Quigley

DQ/sjp

Enclosure

cc: J.D. LaRock  
Carlos Santiago  
Visiting team