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COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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February 12, 2018

Mr. Michael B. Alexander
President
Lasell College
1844 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02466

Dear President Alexander:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on November 16, 2017 the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Lasell College and voted to take the following action:

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

that the College submit a report for consideration in Fall 2019 that gives emphasis to the institution's success in:

- 1) implementing its strategic plan;
- 2) achieving its enrollment goals for its undergraduate and graduate divisions;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2022 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2022 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in:

- 1) continuing to address the areas emphasized in the Fall 2019 progress report;
- 2) assessing student learning outcomes and co-curricular experiences and using the results for improvement.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Lasell College was accepted because it responded to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letter of April 29, 2013 and addressed each of the nine standards, including a reflective

essay for Standard 8: *Educational Effectiveness* on student learning and success.

The Commission commends Lasell College for submitting a cogent and well-conceived interim report that confirms its continued compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation* and highlights the College's accomplishments over the last five years. We note with favor that Lasell continues to support its mission to "emphasize learning by doing" with its "connected learning" model for its liberal arts and professional programs. The College has completed the major revision of its core curriculum that was in process at the time of the last comprehensive evaluation. The new core, which comprises 15 foundation courses that integrate 14 core student learning outcomes, was implemented in Fall 2014. We are pleased to learn that the College surpassed its goal to reach and maintain a 75% retention rate, with a three-year average of 76.4%, and concur that the 2016 graduation rate of 56.65% represents an "important step" towards the College's goal to increase degree completion. Lasell attributes these improvements to targeted initiatives that include designating full-time professional advising staff for students who have not declared a major; restructuring the position of Director for the Academic Achievement Center; "overhauling" academic support services; and enhancing services for at-risk students by offering "The Learning Process," a non-credit course and advising model and appointing a full-time learning specialist. We are gratified to learn of the steps taken by Lasell College to strengthen academic rigor, including the establishment of a Program Review Committee, achievement of specialized accreditation for six academic programs, faculty participation in professional development through the Teaching and Learning Center, and greater consistency in capstone internship and research projects at the graduate level. The Commission notes that despite recent downturns in enrollment, the College increased its revenues, net assets, total assets, and cash operating surpluses during the last two years and experienced growth in endowment from \$30 million in 2012 to \$43 million in 2017. To increase and diversify revenue, the institution expanded its online course offerings, added a Winter Online Term, entered into collaborations with other institutions for shared IT services and campus policing, and grew revenue from conference and facilities rentals.

The Commission also commends Lasell College for its comprehensive reflective essay that details the College's commitment to collaborative learning in its academic and co-curricular programs. We are gratified to learn that the College regularly assesses student learning outcomes through measures including course evaluations, embedded student work, rubrics, focus groups, student and alumni surveys, standardized examinations, and capstone courses. The College uses the results of its assessments to further improve its courses and programs and included in its essay examples of how faculty in the Education and Humanities departments used qualitative and quantitative data to inform program improvement. Within the Core Curriculum, faculty are focusing on the assessment of students' writing ability and have adopted a rubric modeled on AAC&U's VALUE rubric; we are pleased to learn of the "marked improvement" observed in the writing skills of senior students. Each graduate program at the College prepares a five-year assessment map, and we understand these were scheduled to be updated in Fall 2017. During the last ten years, the College has significantly expanded its Institutional Research Office and relies on the "sophisticated data analyses" provided by that office to support the College's planning and assessment activities.

The two items the institution is asked to report on in Fall 2019 are related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation, Students, and Institutional Resources*.

We are pleased to learn of the collaborative process underway to develop Lasell College's new five-year Strategic Plan which the report notes was scheduled to be adopted in November 2017. The Strategic Plan is expected to include priority initiatives for "key challenges" related to college costs, student demographics, graduate enrollment, core curriculum, restructuring of the Academic Affairs division, and construction of a modern Athletic Center. In the Fall 2019 report,

we look forward to learning of the College's success in accomplishing its strategic planning goals, in keeping with our standard on *Planning and Evaluation*:

The institution plans beyond a short-term horizon, including strategic planning that involves realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. The results of strategic planning are implemented in all units of the institution through financial, academic, enrollment, and other supporting plans (2.3).

The institution 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 (2.4).

The institution has a demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning (2.5).

We understand that Lasell College has experienced decreases in enrollment for the past two years in both its undergraduate and graduate programs. To reverse this trend, the College has identified "potential service improvements" and new academic offerings that it believes will attract more undergraduate students to the College. The institution has also piloted the "Sophomore Alternative Semester" to address the high cost of undergraduate education. To increase enrollment at the graduate level, the College plans to explore new degree and certificate programs and pursue partnerships with industry. The Fall 2019 report will afford the institution an opportunity to provide an update on its continued success in achieving its enrollment goals for the undergraduate and graduate divisions. We remind you of our standard 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 the institution 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 2022 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 2022 self-study, to give emphasis to its continued success in addressing the areas specified above for attention in the Fall 2019 report. 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 to be provided in the self-study. In addition, we ask that the College give emphasis in the self-study to a matter related to our standard on *Educational Effectiveness*.

The Commission appreciates Lasell College's candid acknowledgment that, despite progress made to date on the assessment of student learning, more work remains to be done, particularly in the areas of assessing co-curricular learning, student success following graduation, and the use of assessment results for improvement. We are gratified to learn of the intention of the Academic and Student Affairs Divisions to collaborate on co-curricular assessment that is based on the College's 14 institutional student learning outcomes and connected to assessment of student learning in the core curriculum. In its reflective essay, the College also notes its commitment to continued progress on assessment of program learning outcomes and to enhancing its understanding of the success of graduates of both its undergraduate and graduate

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programs through the use of exit surveys, focus groups, and better “tracking” of alumni. We ask that the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2022 comprehensive evaluation include an update on the institution’s continued progress with the assessment of student learning, in keeping with our standard on *Educational Effectiveness*:

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 institution with stated goals for students’ co-curricular learning systematically assesses their achievement (8.4).

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).

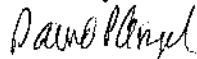
The results of assessment and quantitative measures of student success are a demonstrable factor in the institution’s efforts to improve the learning opportunities and results for students (8.8).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Lasell College and hopes 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.

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. Keon Holmes. 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.

If you have any questions about the Commission’s action, please contact Barbara Brittingham, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



David P. Angel

DPA/sjp

cc: Mr. Keon Holmes



COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

3 Burlington Woods, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514

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Public Disclosure of Information About Affiliated Institutions

The following policy governs the release of information regarding the status of affiliated colleges and universities by institutions and by the Commission.

1. Release of Information by Institutions Regarding Their Accreditation Following Commission Action

At the conclusion of the evaluation process institutions are encouraged to make publicly available information about their accreditation status including the findings of team reports and any obligations or requirements established by Commission action, as well as any plans to address stated concerns. Because of the potential to be misleading, institutions are asked not to publish or otherwise disseminate excerpts from these materials.

While the Commission does not ordinarily release copies of self-studies, progress reports, evaluation reports, or other documents related to the accreditation of individual institutions, it believes it to be good practice for institutions to make these materials available, in their entirety, after notification of Commission action.

The Commission will release information on actions of show cause or deferral. If such information is also released by the institution in question or is otherwise made public, the Commission will respond to related inquiries and may issue revised public statement.

If an institution releases or otherwise disseminates information which misrepresents or distorts its accreditation status, the institution will be notified and asked to take corrective action publicly correcting any misleading information it may have disseminated, including but not limited to the accreditation status of the institution, the contents of evaluation reports, and the Commission actions with respect to the institution. Should it fail to do so in an immediate and timely way, the Commission, acting through its President, will release a public statement in such form and content as it deems desirable providing correct information. This may include release of notification letters sent by the Commission to the institution, and/or a press release.

2. Published Statement on Accredited Status

The Commission asks that one of the following statements be used for disclosing on its website and in catalogues, brochures, advertisements, etc., that the institution is accredited.

An institution may wish to include within its website, catalogue or other material a statement which will give the consuming public a better idea of the meaning of regional accreditation. When that is the case, the Commission requests that the following statement be used in its entirety:

_____ College (University) is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.

Accreditation of an institution of higher education by Commission indicates that it meets or exceeds criteria for the assessment of institutional quality periodically applied through a peer review process. An accredited college or university is one which has available the necessary resources to achieve its stated purposes through appropriate educational programs, is substantially doing so, and gives reasonable evidence that it will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Institutional integrity is also addressed through accreditation.

Accreditation by the Commission is not partial but applies to the institution as a whole. As such, it is not a guarantee of every course or program offered, or the competence of individual graduates. Rather, it provides reasonable assurance about the quality of opportunities available to students who attend the institution.

Inquiries regarding the accreditation status by the Commission should be directed to the administrative staff of the institution. Individuals may also contact:

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
New England Association of Schools and Colleges
3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514
(781) 425 7785
E-Mail: cihe@neasc.org

The shorter statement that an institution may choose for announcing its accredited status follows:

College (University) is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.

Inquiries regarding the accreditation status by the Commission should be directed to the administrative staff of the institution. Individuals may also contact:

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Accreditation by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education has reference to the institution as a whole. Therefore, statements like "fully accredited" or "this program is accredited by the Commission" or "this degree is accredited by the Commission" are incorrect and should not be used.

3. Published Statement on Candidate Status

An institution granted Candidate for Accreditation status must use the following statement whenever it makes reference to its affiliation with the New England Association:

College (University) has been granted Candidate for Accreditation status by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. Candidacy for Accreditation is a status of affiliation with the Commission which indicates that the institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward accreditation.

Candidacy is not accreditation nor does it assure eventual accreditation.

Inquiries regarding the status of an institution affiliated with the Commission should be directed to the administrative staff of the college or university. Individuals may also contact:

**Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
New England Association of Schools and Colleges
3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514
(781) 425 7785
E-Mail: cihe@neasc.org**

4. Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions by the Commission

The Commission publishes the following information about member and candidate institutions on its website:

- Name of the institution
- The date of initial accreditation and/or when candidacy was granted
- Accreditation status (member or candidate)
- Address
- Phone and fax numbers
- CEO name and title
- Degree levels awarded
- Dates of initial accreditation (or candidacy), last review and next review
- Locations of off-campus instructional sites
- The basis for Commission action affecting candidacy or accreditation status
- The date and nature (comprehensive or focused) of the most recent on-site evaluation and subsequent Commission action on the institution's accredited status
- The date and nature (comprehensive or focused) of the next scheduled on-site evaluation
- Submission date and action taken on the most recent written report required by the Commission
- The date and nature of any show-cause for denial of candidacy or accreditation, probation, or withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation status
- The extent of, or limitations on, the status of affiliation
- In cases of adverse action (denial or withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation, placing an institution on probation), the Commission's reasons for that status and, in the case of probation, its plans to monitor the institution. The Commission, in consultation with the institution, will prepare a written statement incorporating the above information. The Commission reserves the right to make the final determination of the nature and content of the statement. The institution will also be offered the opportunity to make its official comment; if the institution does make

an official comment, the comment will be made available by the Commission

- For institutions whose candidacy or accreditation has been withdrawn, the date of, and reasons for, withdrawal.

The Commission recognizes that, to be fully understood, information about the accredited status of institutions must be placed within the context of the policies and procedures of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. In responding to inquiries, the Commission will endeavor to do so.

The Commission may also publish on its website a public statement about an action taken regarding a member or candidate institution when further information about the action and the Commission's reasons for taking the action would be helpful to members of the public.

Adverse actions (placement of an institution on probation, denial of candidate status or accreditation, and withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation) are communicated when the decision becomes final (i.e., when the institution does not appeal or when the appeals process is completed and the decision is upheld). The Commission, at its discretion, may make the adverse action public before the decision is final or the appeal is completed. In so doing, the Commission will provide information about the appeal process.

5. Public Disclosure of Institutional Actions

Within 30 days after the action on accreditation status is taken, the Commission will notify the Secretary of Education, New England state higher education officers, appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public. The Commission will also make public on its website the basis for these decisions. Such actions include:

A final decision to:

Grant candidacy or accreditation

Continue an institution in accreditation

Deny or withdraw the candidacy or accreditation of an institution

Place an institution on probation

Approve substantive change (e.g., moving to a higher degree level)

A decision by an accredited or candidate institution to voluntarily withdraw from affiliation with the Commission.

Per federal regulation, within 60 days of a final decision to take an adverse action (probation or withdrawal of accreditation), the Commission will submit a copy of the final decision letter to the Secretary of Education. The Secretary will make the letter public.

November 1998

September 2001

April 2010

September 2011

Editorial Changes, March 2014

April 2015

April 2017