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March 28, 2012

Dr. Nancy E. Carriuolo
President
Rhode Island College
404 Roberts Hall
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Providence, RI 02908-1991

Dear President Carriuolo:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 1, 2012, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Rhode Island College (RIC):

that Rhode Island College be continued in accreditation;

that Rhode Island College submit a fifth-year interim report for consideration in Fall 2016;

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

1. further assessing student learning for all levels of programs (bachelor's master's and Ph.D.);
2. continuing to implement the joint Ph.D. program with the University of Rhode Island with particular attention to planned changes in governance and program oversight;
3. diversifying revenue and monitoring the effect on student tuition, fees, and debt, as well as retention and graduation rates;
4. further implementing plans to reduce building maintenance backlog, accomplish facilities renovation, and improve technology;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2020.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

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

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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

We concur with the team's observation that Rhode Island College (RIC) is achieving its mission, offering programs and services appropriate to its mission, and serving its students and the state of Rhode Island well. We are gratified to learn that an effective campus team and governing board are cultivating a positive atmosphere and that faculty and staff are well qualified and committed to students. We further commend the College for its many strengths and accomplishments under new leadership, among them its revised mission; the development and implementation of a strategic plan, master plan for facilities, and new general education program; and its expanded fundraising efforts and increased grant funding which are strengthening the institution's resources. We congratulate RIC for establishing a strong culture of assessment and note with favor that the institution's fiscal foundation is solid, yet lean, and there is a good investment in the physical plant. The Commission concurs with the visiting team that Rhode Island College is well-positioned to build on its success in the next decade and "...offer accessible higher education of the finest quality to traditional and nontraditional students from around the state, the region, and beyond."

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, Rhode Island College is asked, in Fall 2016, to report on four matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*, *The Academic Program*, *Students*, *Physical and Technological Resources*, and *Financial Resources*.

We share the judgment of the visiting team that assessment of student learning is a strength of RIC's academic programs. We commend the institution for its thorough and systematic review of academic programs and its use of data for continuous improvement. While acknowledging RIC's success in establishing a distinctive culture of assessment, we recognize that measuring student success across programs is an ongoing process. We appreciate that the College has convened a committee to review general education learning outcomes across the curriculum that will use the College's well-designed program review process. We welcome further information, in the Fall 2016 report, on the College's continued progress in assessing student learning for the College's programs at all levels. Our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *The Academic Program* are pertinent here:

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 implements and provides support for systematic and broad-based assessment of what and how students are learning through their academic program and experiences outside the classroom. Assessment is based on clear statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. Assessment provides useful information that helps the institution to improve the experiences provided for students, as well as to assure that the level of student achievement is appropriate for the degree awarded (4.48).

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).

The Commission takes favorable note of the College's candid evaluation of its joint Ph.D. program with the University of Rhode Island (URI). We are pleased to learn that RIC is taking a leadership role in establishing program oversight and assessment that incorporates both internal

and external perspectives. We are further gratified that the College has convened a group of educators from RIC, URI, and other institutions to compile recommendations which will be submitted by June 30 and that the College expects to hire an independent consultant to review the recommendations and provide additional input and feedback. The Fall 2016 report will afford RIC an opportunity to update the Commission on the progress it has made to establish a model of oversight and assessment for its joint Ph.D. program as guided by our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *Organization and Governance*:

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

The institution's organization and governance structure assure the integrity and quality of academic programming however and wherever offered (3.10).

The Commission commends RIC for its development of a multi-faceted approach to the diversification of revenue. We are gratified to learn that the institution is enhancing its development and grant-writing operations and is expanding programs offered through continuing education. We note with favor the College's goal to control tuition increases given the potential negative impact of raising tuition and fees on retention and graduation rates and the level of student debt. We ask that the Fall 2016 report give emphasis to the College's continued success in diversifying revenue and monitoring the effect on student tuition, fees, and debt, as well as student retention and progress to graduation. We are guided by our standards on *Students* and *Financial Resources*.

Data on retention, graduation, and other measures of student success are regularly reviewed within the institution, with the results being used for planning, resource allocation, and improvement (6.9).

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 (9.1).

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. The governing board reviews and approves the institution's financial plans based on multi-year analysis and financial forecasting (9.3).

The Commission notes with favor that the College "is actively managing its infrastructure needs and aligning them with strategic goals" and is partnering with the state to address its maintenance backlog and facilities needs. While we are gratified to learn that presentation and instructional technology is present in nearly 100% of the classrooms and there is a plan in place to renew hardware on a three-to-five-year cycle, we share the team's concerns that funding for technology upgrades is not formally included in the operating budget. We look forward to learning, through the fifth-year interim report, of the College's continued success in implementing its facilities master plan, including an update on progress with reductions to the building maintenance backlog, facilities renovations, and technology improvements. This section of the report should be informed by our standard on *Physical and Technological Resources*:

The institution undertakes physical resource planning linked to academic and student services, support functions, and financial planning. It determines the adequacy of existing physical and technological resources and identifies and plans the specified resolution of deferred maintenance needs. Space planning occurs on a regular basis as

part of physical resource evaluation and planning, and is consistent with the mission and purposes of the institution (8.4).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2020 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. Since Rhode Island College delayed its comprehensive by a year, scheduling the comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2020 returns the College to its original evaluation schedule.

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 Rhode Island College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you and Dr. Sara Jayne Steen, 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. Lorne Adrian. 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, Director of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Mary Jo Maydew

MJM/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Lorne Adrian
Visiting Team