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January 20, 2011

Dr. Barbara Vacarr
President
Goddard College
123 Pitkin Road
Plainfield, VT 05667

Dear President Vacarr:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on November 18, 2010, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Goddard College:

that Goddard College be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit a report for consideration in Spring 2013 that gives emphasis to its success in:

1. revising the College's mission statement;
2. developing and implementing an integrated strategic planning process that includes a multi-year financial plan which addresses diversification of revenue and also a recruitment, enrollment, and retention plan that encompasses the institution's goals for growth in underrepresented students;
3. assuring the effectiveness of governance structures and processes;
4. enhancing financial stability;

that the College submit a fifth-year interim report for consideration in Spring 2015;

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

1. continuing to address the items specified for attention in the Spring 2013 report;
2. developing and implementing a more coordinated approach to the collection, management, analysis, and use of institutional data and building capacity and habits of using evidence for determining institutional effectiveness and decision-making throughout the College;

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3. assuring the sufficiency of full-time faculty and the effectiveness of the institution's "paid by task" faculty model on faculty participation in institutional governance and professional development;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Spring 2020.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

Goddard College is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*. The College has undergone a remarkable transformation in the last seven years, with enrollment growth of more than 33 percent, the addition of new academic programs, the successful implementation of its low-residency programs and off-campus location in Port Townsend, Washington, and balanced operating budgets for the past five fiscal years. The mission of Goddard College is well-understood by all members of the campus community, and there is widespread, passionate commitment to the institution's "progressive, student-centered, and individualized" approach to education. Under the leadership of a new president and her senior team, and with the support of a committed Board of Trustees, Goddard College seems well positioned to build on recent success and to continue its institutional development.

The items that we ask be given attention in the report submitted for consideration in Spring 2013 are related to our standards on *Mission and Purposes, Planning and Evaluation, Organization and Governance, and Financial Resources*.

As noted in both the self-study and team report, while there is widespread agreement on, understanding of, and commitment to fundamental aspects of Goddard's mission, the mission statement itself is in need of review. We understand that a writing group was convened and has prepared a revised mission statement for review by the campus community. We look forward to learning, through the Spring 2013 report, of the College's success in revising its mission statement, in keeping with our standard on *Mission and Purposes*:

The mission of the institution defines its distinctive character, addresses the needs of society and identifies the students the institution seeks to serve, and reflects both the institution's traditions and its vision for the future. The institution's mission provides the basis upon which the institution identifies its priorities, plans its future and evaluates its endeavors; it provides a basis for the evaluation of the institution against the Commission's Standards (1.1).

The institution's mission is set forth in a concise statement that is formally adopted by the governing board and appears in appropriate institutional publications (1.2).

The Commission understands that Goddard College is preparing to undertake an integrated strategic planning process that will align long-term academic, enrollment, financial, and master plans. We are pleased to learn that the planning process will give attention to the institution's goals to improve retention and graduation rates and to increase the diversity of the student population as well as its acknowledged need to diversify sources of revenue and enhance advancement efforts. The Spring 2013 report will provide an opportunity for the College to update the Commission on its strategic planning process. We remind you of our standard on *Planning and Evaluation*:

Planning and evaluation are systematic, comprehensive, broad-based, integrated, and appropriate to the institution. They involve the participation of individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes. Results of planning and

evaluation are regularly communicated to appropriate institutional constituencies. The institution allocates sufficient resources for its planning and evaluation efforts (2.1).

The institution undertakes short- and long-term planning, including realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. The institution systematically collects and uses data necessary to support its planning efforts and to enhance institutional effectiveness. It 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 (2.2).

The Commission commends Goddard College for its sustained efforts to create governance structures that enable the broad involvement of members of the campus community in discussions about policies and programs. We share the observation of the visiting team, however, that “perceptions vary” as to the effectiveness of these structures. As acknowledged in the self-study and team report, it is challenging to develop transparent, inclusive, and effective governance structures for a low-residency college that operates in a unionized environment. We are gratified to learn of the commitment of the College to continue its “ongoing dialogue” about governance and ask that the Spring 2013 report provide evidence that “[t]he effectiveness of the institution’s organizational structure and system of governance is improved through periodic and systematic review” (3.12).

Despite recent improvements to the institution’s financial condition, resources represent a continuing challenge for Goddard College. We note that nearly 90 percent of the College’s revenue comes from tuition and student-related income. The institution’s financial, enrollment and retention planning are not yet well developed, and there has not been a tradition of fundraising at the College. We are gratified to learn that developing a long-range financial plan and increasing fundraising are among the College’s highest priorities, and we look forward to learning, in Spring 2013, of the institution’s continued success in assuring its financial stability. Relevant here is our standard on *Financial Resources*:

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 (9.2).

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 (9.3).

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 the College is asked, in Spring 2015, to report on three matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation, Organization and Governance, and Faculty*.

The Commission asks that the report submitted for consideration in Spring 2015 provide evidence that additional progress has been made in addressing the matters identified for emphasis in the Spring 2013 report. We recognize that these issues do not lend themselves to rapid resolution and will require the institution’s continued attention over time; thus we ask that further information be provided in the fifth-year interim report.

The Commission concurs with the visiting team that the College would benefit from a more coordinated approach to the collection, analysis, dissemination, and use of data, including assessment results. We are gratified to learn that a member of the president's staff has been designated to work full-time on planning and institutional research and that the College anticipates "measurable gains" in its efforts to establish a culture of evidence and to use data for planning and decision-making. The fifth-year interim report, and in particular the College's discussion of the Student Achievement and Success (E&S) data forms, will afford Goddard College the opportunity to update the Commission on its success in assuring that its "system of evaluation is designed to provide relevant and trustworthy information to support institutional improvement, with an emphasis on the academic program" (2.4) and that the "results of evaluation are used systematically for improvement and to inform institutional planning, especially as it relates to student achievement and resource allocation" (2.6).

As noted above, the dedication of the Goddard College faculty is one of the institution's strengths. We share the concern expressed in the report of the visiting team, however, about the small number of full-time faculty (six at the time of the team's visit) and the impact of the institution's "paid by task" model for its less-than-half-time faculty members on their participation in College governance and professional development. We anticipate being apprized, through the report submitted for consideration in Spring 2015, of the College's success in addressing these concerns, in keeping with our standards on *Organization and Governance* and *Faculty*:

Faculty exercise an important role in assuring the academic integrity of the institution's educational programs. 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 (3.10).

There are an adequate number of faculty whose time commitment to the institution is sufficient to assure the accomplishment of class and out-of-class responsibilities essential for the fulfillment of institutional mission and purposes. Responsibilities of teaching faculty include instruction and the systematic understanding of effective teaching/learning processes and outcomes in courses and programs for which they share responsibility; additional duties may include such functions as student advisement, academic planning, and participation in policy-making, course and curricular development, research, and institutional governance (5.3).

The institution avoids undue dependence on part-time faculty, adjuncts, and graduate assistants to conduct classroom instruction. Institutions that employ a significant proportion of part-time, adjunct, clinical or temporary faculty assure their appropriate integration into the department and institution and provide opportunities for faculty development (5.8).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2020 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 Goddard College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to

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meet with you, Dr. Robert Kenny, Vice President for Finance and Administration, and Dr. Marianne Reiff, Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, as well as Mr. David Hales, 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. Stephen Friedman. 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. Stephen Friedman
Visiting Team