



Founded in 1885

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES, INC.
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

ELSA M. NUNEZ, Chair (2010)
Eastern Connecticut State University

MARY JO MAYDEW, Vice Chair (2011)
Mount Holyoke College

DORIS B. ARRINGTON (2009)
Capital Community College

GAI CARPENTER (2009)
Hampshire College

KIRK D. KOLENBRANDER (2009)
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

JAMES P. LEHENY (2009)
University of Massachusetts Amherst

PETER NESSEN (2009)
Boston, MA

KATHERINE H. SLOAN (2009)
Massachusetts College of Art and Design

KATHRYN T. SPOEHR (2009)
Brown University

STACY L. SWEENEY (2009)
The Art Institutes

REV. JEFFREY P. VON ARX, S.J. (2009)
Fairfield University

F. ROBERT HUTH (2010)
Middlebury College

HUBERT D. MAULTSBY (2010)
Norwich University

RICHARD L. PATTENAUDE (2010)
University of Maine System

RONALD V. GALLO (2011)
Cranston, RI

R. BRUCE HITCHNER (2011)
Tufts University

BRUCE L. MALLORY (2011)
University of New Hampshire

WILFREDO NIEVES (2011)
Middlesex Community College, CT

WALLACE NUTTING (2011)
Saco, ME

JAMES O. ORTIZ (2011)
Southern Maine Community College

JILL N. REICH (2011)
Bates College

CHRISTOPHER J. SULLIVAN (2011)
Concord, NH

DEBRA M. TOWNSLEY (2011)
Nichols College

Director of the Commission
BARBARA E. BRITTINGHAM
E-Mail: bbrittingham@neasc.org

Deputy Director of the Commission
PATRICIA M. O'BRIEN, SND
E-Mail: pobrien@neasc.org

Associate Director of the Commission
ROBERT C. FROH
E-Mail: rfroh@neasc.org

Associate Director of the Commission
LOUISE A. ZAK
E-Mail: lzak@neasc.org

Assistant Director of the Commission
JULIE L. ALIG
E-Mail: jalig@neasc.org

April 7, 2009

Dr. John W. Miller
President
Central Connecticut State University
1615 Stanley Street
New Britain, CT 06050-4010

Dear President Miller:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 6, 2009, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Central Connecticut State University:

that Central Connecticut State University be continued in accreditation;

that the University submit a report for consideration in Spring 2011 that gives emphasis to the institution's success in:

1. implementing a systematic, broad-based program of student learning assessment and using the results for improvement;
2. strengthening the University's capacity to collect, analyze and use data in decision-making;

that the University submit a fifth-year interim report for consideration in Fall 2013;

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

1. continuing to address the areas specified for attention in the Spring 2011 report;
2. reviewing all academic programs on a regular cycle;
3. assuring the effectiveness of academic advising;
4. assuring that part-time faculty are appropriately qualified and that the University has in place effective procedures for the evaluation of part-time faculty;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2018.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

Central Connecticut State University is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*. We commend the University for the clarity of its mission and for its comprehensive planning processes, which provide clear direction for institutional development. The University has adopted four "areas of distinctiveness" that also provide focus for academic programs and research and service activities. We take favorable note of the institution's well-established instructional location in Jamaica, which is well managed and provides high-quality programs in education. The University's dedicated faculty and staff are committed to student success, and the President and his senior team provide strong leadership to the campus community. The institution is financially secure and, with a strong fundraising program and an effective budgeting process in place, is well prepared to address possible resource shortfalls and to continue to assure the quality of its programs and services in the future.

The items the institution is asked to report on in Spring 2011 are related to our standards on *The Academic Program* and *Planning and Evaluation*.

The Commission is pleased to learn of steps taken by Central Connecticut State University to develop and implement a comprehensive approach to the assessment of student learning, including the establishment of an Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA), the appointment of a standing Academic Assessment Committee, the preparation of an institutional Assessment Policy, and the recent administration of the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). We understand that academic departments are required to submit an assessment report for each academic program to the University's OIRA and that OIRA staff will review these reports and provide written feedback to the departments. We note with approval the University's participation in the Voluntary System of Accountability and its plans to include CLA results in its profile. We look forward to learning, through the Spring 2011 report, of the institution's continued success in implementing its assessment plan. We remind you of our standard on *The Academic Program*:

The institution implements and supports a systematic and broad-based approach to the assessment of student learning focused on educational improvement through understanding what and how students are learning through their academic program and, as appropriate, through experiences outside the classroom. This approach is based on a clear statement or statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. The approach provides useful information to help the institution understand what and how students are learning, improve the experiences provided for students, and assure that the level of student achievement is appropriate for the degree awarded. Institutional support is provided for these activities (4.44).

The institution's approach to understanding student learning focuses on the course, program, and institutional level. Data and other evidence generated through this approach are considered at the appropriate level of focus, with the results being a demonstrable factor in improving the learning opportunities and results for students (4.45).

The institution's approach to understanding what and how students are learning and using the results for improvement has the support of the institution's academic and institutional leadership and the systematic involvement of faculty (4.47).

Relatedly, we concur with the visiting team that Central Connecticut State University would benefit from strengthening its capacity to collect, analyze, and use data. The recently established OIRA has already begun to exercise responsibility in this regard, and we are gratified to learn of the institution's commitment to the effective use of data in planning, program development, and decision-making. The Spring 2011 report will provide an opportunity for the University to update the Commission on its success in this area, in keeping with our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *The Academic Program*:

The institution regularly and systematically evaluates the achievement of its mission and purposes, giving primary focus to the realization of its educational objectives. Its system of evaluation is designed to provide relevant and trustworthy information to support institutional improvement, with an emphasis on the academic program. The institution's evaluation efforts are effective for addressing its unique circumstances. These efforts use both quantitative and qualitative methods (2.4).

Evaluation enables the institution to demonstrate through verifiable means its attainment of purposes and objectives both inside and outside the classroom. 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).

The institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students. Inquiry may focus on a variety of perspectives, including understanding the process of learning, being able to describe student experiences and learning outcomes in normative terms, and gaining feedback from alumni, employers, and others situated to help in the description and assessment of student learning. The institution devotes appropriate attention to ensuring that its methods of understanding student learning are trustworthy and provide information useful in the continuing improvement of programs and services for students (4.50).

2011
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 Commission looks forward to receiving evidence of the University's continued progress in addressing the issues specified for attention in the Fall 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 Fall 2013 report. In addition, the University is asked to report on three matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*, *The Academic Program*, and *Faculty*.

The Commission is pleased to learn that Central Connecticut State University has drafted an Academic Program Review Process that will be reviewed by the Provost's Council and Faculty Senate in Spring 2009. The proposed process includes an annual review of each academic program by the Dean and Provost's Council and an external review once every five years. We anticipate being apprized, through the Fall 2013 report, of the University's success in implementing a systematic approach to academic program review. Relevant here are our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *The Academic Program*:

The institution has a system of periodic review of academic and other programs that includes the use of external perspectives (2.5).

The institution develops, approves, administers, and on a regular cycle reviews its degree programs under effective institutional policies that are implemented by designated bodies with established channels of communication and control. Faculty have a substantive voice in these matters (4.8).

The Commission shares the judgment of the visiting team that the quality of academic advising provided by the University is "inconsistent" and that students are not always provided in a timely manner with the information and advice they need to be successful in their educational programs. We take favorable note of the institution's recent development of a proposal for a comprehensive reorganization of the advising function at the University. The proposal includes the creation of a Center for Advising and Career Education, the establishment of Academic Advising Centers in each school, and increased training, rewards, and recognition for faculty advisors. The Fall 2013 report will provide an opportunity for the University to report on the success of this reorganization. We remind you of our standard on *Faculty*:

The institution has in place an effective system of academic advising that meets student needs for information and advice and is compatible with its educational objectives. Faculty and other personnel responsible for academic advising are adequately informed and prepared to discharge their advising functions. Resources are adequate to ensure the quality of advising for students regardless of the location of instruction or the mode of delivery (5.17).

Finally, as noted in the report of the visiting team, the University's documentation of the qualifications and effectiveness of part-time faculty has been incomplete. We look forward to learning, through the Fall 2013 report, of the institution's success in assuring that "[t]he preparation and qualifications of all faculty are appropriate to the field and level of their assignments" (5.2) and that the University has established "equitable and broad-based procedures" for the evaluation of part-time faculty (5.10).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2018 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 Central Connecticut State University and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, and Dr. Carl R. Lovitt, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, as well as Dr. Gene Diaz, team representative, 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. Lawrence D. McHugh. 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.

Dr. John W. Miller
April 7, 2009
Page 5

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

Sincerely,



Elsa M. Nuñez

EMN/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Lawrence D. McHugh
Visiting Team