



UMass Lowell
Office of the Chancellor

DEC 11 2018

Received

December 5, 2018

Dr. Jacqueline F. Moloney
Chancellor
University of Massachusetts Lowell
University Crossing, Suite #400
220 Pawtucket Street
Lowell, MA 01854

Dear Chancellor Moloney:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on September 21, 2018, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by University of Massachusetts Lowell, as well as the institution's report regarding the relocation of its Haverhill, Massachusetts instructional location and the report of the evaluator, and voted to take the following action:

that the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by University of Massachusetts Lowell be accepted;

that the report regarding the relocation of the University's Haverhill, Massachusetts instructional location to Harbor Place be accepted and inclusion of the Harbor Place site within the institution's accreditation be confirmed;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2023 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2023 evaluation give continued emphasis to two of the items specified for attention in the Fall 2018 interim report and to its success in three additional matters:

1. continuing to develop a comprehensive approach to the assessment of student learning including general education, and using the results to inform program improvement;
2. providing sufficient resources to support and enhance the University's core mathematics curriculum;
3. strengthening its English language program for international students;

DAVID QUIGLEY, Chair (2021)
Boston College

GEORGE W. TETLER, Vice Chair (2019)
Worcester, MA

HARRY E. DUMAY (2019)
College of Our Lady of the Elms

JEFFREY R. GODLEY (2019)
Groton, CT

COLEEN C. PANTALONE (2019)
Northeastern University

MARIKO SILVER (2019)
Bennington College

KASSANDRA S. ARDINGER (2020)
Trustee Member, Concord, NH

RUSSELL CAREY (2020)
Brown University

FRANCESCO C. CESAREO (2020)
Assumption College

F. JAVIER CEVALLOS (2020)
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RICK DANIELS (2020)
Cohasset, MA

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Yale University

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4. achieving the University's goals for gender diversity;
5. effectively managing the growth of its Harbor Place campus in Haverhill, Massachusetts.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The interim (fifth-year) report submitted by University of Massachusetts Lowell was accepted because it responded to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letter of June 4, 2014 and addressed each of the nine standards, including a reflective essay for Standard 8: *Educational Effectiveness* on student learning and success.

The Commission commends University of Massachusetts Lowell (UMass Lowell), the "fifth-fastest growing public doctoral institution in the nation," for its exceptional management of the institution's rapid expansion as demonstrated by enrollment surpassing 18,000 students in Fall 2017, a 12% growth in full-time faculty from 549 in FY2015 to 616 in FY2018, and "dramatic" development of campus facilities through annual expenditures for major capital projects (\$98.0 million) and deferred maintenance (\$39.8 million). At the same time, the University has preserved its commitment to students by offering affordable undergraduate and graduate programs that, as seen on the institution's "World in Your Hands" website, connect them to "abundant" experiential learning opportunities both regionally and internationally, and as is evident from increases in both the institution's undergraduate retention rates (79% in Fall 2011 to 86% in Fall 2017) and six-year graduation rates (51% in 2010 to 62% in 2018). UMass Lowell's focus on innovation is also apparent from such initiatives as its establishment of a Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation who serves on the Executive Cabinet, its Innovation Hubs (iHubs) in downtown Lowell and Haverhill, cutting-edge research facilities, and the DifferenceMaker initiative that resulted in 19 student-led startup companies. Over the past five years, significant academic advances have included implementation of a new Core Curriculum, the first Interdisciplinary Studies Conference held in March 2018, growth in the institution's Honors College that now serves 1,616 students, and the launch of the River Hawk Scholars Academy in Fall 2017 to serve first-generation college students. We are also pleased to learn of the resources dedicated to enhance the University's mathematics curriculum, including the hiring of eight new faculty, with plans for an additional eight positions over the next three years, to handle the 20% enrollment increase in service courses offered and to replace departing faculty; in addition, a new placement process will be introduced in Fall 2018 and plans are in place to closely monitor its impact on student success. With the involvement of the University's Financial Planning Committee, development of a Multiyear Financial Plan designed to achieve positive annual operating margins, build sufficient reserves, and maintain a debt service ratio under 8% is a notable accomplishment, and the institution's success to date in raising \$122 million toward its first-ever comprehensive fundraising campaign goal of \$125 million is impressive.

In addition to the achievements indicated above, we note with favor UMass Lowell's increased use of data to "become a more strategic organization ... with a mindset of continuous improvement." As demonstrated in the E-series forms, the collaborative faculty-driven approach used by the institution has helped to foster buy-in to assessment across the entire institution, to include its graduate, online, and continuing education programs. To support these efforts, the University has established a Policy on Learning Outcomes Assessment and specifically incorporated assessment into its faculty Promotion and Tenure guidelines. We also acknowledge the work of the 16-member Core Curriculum Committee to develop a proposal for an "ongoing assessment cycle" to measure student achievement of all seven of the Core's Essential Learning Outcomes (ELO), and recognize the E²LO initiative designed to connect student co-curricular experiences to classroom development through such programs as one-credit Living-Learning seminars. Other strategies include: the three-year ePortfolio project, the Annual Curriculum and Learning Summary implemented in Spring 2018, and launch of UMass Lowell's Tableau

Datamart that provides customized reporting on a range of institutional data. The institution's creation of a culture of assessment is further supported by its participation in state and national-level efforts and its investment in staffing. As observed by UMass Lowell in its interim report, while the past five years have helped to build a foundation for assessment across the institution, it also underscored "how much work is yet to be done."

The Commission also accepted the report submitted by University of Massachusetts Lowell and confirmed inclusion of the Haverhill, Massachusetts institutional location at Harbor Place within the institution's accreditation because the report was responsive to the concerns raised in our letter of October 27, 2015 and provided evidence that the University is implementing the off-campus location in a manner consistent with Commission standards and policies.

We note with approval the successful relocation of UMass Lowell's instructional site in Haverhill, MA from Northern Essex Community College (NECC) to Harbor Place. Conceived of as both a location for academic programs and the institution's second iHub, the Harbor Place campus provides a vehicle for the University to carry out its mission to "build on its founding tradition of innovation, entrepreneurship and partnerships with industry and the community." As the Harbor Place campus is part of the Department of Online and Continuing Education, Haverhill students have access to the institution's well-established array of online services, and we understand that the Manager of Advising Services serves as the campus administrator. As verified by the evaluator, Haverhill faculty and students "feel a bond and connection" with the institution and consider the instructional quality of courses offered at Harbor Place equivalent to that of those offered on the main campus in Lowell.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2023 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. In addition to the information included in all self-studies, University of Massachusetts Lowell is asked to give continued emphasis to two areas specified for the Fall 2018 interim report, namely: continuing to develop a comprehensive approach to the assessment of student learning, including general education, and using the results to inform program improvement; and providing sufficient resources to support and enhance the University's core mathematics curriculum. The Commission understands that these issues do not lend themselves to rapid resolution and will require the institution's sustained attention over time; hence we ask that evidence of continued progress be provided in the Fall 2023 self-study. The three additional items the institution is asked to report on in its Fall 2023 self-study are related to our standards on *The Academic Program, Students, Planning and Evaluation, and Educational Effectiveness*.

We are aware of UMass Lowell's goal to strengthen its program for international students aimed at increasing their fluency in English communication beyond minimal TOEFL proficiency. As shared in the interim report, however, little progress has been made to date in part due to several failed searches for ESL faculty. The University has therefore engaged a visiting consultant to help establish "clear benchmarks for success," and invested in the creation of a University writing center and additional tutors for its English language learners. We look forward to learning, in the Fall 2023 self-study, of the institution's success to ensure "[s]tudents completing an undergraduate or graduate degree program demonstrate collegiate-level skills in the English language" (4.11).

While UMass Lowell has been successful in increasing the diversity of its student body with those identifying as ethnically diverse climbing from 29% in 2012 to 34% in 2018, we understand that achieving gender diversity continues to be a "struggle" particularly given the institution's strength in STEM disciplines that are less likely to attract women. As a result, a number of initiatives have been implemented to increase the yield of women students: a summer bridge program for incoming female students in STEM fields, targeted admissions events, and designated funding to provide highly qualified female applicants scholarships and co-op experiences. The Fall 2023 self-study will afford the University an opportunity to reflect on its

efforts to "... address[] its own goals for the achievement of diversity among its students" (*Students*, Statement of the Standard).

Particularly as UMass Lowell has plans to further develop its Harbor Place institutional location, we ask that the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2023 comprehensive evaluation also provide evidence that the institution continues to effectively manage the growth of its Haverhill campus. Specifically, we note that the University has set a "still-ambitious" goal to increase enrollment from 63 students in Spring 2018 to 200 students per semester. Initiatives that will be implemented to achieve this goal include the launch of an MBA program in FY2019 and more targeted marketing efforts through increased use of direct mail, the hiring of a marketing consultant, and establishing a greater recruiting presence on the NECC campus. In addition, we understand that UMass Lowell intends to promote its iHub model by offering monthly lectures and industry-specific workshops. We also view positively the University's plans to track its Haverhill students as a separate cohort to determine the equivalency of student achievement across the institution's locations and formats of delivery. This section of the report should be informed by our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *Educational Effectiveness*:

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

The institution enrolling multiple student bodies, by degree level, location, modality, or other variables, develops and uses the data, evidence, and information below for each student body (8.1).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the reports submitted by University of Massachusetts Lowell and the evaluator 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 and the head of the system of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Robert Manning and Martin Meehan. 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.

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

Sincerely,



David Quigley

DQ/sjp

Enclosures

cc: Mr. Robert Manning
Mr. Martin Meehan
Visiting evaluator