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COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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July 12, 2017

Dr. Charles Wall
President
Massasoit Community College
One Massasoit Boulevard
Brockton, MA 02302

Dear President Wall:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on April 21, 2017, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Massasoit Community College:

that Massasoit Community College be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit a report for consideration in Spring 2020 that gives emphasis to the institution's success in:

1. implementing a comprehensive and consistent approach to assess institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes with emphasis on building capacity to use evidence for institutional improvement;
2. achieving its goals to increase enrollment and improve graduation rates;

that the College submit an interim (fifth-year) report for consideration in Fall 2021;

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

1. continuing to address the two areas specified above for attention in the Spring 2020 progress report;
2. strengthening its financial stability;
3. providing professional development opportunities for faculty and staff related to the implementation of academic advising policies;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2026.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

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

The Commission joins the visiting team in commending Massasoit Community College (MCC) for its comprehensive and candid self-study that documents the institution's many strengths and accomplishments over the last decade. The commitment of the board, leadership team, faculty, and staff to the institution's mission is noteworthy, and we are particularly gratified to learn that the campus community was actively engaged in the recent revision of MCC's mission. The College's long history of thoughtful strategic planning is commendable, and the visiting team confirmed that MCC allocated resources to achieve the initiatives outlined in Strategic Plan 2015-2017 and that the development of Strategic Plan 2018-2022 is currently underway at the institution. The governing board's adoption of a three-year self-assessment is noted with favor, and we are also pleased to learn of MCC's annual academic goal-setting process that ensures resources are made available based on academic plans, needs, and objectives. We are further gratified to note the progress MCC is making in achieving its diversity goals as evidenced by an increase in underrepresented students from 32% in Fall 2010 to 42% in Fall 2014. In addition, since launching the Middleborough Center in Fall 2011, enrollment at that location has increased from 92 students to 403 students in Fall 2016; the institution's steadfast attention to student services ensures that students on the main campus as well as at off-campus locations and online have sufficient access to appropriate services. The team confirmed that the core of 129 full-time, well-qualified faculty serve as the "hive" of the institution. Adjunct faculty and academic staff hold the appropriate credentials and, together with full-time faculty, are sufficient to support academic programs at the College. We note with approval that, since the time of the team visit, the College has made additional improvements: MCC has streamlined its student evaluation process; all associate degree programs now require 20 general education credits; and the academic governance structure was reviewed by the Academic Senate in May 2017. Finally, we congratulate Massasoit Community College for its 50 years of dedicated service to the community. We concur with the judgment of the visiting team that the College has established a solid foundation on which to continue to improve, address its challenges, and achieve its mission well into the future.

The items the institution is asked to report on in Spring 2020 are related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation, Students, and Educational Effectiveness*.

As Massasoit Community College candidly acknowledged in its self-study, the institution has not yet developed a comprehensive, systematic approach to access and use available data. For example, while data and reports are available through the institution's portal, the College has not established an effective method to inform departments of the availability of useful data. We are therefore pleased to learn that MCC is developing a dashboard that will ensure data are consistently available throughout the institution. In addition, MCC recently adopted the Association of American Colleges and Universities' LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes and corresponding VALUE rubrics, and the College will begin evaluating student achievement using these metrics in AY2017. We look forward, in the report submitted in Spring 2020, to learning of the College's success in implementing a comprehensive and consistent approach to assess institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes with emphasis on building capacity to use evidence for institutional improvement. Our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *Educational Effectiveness* are relevant here:

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 valid information to support institutional improvement. The institution's evaluation efforts are effective for addressing its unique circumstances. These efforts use both quantitative and qualitative methods (2.6).

The institution has a demonstrable record of success in using the results of its evaluation activities to inform planning, changes in programs and services, and resource allocation (2.8).

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 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 institution devotes appropriate attention to ensuring that its methods of understanding student learning and student success are valid and useful to improve programs and services for students and to inform the public (8.9).

The institution integrates the findings of its assessment process and measures of student success into its program evaluation activities and uses the findings to inform its planning and resource allocation and to establish claims the institution makes to students and prospective students (8.10).

We understand from the visiting team that enrollment at Massasoit Community College was 4,745 FTE in Fall 2016, down from 5,074 FTE in Fall 2013 and that the state appropriation as a percentage of the College budget declined to 36% in FY2015. Accordingly, MCC has "redoubled" its enrollment management efforts by implementing strategies to increase enrollment in dual enrollment and online courses and focusing its attention on "sustainable" programs, including Nursing, Criminal Justice, Liberal Arts, and STEM. We further understand that while IPEDs graduation rates of around 15% have been consistent for the last four years, graduation rates during this same period are markedly higher when other cohorts are considered: 22% for first-time part-time students; 31% for full-time transfer-in students, and 48% for part-time transfer-in students. We view favorably MCC's efforts to continue to improve retention and graduation rates by implementing targeted academic support services, student life programs, disabilities services, and programs such as Latch, TRIO, Choices, and Gateway to College. The Spring 2020 report will provide MCC an opportunity to apprise the Commission on its success in achieving its goals to increase enrollment and improve graduation rates as evidence that "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 Standard). We also refer you to our standard on *Educational Effectiveness*:

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).

Commission policy requires an 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 interim reports, the College is asked, in Fall 2021, to give emphasis to its continued success in addressing the two areas specified above for attention in the Spring 2020 progress report. The Commission understands that these issues do not lend themselves to rapid resolution and will

require the institution's continued attention over time; hence, we ask that evidence of further progress in implementing a comprehensive approach to assessment across the institution and using results to make consistent institutional improvements, and achieving goals to increase enrollment and improve graduation rates be provided in the interim report submitted for consideration in Fall 2021. In addition, the College is asked to report on two matters related to our standards on *Institutional Resources* and *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*.

As the visiting team noted in its report, the payment of a net pension liability of \$5.9 million resulting in a restatement of MCC's net unrestricted position from \$8.8 million to \$3.3 million and a material change in its Primary Reserve Ratio from 17.9% in FY2014 to 7.4% in FY2015 considerably shortened the operating time period of available reserves and had an impact on the institution's financial condition. While we recognize that MCC ended FY2015 with a positive \$29 million, we also share the concern of the team that continued downward trends in enrollment and state appropriations could put further stress on the College's financial position. We therefore note with approval that MCC has created an informal "think tank" to create a five-year enrollment projection model based on historical trends, and the initial "deliverable" of this model is scheduled in AY2017. We look forward to learning, through the Fall 2021 interim report, of the College's success in implementing its enrollment projection model and strengthening its financial condition as evidence that "[t]he institution is financially stable" (7.5). We are also informed by our standard on *Institutional Resources*:

The institution's financial planning, including contingency planning, is integrated with overall planning and evaluation processes. The institution demonstrates its ability to analyze its financial condition and understand the opportunities and constraints that will influence its financial condition and acts accordingly. It reallocates resources as necessary to achieve its purposes and objectives. The institution implements a realistic plan for addressing issues raised by the existence of any operating deficit (7.14).

Opportunities identified for new sources of revenue are reviewed by the administration and board to ensure the integrity of the institution and the quality of the academic program are maintained and enhanced. The institution planning a substantive change demonstrates the financial and administrative capacity to ensure that the new initiative meets the standards of quality of the institution and the Commission's Standards (7.15).

We appreciate the institution's candid acknowledgment that advising at the College is "disparate" and, as the visiting team notes in its report, faculty expressed some confusion about the process by which advisees are assigned to whom and when. We understand that Massasoit is in the third year of a three-year Title III grant to improve pedagogy and develop a more effective model of advising, and we note with favor that, to date, MCC has met its goals to train faculty; an early alert system has been implemented; and about half of the faculty are now "piloting" the use of Degree Works as an advising tool. We also note positively that the College offers "in-house" workshops for faculty and staff throughout the year. The Fall 2021 report will afford MCC an opportunity to provide evidence that "[f]aculty and academic staff are provided with substantial opportunities for continued professional development" (6.6) related to the consistent implementation of academic advising policies. Our standard on *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship* will also provide guidance:

All faculty are appropriately integrated into the department and institution and have appropriate opportunities for professional development (6.1).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2026 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 Massasoit Community College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Dr. Barbara McCarthy, Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Dr. Virginia Carson, 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. Pamerson O. Ifill. 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.

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, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



David P. Angel

DPA/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Pamerson O. Ifill
Visiting Team