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November 18, 2013

Dr. Theodora J. Kalikow  
President  
University of Southern Maine  
P.O. Box 9300, 96 Falmouth Street  
Portland, ME 04104-9300

Dear President Kalikow:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on September 20, 2013, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the report submitted by University of Southern Maine and took the following action:

that the report submitted by University of Southern Maine be accepted;

that the fifth-year interim report scheduled for consideration in Spring 2016 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all interim reports, as well as the matters specified in our letter of November 29, 2011, the institution give emphasis, in the Spring 2016 report, to its success in:

1. continuing to implement a systematic approach to the collection and use of data to inform planning and decision-making, with attention to the development of standard definitions and methodologies and the use of the system-wide data warehouse;
2. achieving the full engagement of all departments in the assessment of programs and student learning outcomes;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Spring 2021 be confirmed.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The report submitted by University of Southern Maine was accepted because it was generally responsive to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letter of November 29, 2011.

We commend University of Southern Maine (USM) for its thoughtful, comprehensive report that provides evidence regarding the systematic collection, analysis, and use of data for decision-making, and engaging faculty

and staff in program review and the assessment of student learning. USM is addressing the challenges of data analysis such as developing standard definitions and methodologies, increasing understanding and reliance on student information systems, and utilizing census data as the official data of the institution. We note with approval that the University has established the Office of Institutional Research to produce and coordinate data reports, with emphasis on using reports routinely to answer key institutional questions. The President's Council reviews University-wide data to inform budgeting, hiring, planning, and other major decisions, and the provost and deans annually review the progress of the Colleges in achieving their respective goals developed in alignment with the University's mission.

We are gratified to learn that USM created a new University-wide assessment committee to establish an assessment cycle, coordinate institutional and program assessment projects, and maintain an assessment webpage. Academic program reviews, which include self-studies and external review teams, occur every seven years, with accredited programs requesting when appropriate that the institutional format be substituted with the process required from the external program accrediting group. Results of these efforts generally indicate that the majority of departments have ongoing assessment in place or have recently started the process. Finally, the Office of Academic Assessment has facilitated ongoing assessment studies to determine student perspectives on their learning and performance and relationship to program and campus services.

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 and the items specified for attention in the Commission's letter of November 29, 2011, the University is asked, in Spring 2016, to report on two matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *The Academic Program*.

The Commission appreciates USM's commitment to "continue to work on the common understanding of University data" and to participate in the implementation of the system-wide data warehouse. The Spring 2016 interim report will provide the institution an opportunity to update the Commission on its success in this regard, as guided by our standard on *Planning and Evaluation*:

Institutional research is sufficient to support planning and evaluation. The institution systematically collects and uses data necessary to support its planning efforts and to enhance institutional effectiveness (2.2).

We are gratified to learn of the many initiatives University of Southern Maine will implement to support the full engagement of all departments in the assessment of programs and student learning outcomes. These include the alignment and integration of Core assessment with degree program assessment, the use of Core assessment blueprints, annual assessment of capstones, in-house and conference-based professional development for faculty, and additional administrative support for assessment activities in academic departments. We look forward, in Spring 2016, to learning of the institution's continued success in implementing its assessment initiatives, in keeping with our standard on *The Academic Program*:

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 institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods and direct and indirect measures to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students, and includes external perspectives. 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 (4.54).

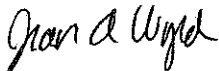
Finally, the scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2021 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by University of Southern Maine and hopes that its preparation 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.

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. Samuel W. Collins. The institution is free to release information about the report and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

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

Sincerely,



Jean A. Wyld

JAW/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Samuel W. Collins