



June 2, 2022

Ms. Elizabeth C. Russell
President
Eastern Maine Community College
354 Hogan Road
Bangor, ME 04401

Dear President Russell:

I write to inform you that at its meeting on April 21, 2022, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the report submitted by Eastern Maine Community College and took the following action:

that the report submitted by Eastern Maine Community College be accepted;

that the interim (fifth-year) report scheduled for consideration in Spring 2024 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all interim reports, as well as the matter specified in our letter of November 15, 2019, the institution give emphasis to its success in:

1. continuing to ensure the effectiveness of its governance processes and strengthening its communication channels;
2. achieving its goals to stabilize enrollment and improve student retention;
3. implementing strategies to improve the financial stability of the College;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Spring 2029 be confirmed.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The report submitted by Eastern Maine Community College was accepted because it was responsive to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letter of November 15, 2019.

The Commission commends Eastern Maine Community College (EMCC) for its well-written and thorough report. We acknowledge the progress the College has made in addressing concerns about communications by implementing the “One Student – Student First” plan, an initiative that was developed in response to the “most pressing leadership issues” identified in the 2021 PACE survey and

is designed to “restore trust, focus, and leadership at the College.” We understand that the plan includes an administrative reorganization through which the workforce training division was moved under the purview of Academic Affairs, a change that provides students who enter via workforce programs a “viable pathway” to credit-bearing programs. In addition, we note with favor the enhanced communication strategies adopted to support the College’s “inclusive governance structure.” We agree that conducting the PACE survey “early next year” will help inform EMCC about the effectiveness of the plan and the reorganization. Finally, we are pleased to learn that the College anticipates concluding its search for a new President and Vice President for Student Affairs by the end of the Spring 2022 semester.

Commission policy requires an interim (fifth-year) 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 and the matter specified for attention in the Commission’s letter of November 15, 2019, the College is asked, in the Spring 2024 interim report, to give emphasis to its continued progress to ensure the effectiveness of its governance processes and strengthen its communication channels. The Commission recognizes that these matters do not lend themselves to rapid resolution and will require the College’s sustained attention over time; hence, we ask that further information be provided in the interim report. In addition, we ask that the Spring 2024 interim report address two areas related to our standards on *Students* and *Institutional Resources*.

We understand that Eastern Maine Community College’s FTE enrollment has decreased by nearly 530 FTEs since AY2016, resulting in over \$1.8 million in lost tuition and fees. We take favorable note of the steps the institution is taking to increase enrollment through enhanced recruitment and admissions processes that will “remove barriers” and enable students to move more effectively through the admissions process. In addition, an Associate Dean of Student Success was recently hired to oversee student support and “reinvigorate” initiatives intended to increase student retention. We look forward to learning, in the Spring 2024 interim report, of the institution’s progress in achieving its goals for enrollment and retention. We are guided here by our standard on *Students*:

Consistent with its mission, 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 the Standard).

The institution demonstrates its ability to admit students who can be successful in the institution’s academic program, including specifically recruited populations. The institution’s goals for retention and graduation reflect institutional purposes, and the results are used to inform recruitment and the review of programs and services (5.6).

Despite the \$1.8 million loss in revenue mentioned above, Eastern Maine Community College has remained “financially solvent” in part due to considerable financial assistance from HEERF funding: \$3.8 million in FY2021 and \$4.7 million in FY2022. The College is making improvements to its “aging facilities” by using resources from its state allocation and grant funding and has also “spent significant bond funding” to replace its server, storage, and networking systems. The Commission understands that the College is preparing for an anticipated deficit in FY2024, and we note with favor the “seven strategies” identified to improve the institution’s financial stability, including a “rightsizing plan” that involves achieving efficiencies through “process improvement and automation,” exploring new revenue sources and resource-saving partnerships, and creating new “high demand” academic programs. In addition, Eastern Maine Community College has received over \$2.5 million from the American Recovery Program and Harold Alfond Foundation to deliver short-term and certificate programs to Maine citizens free of

charge and will use these resources to “leverage” its workforce development opportunities. We ask that the Spring 2024 interim report give emphasis to the College’s progress in implementing strategies to improve its financial stability. Relevant here is our standard on *Institutional Resources*:

The institution preserves and enhances available financial resources sufficient to support its mission. It manages its financial resources and allocates them in a way that reflects its mission and purposes. It demonstrates the ability to respond to financial emergencies and unforeseen circumstances (7.4).

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 (7.6).

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).

Finally, the scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2029 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 Eastern Maine Community College 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.

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 Bill Cassidy and David Daigler. The institution is free to release information about the report 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 Lawrence M. Schall, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



George W. Tetler

GWT/sjp

cc: Bill Cassidy
David Daigler

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions