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

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October 28, 2004

Dr. Ronald D. Liebowitz
President
Middlebury College
Old Chapel
Middlebury, VT 05753

NOV 01 2004

Dear President Liebowitz:

It is my pleasure to inform you that at its meeting on September 23, 2004, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with regard to Middlebury College:

that the fifth-year interim report submitted by Middlebury College be accepted;

that the scheduling of the next comprehensive evaluation for Fall, 2009 be confirmed;

that the self-study prepared for the College's next comprehensive evaluation, in addition to addressing all the standards, give particular emphasis to the College's success in developing and implementing a plan for assessing student learning outcomes in general education and using the results to effect improvement.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

We commend Middlebury College for the exemplary fifth-year report which responds in a comprehensive way to three of the four areas of concern evoked through the last comprehensive review and summarized in the Commission letter of March 28, 2000. We find particularly noteworthy the success of recent fundraising efforts, including the receipt of two of the largest gifts in the College's history.

The Commission is gratified to see how the College has evolved in making systematic use of information for the purposes of planning and evaluation. The report substantiates this by addressing how the College has laid out the foundation of the next strategic plan through retrospective analysis of progress since the 1992 strategic plan; board resolutions on growth from 1995 forward; and the continued development of the Commons system to enable education to take place at all times and in all settings. The Institutional Research

Office, relatively new at the time of the last comprehensive evaluation, has expanded and taken an active role in reporting on planning and evaluation efforts. The Banner computing system offers the ability to collect and analyze significant amounts of data related to budgeting, registration, student credit hours, and progress toward degrees, among other data. Together these efforts highlight how the College has improved significantly its systematic use of information.

The Commission finds praiseworthy the College's efforts in marshalling resources to meet its goals of faculty and staff diversity, particularly given the fact that the College's current demographic profile is more diverse than the population of Vermont. We note that the College has made some gains in increasing the diversity of the faculty through the recruitment of three minority faculty members (two tenure track appointments, and one continuing term appointment). To support diversity goals, the College has created the position of Dean for Institutional Diversity, changed the language used in recruiting advertisements to reflect a more proactive stance toward diversity, and participated in the Northeast Consortium for Faculty Diversity, Dissertation and Fellowship. In addition, a task force on increasing staff diversity began meeting in Spring, 2004.

We note with favor the College's continued development and review of the Commons system. Presently, the College has completed the physical infrastructure for two of the five Commons and is in the process of planning for completing the remaining three. Student satisfaction with the community, and student satisfaction overall, have increased since the institution of the Commons system. New institutional leadership recently established the position of Dean of the College with the responsibility for a comprehensive discussion of the Commons residential system and ways of building a stronger and richer campus community.

With regard to assessment of student learning, the report indicates continued reliance on self-reported student data from graduating seniors without other types of direct and indirect assessment. As a result, the Commission continues to conclude that assessment initiatives at the College are still at an early stage. As part of the next comprehensive review, we would appreciate learning how Middlebury has progressed in developing and implementing a plan for analyzing learning outcomes, and for using the results to effect improvements, particularly with learning outcomes for general education. We request that the College review and respond to our standard on *Programs and Instruction*:

Graduates successfully completing an undergraduate program demonstrate competence in written and oral communication in English; the ability for scientific and quantitative reasoning, for critical analysis and logical thinking; and the capability for continuing learning. They also demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific, historical, and social phenomena, and a knowledge and appreciation of the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of humankind. In addition, graduates demonstrate an in-depth understanding of an area of knowledge or practice and of its interrelatedness with other areas (4.19).

Our policy on Institutional Effectiveness also provides guidance regarding the assessment of student learning (enclosed for your convenience).

Finally, the scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall, 2009, is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive visit at least once every ten years.

You are encouraged to share this letter with all of the College'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. Frederick Fritz. The institution is free to release information about the report and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

Dr. Ronald D. Liebowitz
October 28, 2004
Page 3

The Commission hopes that 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.

If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Charles M. Cook, Director of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Terrence J. MacTaggart

TJM/jm

Enclosures

cc: Mr. Frederick Fritz