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Burlington, VT

PEGGY NEWELL (2022)
Harvard University

President of the Commission
BARBARA E. BRITTINGHAM
bbrittingham@neche.org

Senior Vice President of the Commission
PATRICIA M. O'BRIEN, SND
pobrien@neche.org

Vice President of the Commission
CAROL L. ANDERSON
canderson@neche.org

Vice President of the Commission
LAURA M. GAMBINO
lgambino@neche.org

Vice President of the Commission
PAULA A. HARBECKE
pharbecke@neche.org

Vice President of the Commission
AARON PERKUS
aperkus@neche.org

July 1, 2020

Dr. Laurie L. Patton
President
Middlebury College
Old Chapel, 3rd Floor
Middlebury, VT 05753

Dear President Patton:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on April 23, 2020, the New England Commission of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Middlebury College:

that Middlebury College be continued in accreditation;

that the institution submit an interim (fifth-year) report for consideration in Fall 2024;

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

1. stabilizing the College's financial position;
2. ensuring an effective and transparent system of faculty governance reflective of the institution's global network;
3. achieving its goal to attract and retain a diverse faculty;
4. increasing enrollment at the Middlebury Institute, including an update on its dual degree program offered in collaboration with the Moscow State Institute of International Relations and its Spanish Community Interpreting certificate program;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2029.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

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

The Commission commends the “remarkable spirit of institutional pride and loyalty” shared by Middlebury College’s trustees, administration, and faculty that over the past decade has been the foundation of the institution’s success in providing students a transformative educational experience across all of its component programs – the College, the Institute, and the Schools. The institution’s continuing work to realize the full potential of Middlebury’s global network by developing “new levels of interconnectedness” among its mission-aligned programs offered at more than 40 locations in 18 countries is laudable. As reported by the visiting team, we are pleased to learn that the process used to develop *Envisioning Middlebury*, the institution’s strategic framework designed to guide decision-making over the next decade, was viewed as “inclusive, aspirational and bottom-up,” and we support establishment of the Innovation Fund that is being used to advance the plan’s priorities. To further build a “collaborative spirit” across the institution’s global network, the addition of staff members focused on internal communication and the implementation of a more participatory budgeting process demonstrate a commitment to improving transparency. We note positively the high degree of student satisfaction with the immersive educational experience offered by all of Middlebury’s programs, and we share the judgment of the visiting team that the Committee on Speech and Inclusion created in 2017 is a “model of open and inclusive engagement with conflict.” We further appreciate that the efforts of the Experiential Learning Centers have led to 80% of the College’s students engaging in service activities and 94% being placed in jobs, graduate programs, or fellowships within six months of graduation. Supported by an effective Office of Assessment and Institutional Research, Middlebury’s faculty are also recognized for their “rigorous and well-conceived” decennial external reviews, a process that is being adapted for the institution’s administrative departments, that ensures continuous assessment and program improvement. Along with the visiting team, we find Middlebury College to be a remarkable institution with a visionary mission that is well positioned to continue to serve its different student bodies by building on its enduring strengths while leveraging new opportunities shaped by its global network.

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 Middlebury College is asked, in Fall 2024, to report on four matters related to our standards on *Institutional Resources; Organization and Governance; Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship; Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure; Planning and Evaluation; Students; and The Academic Program.*

We concur with the visiting team that Middlebury College has a “strong financial base” and “ample” facilities to support its programs. Yet, as a result of structural cost issues including the addition of 100 positions between FY2014 and FY2017, the institution has experienced operating deficits since FY2012. In response, we note with approval that progress has since been made to “create a path to financial stability” that involved workforce planning to reduce salary costs across the institution resulting in annual savings of around \$10 million. In addition, we view positively the steps being taken to achieve a balanced budget by FY2021 and to reduce the endowment draw that had been increased to fund the operating deficits; plans are also underway for the next Middlebury Capital Campaign in part to help fund capital expenditures that are projected to be \$175 million over the next decade. We further support the visiting team’s finding that “broad financial understanding and discipline will be critical to the future stability of the institution” and therefore are encouraged to learn of the initiatives being implemented to share financial information with the Middlebury community through open meetings for faculty, staff, and students and the formation of the Faculty Resources Committee. While the College’s enrollment for Fall 2020 is still “trending well” perhaps due to Middlebury’s small size and rural Vermont location, this transparency will be even more important given the potential adverse impact of COVID-19 on the institution’s international operations that already has increased the projected FY2020 deficit. As informed by our standard on *Institutional Resources*, the Fall 2024 interim report will enable the institution to provide evidence of its success to stabilize the College’s financial position.

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 is financially stable. Ostensible financial stability is not achieved at the expense of educational quality. Its stability and viability are not unduly dependent upon vulnerable financial resources or an historically narrow base of support (7.5).

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).

As the institution recognizes and the visiting team validated, Middlebury College is still "growing into ... [its] new governance structure." While several committees were added to engage more faculty in governance issues, we understand that clarity about the "relationship, authority, and responsibility" of the various committees is yet to emerge, and more effective communication among and with the faculty community at large is needed. In addition, issues such as the development of a reliable method of equitably managing teaching loads remain unresolved. At the same time, the existing governance structure does not presently reflect Middlebury's aim to be a globally networked institution as the Institute operates with a separate faculty governance system, and the views of the Schools' largely adjunct faculties are not represented. We ask that the Fall 2024 interim report give emphasis to the institution's continuing development of an effective and transparent system of faculty governance that is reflective of the institution's global network. Our standard on *Organization and Governance* provides this guidance:

The institution's organizational structure, decision-making processes, and policies are clear and consistent with its mission and support institutional effectiveness. The institution's system of governance involves the participation of all appropriate constituencies and includes regular communication among them (3.2).

... The institution's internal governance provides for the appropriate participation of its constituencies, promotes communications, and effectively advances the quality of the institution (3.13).

Through its system of board and internal governance, the institution ensures the appropriate consideration of relevant perspectives; decision-making aligned with expertise and responsibility; and timely action on institutional plans, policies, curricular change, and other key considerations (3.17).

The effectiveness of the institution's organizational structure and system of governance is improved through periodic and systematic review (3.19).

We give credit to Middlebury for its recent creation of a faculty Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that was established to support achievement of its goal to significantly increase the diversity of its faculty and academic staff. Understanding that the institution's success in recruiting and retaining a diverse student body benefits from having a similarly diverse faculty and

staff, the Committee's development of a five-year action plan that is being reviewed by the administration and Faculty Council will provide valuable direction to the effort. The Fall 2024 interim report will afford the institution the opportunity to reflect on its efforts to advance the diversity of its faculty and academic staff, an initiative integral to achieving Middlebury College's mission. This request is in keeping with our standards on *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship and Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure*.

The institution ensures equal employment opportunity consistent with legal requirements and any other dimensions of its choosing; compatible with its mission and purposes, it addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity among its faculty and academic staff (6.5).

The institution adheres to non-discriminatory policies and practices in recruitment, admissions, employment, evaluation, disciplinary action, and advancement. It fosters an inclusive atmosphere within the institutional community that respects and supports people of diverse characteristics and backgrounds (9.5).

We are aware that, in response to declining enrollment at the Middlebury Institute of International Students at Monterey over the past several years, the MBA degree was eliminated, and consideration is being given to expanding the number of hybrid and online programs offered. In addition, to strengthen "reciprocal connections" aligned with Middlebury's strategic direction to enhance its global network, we commend the development of "study away" programs for the College's undergraduate students such as in Environmental Studies that take advantage of faculty expertise at both locations, and of the degree pathways that provide opportunities for Middlebury's undergraduates to complete a master's degree in three additional semesters. We are also pleased to learn that the Institute has been responsive to the feedback of students in its dual degree program with Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) by improving the consistency of language instruction at the program's two instructional sites – Moscow and Vermont – and by providing grant funding to support the enrollment of additional Russian students. In addition, the hybrid Professional Certificate in Spanish Community Interpreting launched in 2019 with 14 students "holds interesting possibilities" to grow enrollment at the Institute. We welcome further information in the Fall 2024 interim report on the institution's success in increasing enrollment at the Middlebury Institute and ask for an update on the implementation of the dual degree program with MGIMO and the Professional Certificate in Spanish Community Interpreting. Our standards on *Planning and Evaluation, Students, and The Academic Program* are relevant here:

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

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 undertakes academic planning and evaluation as part of its overall planning and evaluation to enhance the achievement of institutional mission and program objectives. These activities are realistic and take into account stated goals and available resources. Additions and deletions of programs are consistent with institutional mission and capacity, faculty expertise, student needs, and the availability of sufficient resources required for the development and improvement of academic programs. The institution allocates resources on the basis of its academic planning, needs, and objectives (4.7).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2029 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years.

Dr. Laurie L. Patton
July 1, 2020
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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 Middlebury College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, LeRoy Graham, Associate Provost for Planning, and Andrew Shennan, team representative, 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 George Lee. 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Quigley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" and last name "Quigley" clearly distinguishable.

David Quigley

DQ/sjp

Enclosure

cc: George Lee
Visiting team