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April 4, 2012

Dr. Ronald D. Liebowitz
President
Middlebury College
Old Chapel - 3rd Floor
Middlebury, VT 05753

Dear President Liebowitz:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 1, 2012, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Middlebury College:

that Middlebury College be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit a fifth-year interim report for consideration in Fall 2015;

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

1. implementing a comprehensive approach to the assessment of student learning at the undergraduate level;
2. implementing a system of program review for the graduate degree programs offered through the Middlebury Language School and the Bread Loaf School, with an emphasis on the use of external perspectives;
3. addressing the deferred maintenance needs of the Bread Loaf campus;
4. developing administrative and governance structures to reflect its varied programs and geographic reach, including an update on the evolution of the Middlebury Council and on the College's plans to appoint a chief academic officer with oversight of all academic programs;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2019.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

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

The Commission concurs with the visiting team that while Middlebury College may appear to be a “quintessential New England liberal arts college,” its programs in the fields of language, international studies, and environmental affairs have a global reach and impact. We therefore commend the College for its preparation of a candid self-study that does an exemplary job of encompassing the College’s worldwide programs and campuses. We note with approval that the College’s overarching mission provides a shared identity to Middlebury’s many programs – the Language Schools, the Bread Loaf School of English, the C.V. Starr-Middlebury Schools Abroad, and the Monterey Institute of International Studies – and serves as the context for institutional planning. The College is financially strong, as evidenced by a decade-long record of endowment growth, from \$627 million (FY2001) to \$908 million (FY2011), and a “history of alumni giving that is among the highest in the U.S.” The handling of the 2008 financial crisis by the president and his leadership team is noteworthy, as is the creation of a faculty/administrative committee to build understanding of the College’s financial structure. We commend the commitment of faculty and staff to the success of the College’s undergraduate students that is evident by retention and graduation rates that exceed 90%, and we share the team’s judgment that the continued focus on increasing the diversity of the student body, along with the recent decision to double the number of students recruited through the Posse Program, is admirable. We congratulate Middlebury College’s trustees, senior administration, faculty, students, and staff for an era of innovation and growth which positions the institution well to “develop further synergies across the College’s locations and programs that will benefit students and faculty” in the years to come.

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 the College is asked, in Fall 2015, to report on four matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*, *The Academic Program*, *Physical and Technological Resources*, and *Organization and Governance*.

Along with the team, we commend Middlebury College for its highly regarded and “thoughtfully conceived” undergraduate liberal arts degree programs that incorporate a strong general education component. We are pleased to learn that around 60% of undergraduate students take advantage of the option to study abroad, of which approximately 60% study at a site run by the College. At the same time, we share the team’s concern that the “systematic evaluation of education outcomes” for Middlebury’s undergraduate programs “is still under development.” We understand that use of an independent senior project as a direct measure of student achievement was approved by the faculty in 2008, but that implementation was delayed due to the economic downturn which created uncertainty about the College’s ability to commit to the new faculty positions and revised teaching load guidelines needed to support the initiative. We therefore are gratified to learn that additional staffing resources have since been dedicated to assessment to encourage further progress and note with approval that learning goals for each program now appear on departmental web pages. In addition, we understand that the Educational Affairs Committee plans in the coming year to “focus on implementing senior independent work across all departments and programs” and that it will again assess the teaching resources required. As specified in our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *The Academic Program*, the Fall 2015 report will enable the institution to provide evidence that a comprehensive approach to the assessment of student learning has been implemented at the undergraduate level:

Based on verifiable information, the institution understands what its students have gained as a result of their education and has useful evidence about the success of its recent

graduates. This information is used for planning and resource allocation and to inform the public about the institution (2.7).

The institution implements and provides support for systematic and broad-based assessment of what and how students are learning through their academic program and experiences outside the classroom. Assessment is based on clear statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. Assessment provides useful information that helps the institution to improve the experiences provided for students, as well as to assure that the level of student achievement is appropriate for the degree awarded (4.48).

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).

Expectations for student learning reflect both the mission and character of the institution and general expectations of the larger academic community for the level of degree awarded and the field of study. These expectations include statements that are consistent with the institution's mission in preparing students for further study and employment, as appropriate (4.50).

Among Middlebury's array of intensive summer programs are master's degree programs in six languages and the Doctor of Modern Languages offered through the Middlebury Language School at the Vermont campus and at Mills College in California, and Bread Loaf School's master's degree programs aimed at K-12 teachers of English and language arts. We understand that these respected programs utilize faculty from other institutions, often "well-known and widely cited in their fields," who are selected for their subject area expertise. However, with the exception of the Doctor of Modern Languages program, which was reviewed by an external committee in 2007, we found no evidence of a process of regular program review of these summer degree programs. We seek assurance, in the Fall 2015 report, that the College has implemented a system of program review for these programs and that the review process "includes an external perspective and assessment of their effectiveness" (4.10).

The investment of more than \$180 million in capital projects since 1990 to revitalize Middlebury's main campus in Vermont, in keeping with the College's commitment to environmental sustainability, is commended. We also note with approval that the backlog of deferred maintenance at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, the College's California campus, was largely eliminated as a result of the initial capital investment made as part of the merger. We understand, however, that the maintenance backlog at the Bread Loaf campus in Ripton, Vermont is estimated to be more than \$30 million. The historic nature of the buildings, the site's remote mountainous location, and the active use of the facilities throughout the summer months present challenges for making needed improvements. We therefore are pleased to learn that the College is working to develop a plan to address the accumulated deferred maintenance and has committed to allocating a minimum of \$1 million per year to address the most pressing needs of the Bread Loaf campus. We ask that the Fall 2015 report give emphasis to the progress made to achieve the plan's goal as evidence that the College "identifies and plans the specified resolution of deferred maintenance needs" (8.4).

We concur with the team that, as a result of program expansions, staffing changes, and financial constraints, "Middlebury's organizational structure has yet to catch up with the rapid rate of change with the institution." We understand that the president presides over the College's undergraduate, graduate, and special programs, and that his direct reports include a provost who has authority for the undergraduate academic program, a vice president who oversees the

Language Schools, C.V. Starr-Middlebury Schools Abroad, and the Bread Loaf School of English, and the president of Monterey Institute of International Studies. While we are pleased to learn that the Middlebury Council, which includes representation from all of the College's programs, has been established to "solidify institutional commitment" and to "share strategic initiatives and coordinate new opportunities" across programs, we share the team's concern that no one person has oversight of all academic programs with "responsibility for focusing on synergies among them." The Fall 2015 report will afford the institution an opportunity to update the Commission on its development of administrative and governance structures that reflect the College's varied programs and geographic reach, including an update on the evolution of the Middlebury Council and on the College's plans to appoint a chief academic officer with oversight of all academic programs. We remind you of our standard on *Organization and Governance*:

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 (3.1).

In accordance with established institutional mechanisms and procedures, the chief executive officer and the administration consult with faculty, students, other administrators and staff, and are appropriately responsive to their concerns, needs, and initiatives. The institution's internal governance provides for the appropriate participation of its constituencies, promotes communications, and effectively advances the quality of the institution (3.9).

The institution's chief academic officer is directly responsible to the chief executive officer, and in concert with the faculty and other academic administrators is responsible for the quality of the academic program. The institution's organization and governance structure assure the integrity and quality of academic programming however and wherever offered. Off-campus, continuing education, distance education, correspondence education, international, evening, and week-end programs are clearly integrated and incorporated into the policy formation, and academic oversight, and evaluation system of the institution (3.10).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2019 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. Since Middlebury College delayed its comprehensive by two years, scheduling the comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2019 returns the College to its original evaluation schedule.

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 (via telephone) and Dr. Lawrence S. Bacow, 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. Frederick M. Fritz. The institution is free to release information about the evaluation and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

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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, Director of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Mary Jo Maydew

MJM/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Frederick M. Fritz
Visiting Team

