



November 29, 2022

Dr. Brian Bicknell
President
Manchester Community College
1066 Front Street
Manchester, NH 03102

Dear President Bicknell:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on September 23, 2022, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Manchester Community College and voted to take the following action:

that the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Manchester Community College be accepted;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2027 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2027 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's continued progress in using assessment results for continuous improvement.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Manchester Community College (MCC) was accepted because it responded to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letters of March 29, 2018 and May 17, 2018 and addressed each of the nine standards, including a reflective essay for Standard 8: *Educational Effectiveness* on student learning and success.

The Commission commends Manchester Community College for its well-written and thorough report. We note with favor the considerable progress MCC has made in all five of the areas of emphasis identified for inclusion in the fifth-year report. The strategic planning process is now "driven by leadership to ensure that the resources necessary to achieve more ambitious goals could indeed be allocated." Although work on the next strategic plan was temporarily halted due to the pandemic, we appreciate the fact that a new plan is projected to be completed in AY2023. MCC has also made significant gains in the use of enrollment and retention data for improvement. Daily dashboards, with data disaggregated into categories like age, cohort, total headcount, and credit activity, helps the College track current performance against that of previous years. The

READI Team (Retention, Enrollment and Data Initiatives) also utilizes data and research to inform its focus on “strategic decision-making regarding retention, enrollment, and student success.” The Commission is further gratified to learn of the efforts Manchester Community College has made to increase the diversity of its faculty and staff. Although there has been only a small number of new positions created in the last five years, the College is implementing strategies to attract a more diverse applicant pool whenever a vacancy occurs. Since 2017, four staff positions have been filled by persons of color. We are also pleased to learn that the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee is implementing an unconscious bias training for hiring managers during AY2023. MCC has also continued efforts to improve student success through advising and basic needs support, mental health support, lowering the cost of textbooks through OER, and by expanding its student support services counselor position from a 180-day to a year-round contract.

The Commission is pleased to learn from the reflective essay that Manchester Community College assesses student learning at the course, program, and institutional level. Course outcomes are included on course syllabi, and many departments “evaluate assignments using rubrics that outline specific areas to be evaluated and the performance criteria that apply.” Work is ongoing to map core and program learning outcomes throughout the curriculum, and a pilot project to assess an English Composition “signature assignment” was conducted in Spring 2022. Recently, the College has implemented EAB’s Navigate platform to assist in retention and graduation efforts. While the essay notes that adoption by faculty has been “inconsistent,” MCC reports that use of the platform by faculty and advising staff has made “a significant impact on student success” in its most heavily enrolled programs. We understand the College has experienced a decline in fall-to-fall retention from 78% in 2017 to 62% in 2021, and we therefore note with favor the recent work MCC has conducted to review institutional and disaggregated retention data from Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 to develop strategies to address this decline. Programs with lower-than-average performance were “encouraged to enhance early registration efforts,” and several were selected for “enhanced marketing and enhanced retention efforts.”

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2027 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. In addition to the information included in all self-studies, the Commission asks that the self-study prepared for the comprehensive evaluation give emphasis to a matter related to our standard on *Educational Effectiveness*.

The Commission appreciates Manchester Community College’s candor in acknowledging it has “a long way to go in [its] work to incorporate data into the daily operation of the college” and that it has not yet found “a sustainable means of housing, sharing, and interpreting data, which means that assessment results are often underutilized.” Furthermore, although MCC has administered the Community College Survey of Student Engagement since 2003, no office has been assigned to interpret the data or present it in actionable form to departments. The Commission recognizes that using assessment results effectively for improvement is a matter that will require the institution’s sustained attention over time; hence, we ask that further information on the College’s efforts in this area be provided in the Fall 2027 self-study. We remind you of our standard on *Educational Effectiveness*:

The results of assessment and quantitative measures of student success are a demonstrable factor in the institution’s efforts to improve the curriculum and learning opportunities and results for students (8.8).

The institution integrates the findings of its assessment process and measures of student success into its institutional and program evaluation activities and uses the findings to inform its planning and resource allocation and to establish claims the institution makes to students and prospective students (8.10).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Manchester Community College and hopes its preparation has contributed to institutional improvement. It appreciates your cooperation in 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 of action 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 Kathy Bogle Shields and Marc Rubenstein. 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russell Carey", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

Russell Carey

RC/sjp

cc: Kathy Bogle Shields
Marc Rubenstein

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions