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June 18, 2018

Dr. Kathleen McCartney  
President  
Smith College  
College Hall 201  
Northampton, MA 01063

Dear President McCartney:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on April 20, 2018, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Smith College:

that Smith College be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit an interim (fifth-year) report for consideration in Fall 2022;

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

1. enhancing its information and technology systems with emphasis on integrating and using data across the College;
2. achieving its goals for diversity, equity, inclusion, and campus culture with attention to ensuring that services and resources are sufficient to support its goals;
3. implementing its plans to review its graduate programs and evaluate the relationship between undergraduate and graduate education at the College;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2027.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

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

The Commission joins the visiting team in commending Smith College for its well-written and candid self-study that documents the many ways in which the College is achieving its mission by "balancing the need to address the

challenges facing institutions of higher education with the responsibility of educating students to grapple with the world's challenges." We are especially gratified to learn of Smith's Board-approved five-year strategic plan, *Lives of Distinction and Purpose: A Plan for Smith*, that was developed with broad-based participation by the campus community and provides a framework for setting institutional priorities and assessing outcomes over the coming decade. As the team confirmed, and we note positively, Smith's Board of Trustees is well informed and engaged; the leadership team is dedicated and capable; and the institution's longstanding governance structures are effective. Further, exemplary faculty and staff, relevant high-quality academic programs, and robust student support services contribute to consistently high retention and graduation rates (94% and 87%, respectively) and student success. We note with favor that about 74% of Smith graduates continue on to graduate or professional school; post-graduation employment rates average about 91%; and licensure passage rates average 85% on the Massachusetts Educator Licensure examination and 93% on the Social Work Licensure Examination. The institution's Aa1/AA+ credit rating and \$1.6 billion endowment are impressive, as is the College's success in raising \$486 million through its Women for the World campaign – funding that will “fuel a range of initiatives and ensure Smith's ability to educate exceptional women to be engaged global citizens and leaders” well into the future.

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 the College is asked, in Fall 2022, to report on three matters related to our standards on *Institutional Resources*; *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*; *The Academic Program*; and *Planning and Evaluation*.

As the visiting team observed during its visit and the institution candidly acknowledges in its self-study, “the central IT organization and the services it provides need to more systematically and effectively support the college.” We are therefore pleased to learn that, under the leadership of a new Vice President for Information Technology, the College is “moving swiftly to address these very significant needs in all administrative technology systems and many academic ones.” We particularly note with approval that the College has increased funding for information technology resources in recent years; a Committee on Business Process and Technology (CBPT) has been established and is currently reviewing systems and practices for technical reliability; and “goals for improvements are outlined in the 10-year IT capital plan, the CBPT road map and the 2017 IT strategic plan.” We look forward, in the Fall 2022 interim report, to receiving an update on Smith's progress in this area as evidence that “[t]he institution has sufficient and appropriate information ... and technological resources, [and that the College] devotes sufficient resources to maintain and enhance its information ... and technological resources” (7.21).

We also appreciate the College's frank assessment that preparation for the pending retirement of faculty from various departments will “entail welcoming transformation in our disciplines, research and liberal arts curricula, as well as the creation of more inclusive communities of learning and teaching in order to maintain our academic excellence.” In Spring 2014, the institution's Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP) published a Five-Year Framework that “provides CAP members the context in which to make necessary annual decisions, and provides chairs and directors with a guide for curricular planning and use of staff,” and we are heartened to learn of the “significant gains” Smith has made in hiring a cohort of diverse faculty in fields identified by CAP. In addition, Smith has recently hired a Vice President for Inclusion and Equity who will take a leadership role in promoting the College's diversification goals, and the institution's strategic plan details the services and resources that will be required to support its objectives. The Fall 2022 interim report will afford Smith an opportunity to demonstrate that “it addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity among its faculty and academic staff” (6.5). We are further informed here by our standard on *The Academic Program*:

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).

We further understand from the visiting team that graduate education at Smith College is offered through the School of Social Work which, from its founding, has operated independently from the College. While the team confirmed that baccalaureate and graduate-level programs are commensurate in quality, it also observed that the relationship between graduate education and undergraduate education at Smith is unclear. The Commission therefore notes with approval that the College recognizes the need to systematically evaluate its graduate programs and, under the leadership of the Provost, a task force will be established and graduate programs will be reviewed "in the near future." We also support the team's conclusion that with plans in place to use the strategic reallocation of faculty FTE to advance Smith's academic priorities, it may be opportune to review whether the current portfolio of graduate degrees is consistent with these priorities. We look forward, through the Fall 2022 interim report, to learning of Smith's success in implementing its plans to review its graduate programs and evaluate the relationship between undergraduate and graduate education at the College to illustrate that Smith "has a demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning" (2.5). We are further informed here by our standard on *The Academic Program* (cited above) and below:

The institution develops, approves, administers, and on a regular cycle reviews its academic programs under institutional policies that are implemented by designated bodies with established channels of communication and control. Review of academic programs includes evidence of student success and program effectiveness and incorporates an external perspective. Faculty have a substantive voice in these matters (4.6).

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.

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 Smith College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Danielle Carr Ramdath, Associate Dean of the College, and Christina Paxson, 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 Ms. Deborah Duncan. 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.

Dr. Kathleen McCartney  
June 18, 2018  
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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 that reads "David P. Angel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

David P. Angel

DPA/jm

Enclosure

cc: Ms. Deborah Duncan  
Visiting Team