



March 27, 2023

Mr. Timothy D. Crowley  
President  
Northern Maine Community College  
33 Edgemont Drive  
Presque Isle, ME 04769

Dear President Crowley:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 3, 2023, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the interim (fifth-year) report and the requested information regarding distance education submitted by Northern Maine Community College and voted to take the following action:

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

that the requested information regarding distance education submitted by Northern Maine Community College be accepted;

that Northern Maine Community College be granted limited approval for distance education;

that the institution be reminded that any plans to offer new programs 50% or more online need to be submitted to the Commission for approval prior to implementation;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Spring 2028 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Spring 2028 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in:

1. implementing its strategic plan;
2. implementing its assessment plans, including plans to disaggregate data and use assessment results for improvement;
3. continuing to align its efforts with those of the Maine Community College System, including implementation of the new student information system and learning management system for assessment, and development of educational pathways.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Northern Maine Community College was accepted because it responded to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letters of January 14, 2019, February 17, 2021, and April 20, 2021 and addressed each of the nine standards, including a reflective essay for Standard 8: *Educational Effectiveness* on student learning and success.

The Commission commends Northern Maine Community College (NMCC) for its thoughtful, detailed interim report. We appreciate that the College offers more than 30 academic programs which “give students the technical knowledge and skills as well as the essential general education” needed to pursue a career. In addition, the institution has a “robust” workforce development division to meet the needs of local employers. The Commission is gratified to learn of NMCC’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion as evident from its efforts to date that have included “expanding cultural diversity, refugee resettlement, and education of the community.” We note with favor the College’s progress in collecting and analyzing data leading to an “ongoing process” of program review and development. The Commission further acknowledges that a “more systematic approach has been developed to coordinate professional development among the faculty.” Lastly, we concur that NMCC “keep[s] the mission and values at the forefront of [its] decisions and actions.”

The Commission also appreciates Northern Maine Community College’s efforts to improve student learning and success and thanks the institution for its reflective essay detailing the institution’s progress. We note that the College has “clear, verifiable statements of learning outcomes” for its courses and programs. The Commission understands that “each department continues to track its transfer and progression rates” and each program uses enrollment, persistence, and retention data to “assess its effectiveness” as part of its program review process.

The requested information regarding distance education submitted by Northern Maine Community College was also accepted and the institution granted limited approval for distance education because the information was responsive to our request of October 11, 2022 and provided evidence of the institution’s capacity to offer distance education programming in a manner consistent with the *Standards for Accreditation* and relevant Commission policies. The Commission thanks the College for the additional information about its distance education plans. We appreciate that NMCC has “implemented additional technology” to support its distance education offerings, including the upgrade of two technology classrooms. We also note with favor Northern Maine Community College’s efforts to “provide professional development opportunities” for faculty teaching online. The Commission understands that online courses will be assessed as part of the institution’s program review process.

Given Northern Maine Community College’s limited approval for distance education, we remind you that any plans to offer new programs 50% or more online need to be submitted to the Commission for approval prior to implementation, in keeping with the Commission’s Policy on Substantive Change.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2028 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. The items the Commission asks to be given special emphasis within the self-study prepared for the comprehensive evaluation are matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*, *Educational Effectiveness*, and *Institutional Resources*.

The Commission appreciates that the College’s Strategic Plan was developed in 2017 and “designed as a 5-year road map” which guided the institution through the pandemic. We are further gratified to learn that a committee is being formed and, using a “collaborative and transparent approach,” the institution’s goal is to have “a new 5-year plan developed (and approved) by the greater campus community” by the Fall 2023 semester. The self-study prepared

in advance of the Spring 2028 comprehensive evaluation will provide an opportunity for NMCC to update the Commission on its success in “implementing the results of its planning” (2.5) in this regard. We are further guided here by our standard on *Planning and Evaluation*:

The institution plans beyond a short-term horizon, including strategic planning that involves realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. The results of strategic planning are implemented in all units of the institution through financial, academic, enrollment, and other supporting plans (2.3).

The Commission understands that Northern Maine Community College is, as noted above, collecting and analyzing data for student success, and we note with favor the College’s use of “rates of progression, transfer, retention, and graduation across all programs of study.” We concur that it will be helpful to disaggregate data to “better indicate the performance of students in specific disciplines,” and we acknowledge NMCC’s candid observation that it “needs to do a better job closing the loop.” As informed by our standard on *Educational Effectiveness*, we look forward to learning, through the Spring 2028 self-study, of the College’s progress in implementing its assessment plans and using the results for improvement:

Assessment of learning is based on verifiable statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. The process of understanding what and how students are learning focuses on the course, competency, program, and institutional level. Assessment has the support of the institution’s academic and institutional leadership and the systematic involvement of faculty and appropriate staff (8.3).

The institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods and direct and indirect measures to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students, employing external perspectives including, as appropriate, benchmarks and peer comparisons (8.5).

The institution defines measures of student success and levels of achievement appropriate to its mission, modalities and locations of instruction, and student body, including any specifically recruited populations. These measures include rates of progression, retention, transfer, and graduation; default and loan repayment rates; licensure passage rates; and employment. The institution ensures that information about student success is easily accessible on its website (8.6).

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).

As part of the Maine Community College System (MCCS), Northern Maine Community College aligns its efforts with those of the System. We therefore appreciate learning that MCCS plans to move to a new student information system and has “assembled a committee to create and guide learning outcome usage” in its learning management system, Brightspace, “that will “ensure appropriate data collection at the system level.” The Commission also notes that MCCS “has directed its campuses to develop educational pathways through specific areas of study.” We welcome further information, through the Spring 2028 self-study, about Northern Maine Community College’s success in aligning its efforts with those of the Maine Community College System. Our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *Educational Effectiveness* (both cited above) and *Institutional Resources* provide guidance here:

The institution effectively uses information technology to ensure its efficient ability to plan, administer, and evaluate its program and services (7.26).

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The Commission expressed appreciation for the reports submitted by Northern Maine Community College and hopes their 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 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 Joyce Maker and David Daigler. The institution is free to release information about the reports 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". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Russell Carey

RC/sjp

cc: Joyce Maker  
David Daigler

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions