



April 4, 2023

Dr. Katherine Bergeron
President
Connecticut College
270 Mohegan Avenue
New London, CT 06320-4125

Dear President Bergeron:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 3, 2023, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the interim report submitted by Connecticut College and voted to take the following action:

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

that the College submit a report in Spring 2024 that gives emphasis to the institution's success in:

1. implementing its financial plans and strategies;
2. implementing changes to and evaluating the effectiveness of its faculty governance processes;
3. achieving its goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion;

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 continued success in addressing the matters specified for attention in the Spring 2024 report as well as its success in implementing its strategic plan.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Connecticut College was accepted because it responded to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letters of December 20, 2018 and October 26, 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 Connecticut College for its thoughtful, comprehensive interim report that was developed through an inclusive process that engaged students, faculty, staff, academic leadership, and the Board of Trustees. We appreciate that the College's programs are focused on "developing the intellectual, creative, civic, and professional capacities of every student." The Commission notes with favor Connecticut College's "signature core curriculum, Connections," which provides

opportunities for students to “make connections across their coursework, research internships, and professional experiences.” We are gratified to learn that, upon adoption of its current strategic plan, *Building on Strength*, the College developed a Campus Master Plan, Campus Sustainability Plan, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan, and an Action Plan for Competitive Success in Athletics. A comprehensive fundraising campaign, *Defy Boundaries*, went public in October 2021 and, by December 2022, had raised nearly \$250 million towards its goal of \$300 million. The Commission also notes with favor the recently established Faculty Fellows Program, with two faculty appointed as mentoring fellows. Lastly, we acknowledge the College’s commitment to supporting faculty in the development of Open Education Resources.

The Commission also appreciates Connecticut College’s ongoing efforts to understand and improve the student learning experience. Particularly noteworthy is its Connections core curriculum (noted above) which culminates with an All-College Symposium where, as a culminating senior-year experience, students “showcase the connections they have made” among academic and co-curricular experiences “along with the questions that animated their choices along the way.” The Commission acknowledges the direct assessment of student learning conducted by faculty and staff which has identified areas for improvement. We are also gratified to learn that the College is working with academic departments to “pilot exit surveys of their graduating seniors” to provide additional data on student learning. Particularly noteworthy is the institution’s retention rates which, even with lower-than-usual rates due to COVID, range between 86% and 91% for its fall cohorts, with graduation rates ranging from 81.1% to 84% over the past five years.

The three items the institution is asked to report on in Spring 2024 are related to our standards on *Institutional Resources; Planning and Evaluation; Organization and Governance; and Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure*.

The Commission is gratified to note that, in 2022, Connecticut College’s senior administrative team “began work on a five-year plan for financial resilience” which focuses on “key drivers of revenue and expenditures.” We understand the plan outlines six financial strategies including: enhancing student enrollment and financial aid; improving student retention and persistence; and establishing new revenue streams. In addition, the College is in the midst of a fundraising campaign, noted above. The Commission looks forward to learning, through the Spring 2024 report, of the institution’s success in implementing its financial plans and strategies. We are informed here by our standards on *Institutional Resources* and *Planning and Evaluation*:

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 plans for and responds to financial and other contingencies, establishes feasible priorities, and develops a realistic course of action to achieve identified objectives. Institutional decision-making, particularly the allocation of resources, is consistent with planning priorities (2.4).

We appreciate Connecticut College’s continued efforts to improve and evaluate its governance structures. The Commission understands that, in 2018, monthly faculty meetings became “a space where faculty alone could deliberate fully and candidly on faculty matters,” and a new monthly staff-and-faculty meeting was created to create a “forum to discuss important College business.” We note that this meeting, from the staff perspective, has been a “success.” We are pleased that the College will “continue to monitor the effectiveness” of this approach and “engage in ongoing collaborative dialogue to enrich [the] culture of shared governance.” As guided by our standard

on *Organization and Governance*, we seek assurance, through the Spring 2024 report, of the institution's success in this matter:

The institution has a system of governance that facilitates the accomplishment of its mission and purposes and supports institutional effectiveness and integrity. Through its organizational design and governance structure, the institution creates and sustains an environment that encourages teaching, learning, service, scholarship, and where appropriate, research and creative activity. It demonstrates administrative capacity by assuring provision of support adequate for the appropriate functioning of each organizational component (*Organization and Governance*, Statement of the Standard).

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

The Commission is pleased to learn, as noted above, of the College's development of an Equity and Inclusion Action Plan that has "specific actions aimed at enhancing faculty, student, and staff diversity," including a commitment to "study and address equity, access, and inclusion in the culture and practices" of academic affairs. Connecticut College has also presented the results of its diversity and equity campus climate survey to faculty, staff, and students to prompt "data-informed discussions about next steps the College can take ... to make the Connecticut College community an ever more welcoming place to its members." We anticipate being apprised, through the Spring 2024 report, of the College's success in achieving its diversity, equity, and inclusion goals, as expressed in our standard on *Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure*:

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).

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 College is asked, in the Spring 2028 self-study to give emphasis to its continued success in addressing the areas specified above for attention in the Spring 2024 report. The Commission recognizes that these matters do not lend themselves to rapid resolution and will require the College's sustained attention over time; hence, we ask that further information be provided in the self-study. In addition, the Commission asks that one additional matter related to our standard on *Planning and Evaluation* be given emphasis in the Spring 2028 self-study.

We appreciate the progress Connecticut College has made to date in executing its strategic plan, as noted above. The Commission is gratified to learn that the strategic plan priorities will continue to "ground the coming years" as the College continues to implement the plan. We look forward to learning, as part of the Spring 2028 self-study, of Connecticut College's success in "implementing the results of its planning" (2.5).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Connecticut 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 on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Debo P. Adegbile. The institution is free to release information about the report and the Commission's action to others, in

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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,



Russell C. Carey

RCC/jm

cc: Mr. Debo P. Adegbile

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions