



December 5, 2018

Dr. James P. Lombella  
Interim President  
Tunxis Community College  
271 Scott Swamp Road  
Farmington, CT 06032-3187

Dear President Lombella:

I write to inform you that at its meeting on September 21, 2018, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the report submitted by Tunxis Community College and took the following action:

that the report submitted by Tunxis Community College be accepted;

that a focused evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2019 and the report prepared in advance of that evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in:

1. assuring the sufficiency of resources and personnel, including faculty, to support academic programs and student services in light of the number of shared positions and consolidation efforts;
2. implementing planned initiatives to improve retention and graduation rates;

that the College include with the Fall 2019 report the Data First Forms for Standard 8: *Educational Effectiveness*;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2021 be confirmed;

that the Commission notes the proposal by the President of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system regarding a possible reconfiguration of community colleges by 2023 and informs Tunxis Community College that the advancement of those plans may result in changes to the scheduled monitoring of the College.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The report submitted by Tunxis Community College (TCC) was accepted because it was generally responsive to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letters of February 8, 2017 and July 18, 2017.

DAVID GUGLEY (Chair) (2021)  
Boston College

GEORGE W. TETLER (Vice Chair) (2019)  
Worcester MA

HARRY E. DUMAY (2019)  
College of Our Lady of the Elms

JEFFREY R. GODLEY (2019)  
Groton, CT

COLLEEN C. PANTALONE (2019)  
Hartford School University

MARINO SILVER (2019)  
Benedict College

MASSABRA S. ARDINGER (2020)  
Trustee Member, Concord, NH

RUSSELL GARLY (2020)  
Brown University

FRANCESCO C. CESAREO (2020)  
Assumption College

J. JAVIER CEVALLOS (2020)  
Framingham State University

RICK DANIELS (2020)  
Gahasset, MA

DOUG D. DEHAYES (2020)  
University of Rhode Island

DWAYNE ENDINGER (2020)  
Banker Hill Community College

THOMAS B. EDWARDS (2020)  
Tunxis College

RHEBECY M. GOTT-CREWS (2020)  
Col. University

MARTIN J. HOWARD (2020)  
Proton University

SUSAN D. HURD (2020)  
Manchester Community College (MCC)

JEFFREY S. SOLOMON (2020)  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

CLEAREN BAKER (2021)  
Litchfield, ME

KATHERINE BERGERON (2021)  
Canaan Valley College

PETER F. EBEL (2021)  
Trustee Member, Boston, MA

GREGORY W. FOWLER (2021)  
Southern New Hampshire University

DEBBIE B. HANNO (2021)  
Wheaton College

LUCY S. HSU (2021)  
Johnson & Wales University

CHERYL KENNEDY (2021)  
Berkshire Community College

ABDULLAH A. SEIER (2021)  
Lebanese American University

NEIL D. STEINBERG (2021)  
Providence, RI

JOHN M. SWEENEY (2021)  
Providence College

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The Commission appreciates the update provided by Tunxis Community College about its progress in addressing the two matters specified for attention in the report: the sufficiency of resources and personnel to support programs and services and the implementation of initiatives to improve retention and graduation rates. We understand that TCC currently shares four leadership positions with Asnuntuck Community College (ACC): president; executive assistant to the president; dean of workforce development, continuing education, and marketing; and dean of strategic initiatives, enrollment management, and institutional assessment, who also serves as the interim dean of administration at ACC. The two colleges also share eight additional management positions, including the director of institutional research and the acting director of information technologies. We note that for the Fall 2017 semester the institutions also shared a dean of academics but because “the complexities of managing two schools’ academic divisions proved too difficult for one person to manage,” each College appointed its own chief academic officer. The report notes the benefits that have resulted from sharing positions with ACC, including \$1.0 million in savings, but also candidly acknowledges the challenges that have resulted from these arrangements as well as from staffing losses in information technology where “staffing has grown thin” and the business office where the loss of five full-time positions in the past two years has caused remaining staff to “struggle” to meet students’ needs. We are pleased to learn that a system-wide IT initiative is expected to “streamline processes and system support” and that the business office was recently given approval to hire two full-time clerical positions. TCC has also reorganized reporting relationships between departments and deans to enhance effectiveness and has hired three additional full-time staff in enrollment management and financial aid as well as four new faculty members. With those new faculty hires, the College has filled 54 of the 63 full-time faculty positions it has available.

The report submitted by Tunxis Community College also candidly describes the institution’s challenges with respect to enrollment and finances, with enrollment declines from 2014-2017 and net assets of -\$1.8 million in FY2017. We note with favor that, following these three years of declining enrollment and revenue, FTE enrollment increased for both Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 thanks to an “aggressive marketing campaign” and provided resources to support the new faculty and staff hires described above. We understand that an increased allocation from the state will enable the College to have a balanced budget in FY2019 and that longer-term budget relief is expected to come from the anticipated transition to a “one-college model” for the 12 community colleges in Connecticut.

With respect to retention and graduation rates, the report submitted by Tunxis Community College describes seven continuing programs and 12 new initiatives designed to address student persistence. Some of these – the Transfer Articulation Project and the degree normalization policy, for example – are system-wide efforts while others, such as programming changes, enhanced student services, and “Project Graduation,” are specific to the institution. TCC is “optimistic” that these many initiatives will result in increases in full- and part-time retention rates and graduation rates, most recently at 60%, 46%, and 17%, respectively.

The Commission asks that Tunxis Community College undergo a focused evaluation in Fall 2019 to assess its continued progress in addressing the two matters specified for attention in the Fall 2018 progress report. While we appreciate that TCC has “taken every effort possible to shield students from budget impacts,” we are concerned that the long-term effects of reductions in staffing and the number of shared positions with Asnuntuck Community College may compromise the College’s ability to provide high-quality academic programs and services to students, especially if enrollment continues to increase. The Fall 2019 evaluation will afford the institution an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the shared positions and services and to provide evidence that these arrangements are consistent with the expectations articulated in the Commission’s standards on *Organization and Governance*; *Students*; *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*; and *Institutional Resources*:

The board appoints and periodically reviews the performance of the chief executive officer whose full-time or major responsibility is to the institution (3.10).

The chief executive officer, through an appropriate administrative structure, effectively manages the institution so as to fulfill its purposes and objectives and establishes the means to assess the effectiveness of the institution. The chief executive officer manages and allocates resources in keeping with institutional purposes and objectives and assesses the effectiveness of the institution. The chief executive officer assures that the institution employs faculty and staff sufficient in role, number, and qualifications appropriate to the institution's mission, size, and scope (3.12).

The institution offers an array of student services, including physical and mental health services, appropriate to its mission and the needs and goals of its students. It recognizes the variations in services that are appropriate for residential students, at the main campus, at off-campus locations, and for distance education programs as well as the differences in circumstances and goals of students pursuing degrees (5.9).

The institution provides advising and academic support services appropriate to the student body. The institution's faculty and professional staff collectively have sufficient interaction with students outside of class to promote students' academic achievement and provide academic and career guidance (5.10).

The institution ensures that individuals responsible for student services are qualified by formal training and work experience and organizationally placed to represent and address the needs of students effectively. Personnel, facilities, technology, and funding are adequate to implement the institution's student services policies and procedures (5.17).

There are an adequate number of faculty and academic staff, including librarians, advisors, and instructional designers, whose time commitment to the institution is sufficient to assure the accomplishment of class and out-of-class responsibilities essential for the fulfillment of institutional mission and purposes. Responsibilities include instruction, accessibility to students, and the systematic understanding of effective teaching/learning processes and outcomes in courses and programs for which they share responsibility; additional duties may include, e.g., student advisement, academic planning, and participation in policy-making, course and curricular development, research, and institutional governance (6.2).

The institution employs sufficient and qualified personnel to fulfill its mission (7.1).

The institution preserves and enhances available financial resources sufficient to support its mission. It manages its financial resources and allocates them in a way that reflects its mission and purposes. It demonstrates the ability to respond to financial emergencies and unforeseen circumstances (7.4).

The institution is financially stable. Ostensible financial stability is not achieved at the expense of educational quality. Its stability and viability are not unduly dependent upon vulnerable financial resources or an historically narrow base of support (7.5).

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).

We also look forward to learning, through the Fall 2019 focused evaluation, of the success of initiatives described in the progress report in improving retention and graduation rates. At the time the Fall 2018 report was submitted, it was too soon to assess the effectiveness of many of these efforts; hence, we seek an update in Fall 2019. Tunxis Community College is requested to include the Data First Forms for Standard 8: *Educational Effectiveness* with its report to provide further information, including trends over time, about its retention and graduation rates and other measures of student success. Our standards on *Students* and *Educational Effectiveness* are relevant here:

The institution's goals for retention and graduation reflect institutional purposes, and the results are used to inform recruitment and the review of programs and services (5.6).

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 (8.6).

The institution uses additional quantitative measures of success, such as further education, civic participation, religious formation, and others, as appropriate to its mission, to understand the success of its recent graduates. Information from students and former students is regularly considered (8.7).

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

Finally, the scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2021 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years.

The Commission notes the proposal by the President of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system regarding a possible reconfiguration of the community colleges by 2023. Such a reorganization could result in a change in the schedule of monitoring of Tunxis Community College.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Tunxis Community College and hopes that its preparation 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.

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 on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Matt Fleury and Mr. Mark E. Ojakian. 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.

Dr. James P. Lombella  
December 5, 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 cursive script that reads "David Quigley".

David Quigley

DQ/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Matt Fleury  
Mr. Mark E. Ojakian