



November 23, 2021

Dr. Elsa M. Núñez  
President  
Eastern Connecticut State University  
83 Windham Street  
Willimantic, CT 06226-2295

Dear President Núñez:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on September 24, 2021, the New England Commission of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Eastern Connecticut State University:

that Eastern Connecticut State University be continued in accreditation;

that the institution submit an interim (fifth-year) report by August 15, 2025 for consideration in Fall 2025;

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

- 1) implementing and assessing its Liberal Arts Core;
- 2) integrating evaluation and assessment with planning and resource allocation;
- 3) achieving its enrollment goals;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2030.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

Eastern Connecticut State University is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

The Commission commends Eastern Connecticut State University (Eastern or ECSU) for its comprehensive, candid, and data-rich self-study. We are gratified to note from the report of the visiting team that ECSU's mission statement is "widely known and used on campus" and is actualized in the curriculum through high impact practices such as undergraduate research and service learning. The Commission understands that the University has a "strong tradition of strategic planning;" the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan adopted in Spring 2020 prioritizes assessment, data analytics, and the development and implementation of a marketing plan. We appreciate learning from the visiting team report of the progress made by Eastern "in growing a culture of assessment that includes collecting evidence and starting to review assessment data to determine and implement improvements." Particularly noteworthy are the

initiatives to improve retention and graduation rates including Eastern's Opportunity Programs, the expansion of the Office of Planning and Institutional Research, and the creation of a Dean of Academic Analytics position. We further concur with the visiting team that the institution has "high quality physical and technological facilities." Lastly, it is clear that with its strong leadership team and dedicated faculty and staff, Eastern Connecticut State University is well-positioned to engage students in a "transformative, liberal arts learning experience" 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 University is asked, in Fall 2025, to report on three matters related to our standards on *The Academic Program, Planning and Evaluation*, and *Students*.

We understand that Eastern Connecticut State University is in the process of revising its Liberal Arts Core curriculum. The Commission is gratified to learn that the University's Committee on the Liberal Arts Core plans to present the new curriculum to the University Senate in Spring 2023, with the expectation that the new Core will be in place for students in Fall 2023. The Commission asks that the Fall 2025 interim report give emphasis to the institution's success in implementing and assessing its Liberal Arts Core as informed by our standard on *The Academic Program*:

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 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).

Each undergraduate program includes a general education requirement and a major or concentration requirement. At the baccalaureate level, curricula include substantial requirements at the advanced undergraduate level, with appropriate prerequisites. The institution also affords undergraduate students the opportunity to pursue knowledge and understanding through unrestricted electives (4.14).

The Commission concurs with the visiting team that, as noted above, Eastern has "made great progress in the collecting and use of data and the use of various evaluation tools." We are gratified to learn that the University created a working group to develop projected budgets for each strategic plan initiative and prioritize those initiatives. The working group's recommendations will "inform future budget discussions." The Commission looks forward to learning, through the Fall 2025 interim report, of Eastern Connecticut State University's "success in using the results of its evaluation activities to inform planning, changes in programs and services, and resource allocation" (2.8).

The Commission understands that Eastern's enrollment has declined from a headcount of 1,606 in FY2018 to 1,441 in FY2021. We are, therefore, gratified to note that the institution will begin working on a formal enrollment management plan that will "include discussion of realistic enrollment targets, which will also inform future discussions of the budget." The Fall 2025 interim report will provide Eastern Connecticut State University an opportunity to assure the Commission that it "sets and achieves realistic goals to enroll students who are broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve" (*Students, Statement of the Standard*).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2030 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. Since Eastern Connecticut State University delayed its comprehensive evaluation by a semester, scheduling the next evaluation in Fall 2030 returns the institution to its original review schedule.

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 Eastern Connecticut State University and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, William Salka, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Mel Netzhammer, 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 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 Matt Fleury and Terrence Cheng.

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.

If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Lawrence M. Schall, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



George W. Tetler  
GWT/sjp

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions

cc: Matt Fleury  
Terrence Cheng  
Visiting Team