



January 31, 2023

Ms. Joyce M. Judy  
President  
Community College of Vermont  
PO Box 489  
Montpelier, VT 05601-0489

Dear President Judy:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on November 17, 2023, the New England Commission of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Community College of Vermont:

that Community College of Vermont be continued in accreditation;

that the Fall 2023 visit to assess implementation of the College's prison education program be confirmed;

that the institution submit an interim (fifth-year) report by January 15, 2027 for consideration in Spring 2027;

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

- 1) implementing strategies to enhance student success, including ensuring the consistency of assessment and achieving its goals for retention and graduation;
- 2) implementing changes to its organizational structure as well as responding to changes resulting from the Vermont State College System initiative;
- 3) continuing to implement its strategic plan;
- 4) engaging faculty in academic initiatives and establishing a schedule for faculty and staff evaluations;
- 5) implementing initiatives to support the state of Vermont's goal to have 70% of its workforce hold a postsecondary credential of value by 2025;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Spring 2032.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

Community College of Vermont is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

The Commission commends Community College of Vermont (CCV) for its thorough and well written self-study. We note with favor that, during a time that saw significant national and regional downward trends in community college enrollment, CCV experienced a 10% enrollment increase from Fall 2020 to Fall 2021. In addition, the institution received a \$4.5 million award from the federal government to expand its work with correctional institutions and a \$1 million gift from a private donor to enhance programming directed towards single parents. As noted in the team report, while CCV is a tuition-dependent institution, “with 76 percent of FY21 unrestricted revenue coming from tuition and fees,” the College’s planning and a conservative approach to budgeting have resulted in “financial stability and the ability to pursue opportunities that support the institution’s long-term sustainability.” The institution has been able to lower its historically high three-year student default rate from 23% to 12.2% in FY2018 by contracting with Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, “proactive outreach” from admissions counselors, and “the suspension of repayment” related to the pandemic. Moreover, the percentage of students graduating with debt decreased from 41% in 2016 to 30% in 2020. The Commission understands that the College created a new position, initially titled Executive Director of Human Resources, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), but recently updated to Dean of People and Culture and also established a DEI committee which is co-chaired by the Dean and a faculty member. Lastly, we are pleased to learn from the visiting team that CCV students “spoke of the quality of classes, affordability, [and] responsiveness of faculty.” With its strong and visionary presidential leadership, talented and committed board, faculty, staff, and students, Community College of Vermont is well positioned to fulfill its mission to support and challenge “all students in meeting their educational goals through an abiding commitment to access, affordability, and student success” well into the future.

The Commission confirms the Fall 2023 visit to assess implementation of CCV’s prison education program. We refer you to our letter of October 12, 2022 which specifies matters to receive attention in the report prepared for the visit.

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 Community College of Vermont is asked, in Spring 2027, to report on five matters related to our standards on *Educational Effectiveness; Organization and Governance; Institutional Resources; Planning and Evaluation; and Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*.

We appreciate the considerable attention that Community College of Vermont has devoted to student success initiatives over the past several years. Originating from the mission statement and woven through the admissions process, the design of programs and learning outcomes, faculty development, student support services, academic advising, and well-integrated within the strategic plan, CCV clearly demonstrates “in both word and deed that this is a student-centered institution and that the focus on student success is an important value college wide.” However, the Commission concurs with the visiting team that “consistency in the assessment of learning needs to be embedded more widely,” and we are pleased to learn that the College plans to create “a two-year plan to engage faculty in improving student outcomes” as well as to “recruit, track, and assess faculty participation in training and development opportunities ... to increase utilization of existing opportunities.” We further note that fall-to-fall retention rates have traditionally been below the national average at CCV and have fluctuated over the past five years. Rates for full-time students have ranged from a 2016 high of 60% to a low of 49% in 2018, while those for part-time students ranged from a 2016 high of 51% to a low of 34% in both 2017 and 2019. Three-year graduation rates have ranged from a low of 14% for the Fall 2013 cohort to a high of 24% for the Fall 2017 cohort. We appreciate CCV’s commitment to addressing its overall retention and graduation rates as well as its efforts to disaggregate data and identify student success gaps within the populations

served. The Commission looks forward to learning, through the Spring 2027 interim report, of the College's success in implementing strategies to enhance student success including ensuring the consistency of assessment and achieving its goals for retention and graduation. We are guided here by our standard on *Educational Effectiveness*:

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 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 Commission understands that, in 2019, Community College of Vermont adopted changes to its organizational structure by splitting the long-standing Coordinator of Instruction and Advisement role into two different positions: Coordinator of Student Advising (CSAs) and Coordinator of Teaching and Learning (CTLs). There are 24 CSAs focused primarily on students while the 16 CTLs focus on the hiring, supporting, and evaluating faculty. This change is in alignment with the fourth pillar of the College's 2018-2028 Strategic Plan which focuses on increasing the College's "organizational capacity and sustainability." Simultaneously, CCV has been playing an active role within the Vermont State College System's (VSCS) effort to consolidate its three state universities into Vermont State College (VSC). We are pleased to learn that "CCV's president and VSCS Transformation team members will define and cultivate CCV's role within the new VSCS two institution organizational structure" and, while this initiative is not designed to impact CCV directly, the Commission seeks assurance that the significant commitment of human capital being allocated to support the creation of VSC does not diminish CCV's ability to achieve its mission. In keeping with our standards on *Organization and Governance* and *Institutional Resources*, the Spring 2027 interim report will afford the institution an opportunity to update the Commission on the impact of CCV's recent changes to its organizational structure as well as the impact of the Vermont State College System initiative:

The institution's organizational structure, decision-making processes, and policies are clear and consistent with its mission and support institutional effectiveness. The institution's system of governance involves the participation of all appropriate constituencies and includes regular communication among them (3.2).

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

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

As Community College of Vermont is approaching the halfway point in its ten-year strategic plan, we are pleased to learn that "the College intend[ed] to re-evaluate several indicators and goals at the five-year mark, as a way to ensure that the strategic plan remains both relevant and manageable." The Commission shares the concern raised by the visiting team that the Strategic Plan 2018-2028 "has no metrics" which creates a "disconnect[]" between the plan's strategic pillars and strategic metrics such as retention. We look forward to learning, through the Spring

2027 interim report, of CCV's continued success in implementing its Strategic Plan 2018-2028, as specified in our standard on *Planning and Evaluation*:

The institution undertakes planning and evaluation to accomplish and improve the achievement of its mission and purposes. It identifies its planning and evaluation priorities and pursues them effectively (*Planning and Evaluation*, Statement of the Standard).

The institution has a demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning (2.5).

The Commission is pleased to learn that Community College of Vermont has made strides to increase faculty engagement since the previous comprehensive evaluation and is "committed to establishing this new level of engagement." We note with favor that the Coordinator of Teaching and Learning has a professional development plan "focusing on pedagogy, supervision, evaluation, and crucial conversations." In addition, while we understand there is currently no specific schedule for staff evaluation, we note positively that Human Resources will review the staff evaluation process and "establish an annual schedule for this work." The Commission anticipates being apprised, through the Spring 2027 interim report, of CCV's success in these matters. We remind you of our standards on *Organization and Governance* and *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*:

The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum with its faculty. Faculty have a substantive voice in matters of educational programs, faculty personnel, and other aspects of institutional policy that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise (3.15).

Faculty are demonstrably effective in carrying out their assigned responsibilities. The institution employs effective procedures for the regular evaluation of appointments, performance, and retention. The evaluative criteria reflect the mission and purposes of the institution and the importance it attaches to the various responsibilities of, e.g., teaching, advising, assessment, scholarship, creative activities, research, and professional and community service. The institution has equitable and broad-based procedures for such evaluation in which its expectations are stated clearly and weighted appropriately for use in the evaluative process (6.10).

The institution periodically evaluates the sufficiency of and support for academic staff and their effectiveness in teaching and advising, scholarship, service, and as appropriate to institutional mission, research, and creative activity. The results of these evaluations are used to enhance fulfillment of the institution's mission (6.14).

As stated in the self-study, the state of Vermont has identified a goal to have 70% of Vermonters hold a postsecondary credential by 2025. We appreciate that, as of 2018, only 53% of the workforce held this credential. We commend Community College of Vermont for its implementation of "meta-major programming" and other initiatives to support this goal, and we look forward to learning, through the Spring 2027 interim report, of CCV's success in this regard, in keeping with our standard on *Planning and Evaluation* (cited above).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2032 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

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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 Community College of Vermont and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Deborah Steward, Dean of Academic Affairs, Heather Weinstein, Dean of Strategic Initiatives and Student Affairs, and Cathryn Addy (via telephone), 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 Ms. Eileen Lynn Dickinson and Ms. Sophie Zdatny. 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.

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: Ms. Eileen Lynn Dickinson  
Ms. Sophie Zdatny  
Visiting Team

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions