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NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES, INC. COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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December 30, 2014

Dr. L. Rafael Reif
President
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
77 Massachusetts Avenue, Room 3-208
Cambridge, MA 02139-4307

Dear President Reif:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on September 19, 2014, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Massachusetts Institute of Technology and voted to take the following action:

that the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Massachusetts Institute of Technology be accepted;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2019 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2019 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in:

1. continuing to assess institutional effectiveness, especially as it relates to educational innovation and student learning outcomes;
2. identifying and implementing priorities from the Taskforce on the Future of MIT Education;
3. achieving its goals to strengthen its urban community context, including the Kendall Square and City of Cambridge projects;
4. continuing to achieve its goals for the diversity of faculty and staff.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) was accepted because it responded to the issues identified by the Commission in its letter of May 7, 2010, addressed each of the eleven standards, and included a reflective essay on student learning and success.

The Commission commends MIT for a comprehensive, well-written and candid report. We are pleased to note the Institute's responsiveness to concerns over the deferred maintenance of its facilities, as evidenced by the implementation of an ambitious and flexible long-term plan, MIT 2030, that begins with an Accelerated Capital Renewal Initiative of \$250 million in the first three years and an additional \$150 million a year from 2016 onward. We note with approval MIT's strong financial position with net assets of over \$14 billion, and total operating revenues of more than \$3 billion in FY2013. Despite federal funding uncertainty, the Institute generated \$1.6 billion in research revenues in FY2013, an almost 5% increase over the previous year. We are gratified to learn that changes suggested by the House and Dining Advisory Group to improve choice, build community, and reduce costs have been well received by the students; plan participation has increased by 14% since the first year of the plan, and 61% of meal-plan participants are now "generally" or "very" satisfied with food services.

We appreciate MIT's thoughtful and well-written analytical reflective essay on student success. We commend the Institute for its high graduation rates: 97% percent of undergraduates receive their degrees in six years or less, and 69-94% of doctoral students receive their degrees in ten years. We further note with favor that the Institute has a wealth of data on post-graduation plans and outcomes for its seniors. The most recent undergraduate alumni surveys indicate high satisfaction with MIT undergraduate education, and 75% of respondents believe the institution prepared them "very well" or "more than adequately" for their current careers. We are gratified to learn that the Institute employs a variety of direct and indirect methods to assess student learning outcomes in all programs, including surveys, specialized program accreditation, assessment of pedagogic approaches in online and blended learning programs, and evaluations by visiting committees. We note with favor that the School of Engineering has begun an annual review of departmental assessment reports and that learning assessment plans have been drafted for all graduate programs.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2019 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. The four items the Commission asks to be given special emphasis in the self-study prepared for the comprehensive evaluation are related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*, *The Academic Program*, *Mission and Purposes*, and *Faculty*.

As noted above, we appreciate that MIT assesses student learning through a variety of methods. We are interested to learn that the institution views online education as a catalyst for innovation in residential education, and we are pleased that the Teaching and Learning Laboratory, while noting the "complexity of evaluating learning in this new environment," has provided detailed recommendations to faculty and department heads for improvement. For example, the Department of Materials Science and Engineering will implement a new model of graduate student performance evaluation and has proposed a workshop on ethics; the Microbiology Department will provide support to students in proposal writing; the Department of Architecture is planning a "more formal and comprehensive approach" to collecting data on graduate student publications; and the Department of Urban Studies and Planning is preparing "more and earlier feedback" around its research assistantship program. The self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2019 comprehensive evaluation will afford the institution an opportunity to document the success of these and other initiatives related to the assessment of institutional effectiveness, especially as they relate to educational innovation and student learning outcomes. We remind you of our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *The Academic Program*:

The institution regularly and systematically evaluates the achievement of its mission and purposes, giving primary focus to the realization of its educational objectives. Its system of evaluation is designed to provide relevant and trustworthy information to support institutional improvement, with an emphasis on the academic program. The institution's

evaluation efforts are effective for addressing its unique circumstances. These efforts use both quantitative and qualitative methods (2.5).

The institution implements and provides support for systematic and broad-based assessment of what and how students are learning through their academic program and experiences outside the classroom. Assessment is based on clear statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. Assessment provides useful information that helps the institution to improve the experiences provided for students, as well as to assure that the level of student achievement is appropriate for the degree awarded (4.48).

On a related matter, we were interested to learn of the Institute's "Task Force on the Future of MIT Education," and we believe its recommendations, including the "Initiative for Educational Innovation," provide a useful framework for ongoing analysis of educational experimentation, research, and learning. We look forward to learning, in Fall 2019, of MIT's continued success in identifying and implementing priorities from the report, as evidence of the Institute's "demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning" (2.4).

We are pleased to learn of MIT's plan to build a stronger relationship with the local community through transforming 26 acres of property in Kendall Square into a "gateway" between MIT's East Campus and the city with a "community living room" for public and cultural educational programming, as well as graduate housing, academic space, and commercial and retail use. The Fall 2019 self-study will afford the institution an opportunity to update the Commission on its success in strengthening its urban community context through the Kendall Square and City of Cambridge projects. Our standard on *Mission and Purposes* guides us here:

Consistent with its mission, the institution endeavors to enhance the communities it serves (1.3).

We are gratified to learn that MIT is addressing its commitment to increase the diversity of its faculty and to strengthen the climate of inclusion in each school by supporting initiatives for inclusiveness, broadening the faculty candidate pool, monitoring promotion and tenure practices, establishing formal mentoring programs for junior faculty, and hiring a Community Equity Officer. We look forward to learning, through the Fall 2019 self-study, of the Institute's success in continuing to achieve its goals for the diversity of its faculty and staff. We are guided by our standard on *Faculty*:

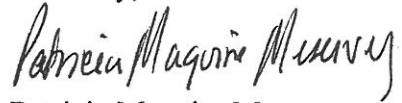
The institution ensures equal employment opportunity consistent with legal requirements and any other dimensions of its own choosing; compatible with its mission and purposes, it addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity among its faculty (5.4).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Massachusetts Institute of Technology and hopes that its preparation has contributed to institutional improvement. It appreciates your cooperation in 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 on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Robert Millard. 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.

If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Barbara Brittingham, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Patricia Maguire Meservey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patricia Maguire Meservey

PMM/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Robert Millard



**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

3 Burlington Woods, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514
Voice: (781) 425 7785 Fax: (781) 425 1001 Web: <http://cihe.neasc.org>

**Public Disclosure of Information
About Affiliated Institutions**

The following policy governs the release of information regarding the status of affiliated colleges and universities by institutions and by the Commission.

**1. Release of Information by Institutions Regarding Their Accreditation
Following Commission Action**

At the conclusion of the evaluation process institutions are encouraged to make publicly available information about their accreditation status including the findings of team reports and any obligations or requirements established by Commission action, as well as any plans to address stated concerns. Because of the potential to be misleading, institutions are asked not to publish or otherwise disseminate excerpts from these materials.

While the Commission does not release copies of self-studies, progress reports, evaluation reports, or other documents related to the accreditation of individual institutions, it believes it to be good practice for institutions to make these materials available, in their entirety, after notification of Commission action.

While the Commission does not initiate public release of information on actions of show cause or deferral, if such information is released by the institution in question, the Commission will respond to related inquiries.

If an institution releases or otherwise disseminates information which misrepresents or distorts its accreditation status, the institution will be notified and asked to take corrective action publicly correcting any misleading information it may have disseminated, including but not limited to the accreditation status of the institution, the contents of evaluation reports, and the Commission actions with respect to the institution. Should it fail to do so, the New England Association, acting through its Chief Executive Officer, will release a public statement in such form and content as it deems desirable providing correct information.

The shorter statement that an institution may choose for announcing its accredited status follows:

_____ College (University) is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc., through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

Inquiries regarding the accreditation status by the New England Association should be directed to the administrative staff of the institution. Individuals may also contact:

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
New England Association of Schools and Colleges
3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514
(781) 425 7785
E-Mail: cihe@neasc.org

Accreditation by the New England Association has reference to the institution as a whole. Therefore, statements like “fully accredited” or “this program is accredited by the New England Association” or “this degree is accredited by the New England Association” are incorrect and should not be used.

3. **Published Statement on Candidate Status**

An institution granted Candidate for Accreditation status must use the following statement whenever it makes reference to its affiliation with the New England Association:

_____ College (University) has been granted Candidate for Accreditation status by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. Candidacy for Accreditation is a status of affiliation with the Commission which indicates that the institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward accreditation.

Candidacy is not accreditation nor does it assure eventual accreditation.

Inquiries regarding the status of an institution affiliated with the New England Association should be directed to the administrative staff of the college or university. Individuals may also contact:

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
New England Association of Schools and Colleges
3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514
(781) 425 7785
E-Mail: cihe@neasc.org

4. **Public Disclosure of Information About Affiliated Institutions by the Commission**

and procedures of the Commission and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. In responding to inquiries, the Commission will endeavor to do so.

5. Public Disclosure of Institutional Actions

Within 30 days after the action on accreditation status is taken, the Commission will notify the Secretary of Education, New England state higher education officers, appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public. Such actions include:

A final decision to:

Grant candidacy or accreditation

Continue an institution in accreditation

Deny or withdraw the accreditation of an institution

Place an institution on probation

Approve substantive change (e.g., moving to a higher degree level)

A decision by an accredited or candidate institution to voluntarily withdraw from affiliation with the Commission.

November 1998

September 2001

April 2010

September 2011

Editorial Changes, March 2014