



Founded in 1885

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

ELSA M. NUNEZ, Chair (2010)
Eastern Connecticut State University

MARY JO MAYDEW, Vice Chair (2011)
Mount Holyoke College

F. ROBERT HUTH (2010)
Middlebury College

HUBERT D. MAULTSBY (2010)
Norwich University

RICHARD L. PATTENAUDE (2010)
University of Maine System

R. BRUCE HITCHNER (2011)
Tufts University

BRUCE L. MALLORY (2011)
University of New Hampshire

WILFREDO NIEVES (2011)
Middlesex Community College, CT

WALLACE NUTTING (2011)
Saco, Maine

JAMES O. ORTIZ (2011)
Southern Maine Community College

JILL N. REICH (2011)
Bates College

CHRISTOPHER J. SULLIVAN (2011)
Concord, NH

DEBRA M. TOWNSLEY (2011)
Nichols College

DORIS B. ARRINGTON (2012)
Capital Community College

NEIL G. BUCKLEY (2012)
Emmanuel College

DAVID E.A. CARSON (2012)
Hartford, CT

PETER V. DEEKE (2012)
Roger Williams University

JUDITH B. KAMM (2012)
Bentley University

WILLIAM F. KENNEDY (2012)
Boston, MA

KIRK D. KOLENBRANDER (2012)
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

KATHERINE H. SLOAN (2012)
Massachusetts College of Art and Design

STACY L. SWEENEY (2012)
The Art Institutes

REV. JEFFREY P. VON ARX, S.J. (2012)
Fairfield University

JEAN A. WYLD (2012)
Springfield College

Director of the Commission
BARBARA E. BRITTINGHAM
E-Mail: bbrittingham@neasc.org

Deputy Director of the Commission
PATRICIA M. O'BRIEN, SND
E-Mail: pobrien@neasc.org

Associate Director of the Commission
ROBERT C. FROH
E-Mail: rfroh@neasc.org

Associate Director of the Commission
LOUISE A. ZAK
E-Mail: lzak@neasc.org

Assistant Director of the Commission
JULIE L. ALIG
E-Mail: jalig@neasc.org

May 7, 2010

Dr. Susan Hockfield
President
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
77 Massachusetts Avenue, Room 3-208
Cambridge, MA 02139-4307

Dear President Hockfield:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on April 16, 2010, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Massachusetts Institute of Technology:

that Massachusetts Institute of Technology be continued in accreditation;

that the Institute submit a fifth-year interim report for consideration in Fall 2014;

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

- 1) developing and implementing a sustainable approach to reducing its deferred maintenance;
- 2) achieving its goals to increase student satisfaction with their dining options;
- 3) strengthening its understanding of what and how students are learning with respect to program- and Institute-wide goals;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2019.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

Celebrating 125 years 1885-2010

209 BURLINGTON ROAD, SUITE 201, BEDFORD, MA 01730-1433 | 781-271-0022 | FAX 781-271-0950

<http://cihe.neasc.org>

By any measure, Massachusetts Institute of Technology is a world-class institution. We concur with the team that MIT has an extraordinarily distinguished faculty and brilliant students and that the Institute has strong administrative leadership. We also agree with the team that the time-to-degree of MIT graduate students, 5.5 years to the Ph.D., is a mark of a successful educational process. The Institute's commitments to excellence, to experimentation, and to its dynamic and focused mission give the Commission confidence that MIT will continue to be one of the country's flagship educational and research universities. Reflective of its commitment to excellence, MIT used the self-study process as an opportunity for reflection and reassessment, producing a document that is laudatory for its clarity and focus.

We commend MIT for the thoughtful and successful approach it has taken to the recent crisis in the economy and the financial markets. Using a characteristically open process, the Institute has made the necessary adjustments while maintaining its core commitments, including to need-blind admissions and need-based financial aid. The Institute remains financially strong with a diversified resource base, including an endowment of over \$1 million per student, and is one of fewer than a dozen universities whose debt both Standard & Poor's and Moody's rate AAA.

We note with favor MIT's remarkable openness, as illustrated by its world-renowned OpenCourseWare initiative, its path-breaking use of blogs by students and admissions officers in the admissions process, and its enduring system of visiting committees, now numbering over 30, resulting in a governing board that is remarkably attuned to the needs of the academic departments. We congratulate the institution for its goal that communication be, in the words of the team, "bidirectional, interactive, and fine-grained." This openness, combined with a commitment to improvement, has strengthened the Institute in many dimensions; as noted by the team, in the past decade, MIT has transformed the atmosphere for women faculty and students.

Commission policy requires a fifth-year interim 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 fifth-year reports the Institute is asked, in Fall 2014, to report on three matters related to our standards on *Physical and Technological Resources*, *Students* and *The Academic Program*.

We note the team's report that the backlog of deferred maintenance increased from \$400,000 in 1999 to \$1.4 billion in 2008, based on 2007 dollars, and as reported recently, to close to \$2 billion. A 2007 audit reported numerous buildings in "poor" condition, including the iconic buildings in the central core of the campus and the facilities for the arts, particularly the performing arts. Despite annual funding in the range of \$34 million to facilities and capital renewal, we agree with the team's observation that without drastic action the deferred maintenance backlog will continue to grow. Through the interim report, the Commission looks forward to learning how MIT demonstrates that it "identifies and plans the specified resolution of deferred maintenance needs" (8.4) as part of "a basis of realistic planning and budget allocation" (8.6).

While it is unusual that the Commission would ask for follow-up reporting on an institution's dining options – despite unhappiness with such matters at a broad array of colleges and universities – we note the particular and apparently long-standing expression of dissatisfaction with such matters at MIT and the seriousness with which the Institute seeks a solution or solutions that reflect its abiding interests in the welfare of its students and their social as well as academic growth. We commend the Institute for addressing this continuing problem with fresh determination, through an advisory group and an Idea Bank to which the community can

contribute thoughts and proposals. We look forward to learning of the success of any new initiatives, including the anticipated full board plan, providing further indication that MIT “provides an environment that fosters the intellectual and personal development of its students” (*Students*, statement of the Standard).

As noted by the team, MIT uses a variety of direct and indirect measures to assess student learning and regularly uses surveys and other tools to provide input to strategic decision-making. The Institute’s course-level system of assessment is strong, as indicated by the avoidance of grade inflation, and ABET accreditation has provided a basis for program-level assessment of student learning among participating departments. Also, MIT’s approach to program review through the 31 visiting committees reflects the Institute’s enduring commitment to improvement through feedback. We concur with the team that at the undergraduate level, all of the degree programs share well-articulated measures of student success and effectiveness, and we find laudatory the field experiments on pedagogical innovations such as the TEAL program in physics. We take favorable note of MIT’s identification of institution-wide learning priorities, including its commitment to ensuring that students gain the skills and knowledge they need to work and contribute internationally and that its students develop and practice the skills to become leaders in various contexts and roles throughout their lives. We also are gratified with the stated goal of identifying a set of learning outcomes that cut across the various global programs, and the seriousness with which the Institute seeks to respond to feedback from students and recent alumni that serves to reinforce the importance of these emphases.

This strong foundation provides the basis for continued improvement. We concur with the team’s observation that while the Institute has a sophisticated institutional research capacity, it is not clear that the use of data on student achievement and success is systematically a part of the visiting committee process so that the “institution’s system of periodic review of academic programs includes a focus on understanding what and how students learn as a result of the program” (4.48). We also anticipate that the clear and laudable emphases on preparing students to work internationally and develop leadership skills will be bolstered by “useful information to help the institution understand what and how students are learning [and] improve the experiences provided for students” (4.44).

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.

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 Massachusetts Institute of Technology and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Dr. L. Raphael Reif, Provost, Dr. Kirk D. Kolenbrander, Vice President for Institute Affairs and Secretary of the Corporation, and Peter Salovey, representing the team, 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 of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Dana Mead.

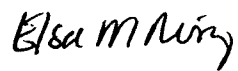
Dr. Susan Hockfield
May 7, 2010
Page 4

The institution is free to release information about the evaluation and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

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 Barbara Brittingham, Director of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Elsa M. Nuñez

EMN/slo

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Dana Mead
Visiting Team