



March 18, 2024

Dr. James W. Dean
President
University of New Hampshire
105 Main Street, Thompson Hall
Durham, NH 03824-3529

Dear President Dean:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 1, 2024, the New England Commission of Higher Education took the following action with respect to the University of New Hampshire:

that University of New Hampshire be continued in accreditation;

that the institution submit an interim (fifth-year) report by August 15, 2028, for consideration in Fall 2028;

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

- 1) evaluating the effectiveness of its leadership transition and securing a permanent Chief Financial Officer;
- 2) maintaining financial stability, with emphasis on achieving its financial and enrollment goals;
- 3) improving communication across the institution;
- 4) achieving its diversity, equity, and inclusion goals, with emphasis on addressing the concerns identified in its Campus Climate Survey;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2033.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

University of New Hampshire is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

The Commission commends New Hampshire University (UNH) on its well-written, candid, and comprehensive self-study that highlights the institution's accomplishments over the last decade; clearly articulates the strengths and concerns noted by faculty, staff, and students at each of its three locations; and provides a "road map" for the future direction of the University. The energy and enthusiasm the visiting team experienced on the campus that creates a dynamic atmosphere for students to excel at the highest levels is noteworthy, as is the shared commitment to and support of student success that

contributes to laudable retention, graduation, and licensure passage rates (e.g., retention and graduation rates of 86% and 78%, respectively for first-time, full-time undergraduate students, and Bar examination passage rates of over 91%). The University's strategic planning process is well-executed and inclusive; financial plans support strategic initiatives; and data are used to measure success in achieving institutional priorities and goals. UNH offers a full complement of high-quality undergraduate and graduate degree programs through five academic colleges and four schools located on its main campus in Durham, New Hampshire, as well as at its off-campus locations in Manchester and Concord, New Hampshire. In addition, the University recently established a College of Professional Studies (CPS) Online Division when it merged with Granite State College in July 2023. Well-qualified faculty and staff support the University's academic enterprise, and we appreciate learning that a full array of information and technological resources are available to faculty, staff, and students. We commend UNH on its fundraising success; at the time of the visit the University had raised \$253 million toward a goal of \$400 million. The Commission also joins the visiting team in congratulating the University of New Hampshire on its 100 years of history and its success as New Hampshire's flagship University. With the continued commitment of an engaged and knowledgeable Board, a capable leadership team, and faculty and staff who are committed to student success, the University is well positioned "to serve the higher educational needs of the people of New Hampshire" 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 2028, to report on four matters related to our standards on *Institutional Resources*; *Organization and Governance*; *Students*; and *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*.

We understand that President Dean is stepping down from his role as chief executive officer (CEO) on June 30, 2024. Candidates from a national pool have been identified through a Board-selected search committee, and the Board expects to identify a new CEO sometime in April 2024. We further note that the role of chief financial officer (CFO) is vacant, and the search for this position "has been delayed so that the incoming president can review the finalists and be part of the CFO selection process." We look forward, in the Fall 2028 interim report, to receiving information regarding the success of University of New Hampshire's leadership transition along with confirmation that "a chief financial officer whose primary responsibility to the institution is reflected in the organizational chart" (7.11) is in place at the University. We are further informed here by our standard on *Organization and Governance*:

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).

According to documents provided to the visiting team, undergraduate enrollment at University of New Hampshire has decreased from 12,812 students in FY2020 to 11,903 students in FY2023, and undergraduate enrollment has continued to decline with 11,719 enrolled in FY2024. Given that discount rates increased from 40.8% to 45.0% during this period, net tuition revenues decreased from approximately \$172 million to about \$163.6 million. In addition, while enrollment in graduate programs increased from 2,714 students in FY2020 to 3,144 students in FY2023, UNH increased its graduate program discount rate from 43.8% to 46.2%, which further adversely impacted net tuition revenue. At the same time, enrollment in online programs has increased in

recent years which is good news. While this trend is expected to continue now that Granite State College has merged with UNH, we concur with the observation of the visiting team that it will take time for the University to assess the full impact of the merger on enrollment. We understand that since the visiting team was on campus in Fall 2023, UNH has faced its financial challenges “head-on” by reducing expenses by 4% thus closing the institution’s \$14 million budget gap by some \$13 million. In addition to cutting back on supplies and services, UNH eliminated 62 positions across the University, and with continued “disciplined” fiscal management, the institution is confident that it can achieve a 1% margin by the end of FY2024. We ask that the Fall 2028 interim report include an update on the institution’s success in achieving its financial and enrollment goals as evidence that the institution is “financially stable” (7.5) and 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). We are further guided here by our standard on *Institutional Resources*:

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).

The institution’s financial planning, including contingency planning, is integrated with overall planning and evaluation processes. The institution demonstrates its ability to analyze its financial condition and understand the opportunities and constraints that will influence its financial condition and acts accordingly. It reallocates resources as necessary to achieve its purposes and objectives (7.14).

Opportunities identified for new sources of revenue are reviewed by the administration and board to ensure the integrity of the institution and the quality of the academic program are maintained and enhanced. The institution planning a substantive change demonstrates the financial and administrative capacity to ensure that the new initiative meets the standards of quality of the institution and the Commission’s Standards (7.15).

While maintaining open and transparent communication with the campus community is a top priority, University of New Hampshire is a “complex and diverse institution” and, as the University candidly acknowledges, its messaging has not always been as clear and consistent as intended. We therefore appreciate that the University has strengthened its efforts in this regard, in part by implementing multiple forms of communication to ensure that the entire campus community is well-informed. For example, communication related to the recent budget reset included emails to the campus community, an open Town Hall with over 1,200 Zoom participants, and access to an internal SharePoint site that contains presentation materials, FAQs, and a way to submit questions for individual answers. Further, UNH is now working with an outside vendor “to improve [its] website and align [its] external messaging with strategic priorities, transparency requirements, and external branding.” The second phase of this project will include an “internal web-based resource to better facilitate communications and connections within UNH.” In keeping with our standard on *Organization and Governance*, we will welcome, in Fall 2028, an update on the institution’s success in improving communication across the institution:

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).

Finally, as documented in UNH’s self-study, “the inclusive culture theme and area of focus extends to all human resource efforts.” However, although the University has increased institutional capacity to support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion priorities (e.g., hired an Equity Specialist and

a Bias Support and Response Coordinator) and “a new Faculty Diversity Hiring Framework that was piloted 2020-2021 is now in full effect,” the results of an October 2023 Campus Climate Survey revealed that there is still work to be done to create a more welcoming campus. We are therefore gratified to learn from the visiting team that UNH is using data gathered from the Campus Climate Survey to help understand trends, and action plans formalized with task forces will be implemented to further address this priority. The Fall 2028 interim report will provide UNH an opportunity to assure the Commission that it “addresses [and assess the effectiveness of] its own goals for the achievement of diversity, equity, and inclusion among its students” (*Students, Statement of the Standard*), “its faculty and academic staff” (6.5), and “its personnel” (7.1).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2033 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 University of New Hampshire and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Wayne Jones, Provost, Kate Ziemer, Senior Vice Provost/Academic Affairs, and Sam Fucile, Director of Central Finance, 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 Mr. Alexander Walker and Ms. Catherine Provencher. 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: Mr. Alexander Walker
Ms. Catherine Provencher
Visiting Team

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions