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April 24, 2008

Dr. Joanne V. Creighton  
President  
Mount Holyoke College  
50 College Street  
South Hadley, MA 01075-1496

Dear President Creighton:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on February 28, 2008, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Mount Holyoke College:

that Mount Holyoke College be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit a fifth-year interim report for consideration in Fall 2012;

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

- 1) developing and implementing appropriate measures of student success in the academic major;
- 2) analyzing the relative benefits, costs, and quality dimensions involved in offering the College's rich interdisciplinary curriculum, and implementing changes as appropriate;
- 3) achieving its goals for retention and graduation;
- 4) continuing to maintain a strong financial position while addressing programmatic needs, financial aid needs, and deferred maintenance;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2017.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

Mount Holyoke College is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*. We take favorable note of the commendable progress the College has made since the time of its last comprehensive review to address important challenges. It has increased the number of applicants and is attracting better-qualified students. In addition, the College has substantially increased the number of students from under-represented minorities and international students on campus. It has instituted a comprehensive strategic planning process that involves all constituencies and that has consistently informed decision-making. The institution exceeded its goal for its last fundraising campaign by \$57 million and is on track to achieve its current campaign goal of \$300 million. This success, combined with prudent steps to bring expenses and the tuition discount rate under control, has led to enhanced financial stability for the institution. Mount Holyoke is deeply committed to its mission to be a “world” college, dedicated to the education of women. Members of the campus community are well aware of the challenges associated with fulfilling this mission, and they can be justifiably proud of their accomplishments. Under the leadership of an effective and dedicated president and senior team, and with the support of an engaged Board of Trustees, the exceptional faculty and staff of Mount Holyoke College are well positioned to meet future challenges and achieve the goals the College has established for itself.

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 provided in all interim reports, the College is asked to report on four other matters related to our standards on *The Academic Program, Faculty, Students, Physical and Technological Resources, and Financial Resources*.

The Commission takes favorable note of the processes developed by Mount Holyoke College to assess student achievement of the outcomes articulated for the general education program and its use of those assessments to inform decision-making. We concur with the visiting team, however, that the College would benefit from increased attention to the assessment of student learning in the academic major. We are pleased to learn that all of the College’s academic departments and interdisciplinary programs have produced “working papers” that outline student learning outcomes for each program. We look forward to learning, through the Fall 2012 report, of the institution’s success in using these documents to develop and implement an approach to assessing student learning in the academic major and using these results for improvement. We remind you of our standard on *The Academic Program*:

The institution publishes the learning goals and requirements for each program. Such goals include the knowledge, intellectual and academic skills, and methods of inquiry to be acquired. In addition, if relevant to the program, goals include creative abilities and values to be developed and specific career-preparation practices to be mastered. (4.4)

The institution’s approach to understanding student learning focuses on the course, program, and institutional level. Data and other evidence generated through this approach are considered at the appropriate level of focus, with the results being a demonstrable factor in improving the learning opportunities and results for students. (4.45)

Mount Holyoke is to be commended for the rich set of disciplinary, inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary programs and course offerings available to students. Although this diversity creates much intellectual excitement, we note the resource challenges associated with implementing such a varied curriculum. The Fall 2012 report will provide an opportunity for the institution to report

on its success in balancing the richness of its curriculum with available resources and making changes as appropriate. Our standard on *The Academic Program* provides guidance here:

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. The evaluation of existing programs includes an external perspective and assessment of their effectiveness. Additions and deletions of programs are consistent with institutional mission and capacity, faculty expertise, student needs, and the availability of resources required for the development and improvement of academic programs. The institution allocates resources on the basis of its academic planning, needs, and objectives. (4.9)

The Commission takes favorable note of Mount Holyoke College's careful, candid analysis of its retention and graduation statistics. We understand that the institution's achievement on these measures (94% and 83% respectively), while notably high, currently lags behind most of its benchmark institutions. We commend the College for developing a comprehensive approach for further improvement on these indicators of student success. We anticipate being apprized, in Fall 2012, of the institution's success in achieving its goals with regard to retention and graduation rates, consistent with our standard on *Students*:

The institution measures student success, including rates of retention and graduation and other measures of success appropriate to institutional mission. The institution's goals for retention and graduation reflect institutional purposes, and the results are used to inform recruitment and the review of programs and services. Rates of retention and graduation are separately determined for any group that the institution specifically recruits, and those rates are used in evaluating the success of specialized recruitment and the services and opportunities provided for the recruited students. (6.6)

Finally, as mentioned above, the Commission notes with approval the significant strides Mount Holyoke College has made during the past decade to enhance its financial position. Both the self-study and the team report, however, identify additional financial challenges facing the institution, including: fulfilling the resource requirements of the College's academic program; lowering the tuition discount rate, currently at 44%, while meeting increased need for student financial aid; and addressing deferred maintenance, estimated at more than \$120 million. The Fall 2012 report will provide an opportunity for the College to update the Commission on its success in addressing these challenges and maintaining the institution's financial strength. Relevant here are our standards on *Physical and Technological Resources* and *Financial Resources*:

The institution undertakes physical resource planning linked to academic and student services, support functions, and financial planning. It determines the adequacy of existing physical and technological resources and identifies and plans the specified resolution of deferred maintenance needs. (8.4)

The institution preserves and enhances available financial resources sufficient to support its academic and other activities. It manages its financial resources and allocates them in a way that reflects its mission and purposes. It demonstrates the ability to respond to financial emergencies and unforeseen circumstances. (9.1)

The institution and its governing board regularly and systematically review the effectiveness of the institution's financial aid policy and practices in advancing the institution's mission

and helping to ensure that the institution enrolls and supports the student body it seeks to serve. (9.5)

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2017 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation 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.

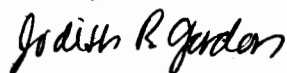
The Commission expressed appreciation for the self-study prepared by Mount Holyoke College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you and Dr. Nancy Dye, team chair, during its deliberations.

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 of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Ms. Leslie A. Miller. 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,



Judith R. Gordon

JRG/slo

Enclosure

cc: Ms. Leslie A. Miller  
Visiting Team