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June 27, 2018

Rev. Brian J. Shanley, O.P.
President
Providence College
1 Cunningham Square
Providence, RI 02918-0001

Dear President Shanley:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on April 18, 2018, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Providence College:

that Providence College be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit a report for consideration in Fall 2019 that gives emphasis to the institution's success in implementing its strategic plan;

that the College submit an interim (fifth-year) report for consideration in Fall 2022;

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

1. continuing to assess the Core Curriculum, with a focus on using the results for improvement, and achieving a wider understanding among students and faculty of the goals and purposes of the Core;
2. achieving its goals with respect to diversity and inclusiveness;
3. implementing its School structure and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of School Deans and the Provost;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2027.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

Providence College is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

The Commission commends Providence College (Providence) for its “extensive and well documented” self-study that describes the College’s many accomplishments since the last comprehensive evaluation and outlines realistic plans for further development. We concur with the visiting team that Providence offers a “high-quality, student-centered education,” and we note with approval the significant investment of resources to improve programs and services, as well as the “transformation” of the campus that includes new facilities for Humanities, Business, and Science. The revision of the Core Curriculum, now based on nine “mission-related goals,” is a notable achievement, as are the College’s consistently high retention and graduation rates (91% and 84%, respectively, for the Class of 2016). We take favorable note of the “significant improvements” to faculty development made during the last decade and the “strong array” of support services available to students. As noted in the report of the visiting team, Providence has strengthened its financial position through successful enrollment strategies and fundraising initiatives, including a recent campaign that exceeded expectations by raising \$185 million on a goal of \$140 million. With an experienced and effective President and senior leadership team, an engaged and committed Board of Trustees, and dedicated faculty and staff, Providence College is poised for continued excellence as it fulfills its commitment to “academic excellence in pursuit of the truth, growth in virtue, and service of God and neighbor.”

The item the institution is asked to report on in Fall 2019 is related to our standard on *Planning and Evaluation*.

The Commission also commends Providence College for the participatory process underway to develop the College’s next strategic plan, PC200. We understand that the plan, which is intended to “guide the College in the first decade of its second century,” will be submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval in October 2018. We look forward to learning, through the report submitted for consideration in Fall 2019, of the institution’s initial success in implementing PC200, in keeping with our standard on *Planning and Evaluation*:

The institution plans beyond a short-term horizon, including strategic planning that involves realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. The results of strategic planning are implemented in all units of the institution through financial, academic, enrollment, and other supporting plans (2.3).

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 College is asked, in Fall 2022, to report on three matters related to our standards on *Educational Effectiveness; Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure; and Organization and Governance*.

The Commission is gratified to learn that assessment of the College’s Core Curriculum is “proceeding effectively and according to plan.” The College’s approach to assessment of student learning in the Core includes a combination of direct, semi-direct, and indirect measures of student learning, and analysis of assessment results “feeds planning and decision-making.” We also appreciate the institution’s candid acknowledgment that communication about the Core Curriculum needs “continued attention and improvement” and note with favor the College’s plans to address this through faculty advisor training and the first-year experience course. The interim report submitted for consideration in Fall 2022 will afford Providence College an opportunity to update the Commission on its success in this regard, in keeping with our standard on *Educational Effectiveness*:

The results of assessment and quantitative measures of student success are a demonstrable factor in the institution’s efforts to improve the learning opportunities and results for students (8.8).

We join the visiting team in congratulating Providence College on its success in achieving its diversity goals for faculty and students and for initiatives such as the Inclusive Pedagogy Project and programming offered through the Center at Moore Hall that support the College's commitment to "embrace diversity and inclusiveness even more fully and authentically." We understand that Providence is searching for a new Chief Diversity Officer and has elevated that position to Vice President with membership on the President's Cabinet. We look forward, in Fall 2022, to learning about the College's continued success in achieving its goals with respect to diversity and inclusiveness, as evidence that the institution "fosters an inclusive atmosphere within the institutional community that respects and supports people of diverse characteristics and backgrounds" (9.5).

The Commission notes the recent organizational change at Providence College to establish four Schools, each with a Dean who reports to the Provost. We concur with the visiting team that the transition to this new structure has "not worked as effectively in some [Schools] as in others" and we support the team's recommendation that the College would benefit from greater clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the Deans and the Provost. We are, therefore, gratified to learn that the institution is addressing this matter through revisions to policies and the Faculty Handbook and by responding to issues noted in the COACHE faculty satisfaction survey results related to shared governance and academic leadership. We anticipate being apprised, through the Fall 2022 interim report, of the College's continued progress to ensure that its "organizational structure and system of governance is improved through periodic and systematic review" (3.19). Our standard on *Organization and Governance* provides this additional guidance:

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 scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2027 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 Providence College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you and John Sweeney, Senior Vice President and CFO, as well as John Bassett, 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 Mr. Christopher K. Reilly. 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 in New England.

Rev. Brian J. Shanley, O.P.
June 27, 2018
Page 4

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 that reads "David P. Angel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

David P. Angel

DPA/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Christopher K. Reilly
Visiting Team