



May 17, 2024

Ms. Elizabeth C. Russell
President
Eastern Maine Community College
354 Hogan Road
Bangor, ME 04401

Dear President Russell:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on April 18, 2024, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Eastern Maine Community College and voted to take the following action:

that the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Eastern Maine Community College be accepted;

that the College submit a report by January 15, 2026, for consideration in Spring 2026, that gives emphasis to the institution's success in:

- 1) continuing to implement its assessment plan and to use assessment results to identify and implement improvements;
- 2) continuing to stabilize enrollment and retention and ensure sufficient resources to achieve its student success goals;
- 3) achieving its goals for student success in its general education courses;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Spring 2029 be confirmed.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Eastern Maine Community College was accepted because it responded to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letters of November 15, 2019 and June 2, 2022 and addressed each of the nine standards, including a reflective essay for Standard 8: *Educational Effectiveness* on student learning and success.

The Commission commends Eastern Maine Community College (EMCC) for its thoughtful, detailed interim report that was developed with the input of the EMCC community. The Commission notes positively the College's "One College" and "One-Student-Student First" initiatives that resulted in the reorganization of EMCC's leadership team, delineated communication lines, and simplified

reporting lines thereby giving all constituencies a “voice” in decision-making. We further appreciate the institution’s additional efforts to strengthen communication and build a “sense of community and care” including providing a weekly newsletter and professional development opportunities. The Commission is also gratified to learn that, as part of its efforts to achieve financial stability, Eastern Maine Community College has “ramped up” its pursuit of grant funding. In 2023, the Maine Community College System Board of Trustees approved a new mission statement for EMCC that was developed through an inclusive process and places greater focus on the College’s goals to be “student-centered and responsive to the needs of community and business partners.” Lastly, we are pleased to note that EMCC updated its strategic plan in Fall 2022, identifying “four specific strategies with accompanying tactics and performance indicators” that will enable Eastern Maine Community College to continue to “accomplish its mission and meet the needs of the students and community it serves.”

The Commission thanks Eastern Maine Community College for its reflective essay on *Educational Effectiveness*. We understand that, at the program level, program and course learning outcomes are “defined, measured, and evaluated” by program faculty, and all programs have at least one program advisory committee meeting per academic year. At the institution level, the College’s essential learning outcomes – communication, teamwork, independent learning, and problem solving – are used to measure educational effectiveness. The Commission notes positively that, in addition to examining graduation rates, which range between 24% and 30%, EMCC also monitors the transfer out and still-enrolled rates; total student success rates (graduated, transferred, or still enrolled) have ranged between 51% and 56% over the past eight cohorts (Fall 2012-Fall 2019).

The items the institution is asked to report on in Spring 2026 are related to our standards on *Educational Effectiveness*, *Students*, and *Institutional Resources*.

The Commission acknowledges, as noted above, the progress EMCC has made in assessment. We appreciate the College’s candid appraisal that it continues to look for “ever better methods of assessment and evaluation” that will help it to take steps towards improving student success. The Commission understands that the institution is participating in the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Intermediaries for Scale Initiative that is supporting its efforts to identify “student success strategies that achieve more equitable outcomes.” We are also gratified to learn of EMCC’s plan to hire a new Director of Learning and Assessment to support faculty in the assessment process. The Commission looks forward to learning, through the Spring 2026 report, of Eastern Maine Community College’s continued success in assessing student learning and identifying and making improvements based on assessment results. We are guided here by our standard on *Educational Effectiveness*:

Assessment of learning is based on verifiable statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. The process of understanding what and how students are learning focuses on the course, competency, program, and institutional level. Assessment has the support of the institution’s academic and institutional leadership and the systematic involvement of faculty and appropriate staff (8.3).

The institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods and direct and indirect measures to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students, employing external perspectives including, as appropriate, benchmarks and peer comparisons (8.5).

The institution defines measures of student success and levels of achievement appropriate to its mission, modalities and locations of instruction, and student body, including any specifically recruited populations. These measures include rates of progression, retention, transfer, and graduation; default and loan repayment rates; licensure passage rates; and

employment. The institution ensures that information about student success is easily accessible on its website (8.6).

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

The Commission is gratified to learn that Eastern Maine Community College has seen a boost in enrollment since the pandemic, with new student headcount increasing by 11.5% between 2022 and 2023. We understand that Maine's Free Community College initiative is having a positive impact on EMCC's enrollment. As this initiative may end in 2025, the Commission appreciates the College's efforts to identify ways to "stabilize enrollment and improve student retention." An audit of recruitment procedures conducted by Ruffalo Noel Levitz identified over 50 short- and long-term recommendations to improve the recruitment process and culminated in a five-year strategic enrollment management plan and an annual marketing and recruitment plan. The Commission notes that as the Free Community College initiative also provides funding for three student support staff positions through the 2024 academic year, EMCC will need to find ways to ensure sufficient resources continue to be available to fund its planned enrollment and retention efforts. As informed by our standards on *Students* and *Institutional Resources*, the Spring 2026 report will provide Eastern Maine Community College the opportunity to apprise the Commission on its success in stabilizing its enrollment and retention and ensuring sufficient resources to achieve its student success goals.

Consistent with its mission, the institution sets and achieves realistic goals to enroll students who are broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve. The institution addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity, equity, and inclusion among its students and provides a safe environment that fosters the intellectual and personal development of its students. It endeavors to ensure the success of its students, offering the resources and services that provide them the opportunity to achieve the goals of their educational program as specified in institutional publications. The institution's interactions with students and prospective students are characterized by integrity and equity (*Students*, statement of the standard).

The institution preserves and enhances available financial resources sufficient to support its mission. 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 (7.4).

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 Commission appreciates EMCC's efforts to analyze student performance and success in general education courses. We understand that, in Fall 2022, only 27% of all EMCC students passed both their gateway English and math courses, which is below the Maine Community College System completion rate of 37%. The Commission is gratified, therefore, to learn of the creation of a new course, ENG100: Basic Academic and Pre-Professional Writing, to help students "develop their writing skills." In keeping with our standard on *Educational Effectiveness* (cited above), the Spring 2026 report will enable the institution to provide evidence of its success in achieving its goals for student success in its general education courses.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2029 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years.

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The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Eastern Maine Community College and hopes its preparation has contributed to institutional improvement. It appreciates your cooperation in the effort to provide public assurance of the quality of higher education.

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 David Daigler and Joyce Maker. 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 Lawrence M. Schall, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russell Carey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Russell Carey

RC/sjp

cc: David Daigler
Joyce Maker

Enclosures: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions