October 27, 2010

Rev. Michael C. McFarland, S.J.
President
College of the Holy Cross
One College Street, 119 Fenwick Hall
Worcester, MA 01610

Dear President McFarland:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on September 17, 2010, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to College of the Holy Cross:

that College of the Holy Cross be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit a fifth-year interim report for consideration in Spring 2015;

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

1) implementing a comprehensive, college-wide approach to the assessment of student learning and using the results for improvement;

2) reviewing the role of faculty in governance and, as appropriate, making revisions to the College’s system of governance;

3) achieving its goals for the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of its faculty and staff;

4) assuring the adequacy of resources to support library acquisitions and determining an appropriate role for library staff in academic planning;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Spring 2020.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.
College of the Holy Cross is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the Standards for Accreditation. We commend the College for the clarity of its mission and the extent to which the institution's mission and Jesuit identity inform the programs and services of the College. We concur with the visiting team that College of the Holy Cross offers its students "an excellent educational opportunity to realize their intellectual and personal potential" and is supported in that endeavor by an engaged Board of Trustees, dedicated faculty and staff, and committed senior leaders. We note with approval the College's commitment to diversity and the continued priority it gives to need-blind financial aid policies, both of which have had a positive impact on retention. Finally, we applaud the significant investments the College has made in facilities and technology, as well as its prudent financial management and culture of budget discipline.

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 College is asked, in Spring 2015, to report on four matters related to our standards on The Academic Program, Organization and Governance, Faculty, Integrity, Library and Information Resources and Planning and Evaluation.

Although College of the Holy Cross has implemented some assessment activities, the self-study notes that "much remains to be done." We share the visiting team's judgment that the College's approach to the assessment of student learning is not yet at a level that meets its high expectations for excellence. Campus-wide assessment is not yet effectively coordinated; departmental assessment efforts are uneven; and there is greater reliance on indirect measures and survey data than on direct measures of student learning. We are pleased to learn that the College has established a committee to design and implement a program for measuring student success in achieving institutional learning goals and is planning to add more staff resources to its Office of Assessment and Research. We look forward to learning, through the Spring 2015 interim report, of the College's success in developing and implementing a comprehensive approach to the assessment of student learning and using the results for improvement. We are guided here by our standard on The Academic Program:

The institution implements and supports a systematic and broad-based approach to the assessment of student learning focused on educational improvement through understanding what and how students are learning through their academic program and, as appropriate, through experiences outside the classroom. This approach is based on a clear statement or statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. The approach provides useful information to help the institution understand what and how students are learning, improve the experiences provided for students, and assure that the level of student achievement is appropriate for the degree awarded. Institutional support is provided for these activities (4.44).

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).

The Commission also concurs with the visiting team that the effectiveness of faculty governance at College of the Holy Cross merits "a thorough review." We understand that the College is
committed to a graduated approach to undertaking this review and plans, over the next several years, to study several aspects of faculty governance and the use of faculty time, including the number and size of committees, committee assignments, the tenure process, faculty workload, and the process through which proposals are brought through the governance process. The Spring 2015 report will provide an opportunity for the College to update the Commission on the progress of this review and its success in assuring that the “effectiveness of the institution’s organizational structure and system of governance is improved through periodic and systematic review” (3.12). Our standards on Organization and Governance and Faculty are relevant here:

Faculty exercise an important role in assuring the academic integrity of the institution's educational programs. Faculty have a substantive voice in matters of educational programs, faculty personnel, and other aspects of institutional policy that relate to their areas of responsibility and expertise (3.10).

Faculty assignments and workloads are consistent with the institution's mission and purposes. They are equitably determined to allow faculty adequate time to provide effective instruction, advise and evaluate students, contribute to program and institutional assessment and improvement, continue professional growth, and participate in scholarship, research, creative activities and service compatible with the mission and purposes of the institution. Faculty workloads are reappraised periodically and adjusted as institutional conditions change (5.7).

Faculty are demonstrably effective in carrying out their assigned responsibilities. The institution employs effective procedures for the regular evaluation of faculty appointments, performance, and retention. The evaluative criteria reflect the mission and purposes of the institution and the importance it attaches to the various responsibilities of faculty, e.g., teaching, advising, assessment, scholarship, creative activities, research, and professional and community service. The institution has equitable and broad-based procedures for such evaluation applying to both full- and part-time faculty, in which its expectations are stated clearly and weighted appropriately for use in the evaluative process (5.10).

The Commission is pleased to learn of the steps taken by College of the Holy Cross to achieve its goals to increase the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of its faculty and staff. We understand that the institution is implementing recommendations made by external consultants and a faculty committee to adjust its recruiting processes and to create a campus climate that is more welcoming and supporting of ALANA and female faculty and staff. We anticipate being apprized, through the Spring 2015 report, of the College’s continued success in achieving its diversity goals. We remind you of our standards on Faculty and Integrity:

The institution employs an open and orderly process for recruiting and appointing its faculty. Faculty participate in the search process for new members of the instructional staff. The institution ensures equal employment opportunity consistent with legal requirements and any other dimensions of its own choosing; compatible with its mission and purposes, it addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity of race, gender, and ethnicity (5.4).

The institution adheres to non-discriminatory policies and practices in recruitment, admissions, employment, evaluation, disciplinary action, and advancement. It fosters an atmosphere within the institutional community that respects and supports people of diverse characteristics and backgrounds (11.5).
Finally, the Spring 2015 report will afford College of the Holy Cross an opportunity to demonstrate its success in assuring the sufficiency of resources to support library acquisitions and determining an appropriate role for professional library staff in academic planning. The report of the visiting team notes that there is “little evidence that ... professional librarians are seen as active participants in ongoing campus conversations about the academic program” and that, despite an expression of concern on the part of the Board that the College’s acquisitions budget is lower than similarly sized peers, there are no plans to provide more systematic support for library expenditures. We look forward to learning, in Spring 2015, of steps taken by the College to assure that it “provides sufficient and consistent financial support for the library” (7.2) so it may have confidence that its library and information resources are “sufficient in quality, level, diversity, quantity, and currency to support and enrich the institution’s academic offerings” (7.7) and that its academic planning involves “the participation of individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes” (2.1).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2020 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 College of the Holy Cross and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you and Dr. Elaine Tuttle Hansen, 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 P. Kevin Condron. 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 in New England.

If you have any questions about the Commission’s action, please contact Barbara Brittingham, Director of the Commission.

Sincerely,

Mary Jo Maydew

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MJM/slo
Enclosure

cc: P. Kevin Condron
Visiting Team