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NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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1/19/05

December 16, 2004

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Dr. Richard C. Levin
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Dear President Levin:

It is my pleasure to inform you that at its meeting on November 5, 2004, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with regard to Yale University:

that the fifth-year report submitted by Yale University be accepted;

that the scheduling of the next comprehensive evaluation for Fall, 2009 be confirmed;

that, in addition to providing information included in all self-studies for comprehensive evaluations, the University give particular emphasis to its continuing efforts in:

1. ensuring effective mechanisms for reviewing current academic programs and new program proposals, and for determining the resources needed to maintain them at an appropriate level of strength;
2. developing a comprehensive teaching evaluation system;
3. improving the evaluation of faculty for tenure and promotion;
4. achieving the University's own goals for ethnic, racial, and gender diversity on the faculty.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The Commission commends Yale University for a thorough fifth-year interim report which demonstrates candor and substance. Yale took the recommendations that arose through the November 1999 comprehensive evaluation seriously. We applaud how Yale has made several major changes to sustain a high level of institutional effectiveness including: undertaking an ambitious review of its undergraduate curriculum; revising degree requirements to strengthen students' skills in quantitative reasoning and writing; and enhancing the international character of the institution. We take favorable note of the University's

Dr. Richard C. Levin
December 16, 2004
Page 2

decision to admit international students to Yale College without regard to financial aid, and to provide sufficient need-based financial aid to cover the cost of attending Yale.

The Commission finds laudable the creation of the Yale College "Committee on Majors" which reviews current majors and proposals for new majors. As indicated in the interim report, this Committee works closely with a Resource Assessors group that provides relevant data about financial, physical and staffing resources; and the Committee has become a critical component of the College faculty governing process. The report claims that the Committee has provided a "higher threshold for programmatic approval" in working to make the majors more comprehensive and to reduce the number of majors overall. We note that the report does not describe the methods and criteria used by the "Committee on Majors" to address program proliferation and also that the institution is contemplating program expansion in the sciences. Within the next comprehensive evaluation we would appreciate being apprised of the effectiveness of mechanisms that elucidate these issues in keeping with our standard on *Programs and Instruction*, which specifies that "the institution provides sufficient resources to sustain and improve programs and instruction" (4.2) and that "the institution allocates human, financial, and physical resources on the basis of its academic plans, needs, and objectives" (4.4).

In response to the recommendation from the Fall 1999 comprehensive evaluation that urged enhancing the quality of teaching by means of systematic instructional evaluation, the Commission finds praiseworthy the implementation of an ambitious online course evaluation system proposed by the Yale College Teaching and Learning Committee in Fall 2002. Anonymous student evaluations of courses are now available online to all undergraduates during their course selection period. The evaluations are made available to the instructors, to the instructor's department chair, and to a limited group of staff in the College Dean's Office. In Spring 2004, 87 percent of enrolled students completed course evaluations, and faculty report that the student responses in the online system provide "far more substantial" information than earlier teaching evaluation instruments. However, future efforts may find it useful to address related issues such as how the University assists instructors in interpreting and using student feedback to enhance the quality of their teaching, and how the data are used in the evaluation of faculty for salary increases or for tenure and promotion decisions. Additionally, we suggest that systematic teaching evaluation need (and should) not be restricted to student evaluations. Within its next self-study for the 2009 comprehensive evaluation, the Commission would appreciate learning about the University's continued success in developing a comprehensive teaching evaluation system as guided by the standards addressing *Programs and Instruction* which state among other things that "the effectiveness of instruction is periodically and systematically assessed using adequate and reliable procedures; and the results are used to improve instruction" (4.30).

The Commission takes favorable note of Yale's efforts to ensure that procedures for evaluating faculty for tenure and promotion are transparent and widely understood. Yale has put the entire Faculty of Arts and Sciences Appointments Memorandum on the university's website; prior to this it had been available only through department chairs. The interim report notes that the tenure success rate varies among different divisions, with the highest in biological sciences and the lowest in the humanities, but it offers no explanation about why this variation exists. Additionally, while the report cites the percentage of senior tenured faculty who have come from the ranks of untenured Yale faculty, we suggest that it may be useful to provide systematic data on the actual rates at which junior faculty receive tenure. The University is considering various changes in its faculty personnel procedures, and the Commission looks forward to learning through the 2009 comprehensive evaluation about progress in relation to considering these changes as guided by our standard on *Faculty* which states "The institution has equitable and broad-based procedures for [the] evaluation [of faculty], in which its expectations are stated

clearly and weighted appropriately for use in the evaluative process" (5.11).

We applaud the University for its continuing efforts in addressing its goals for diversifying the faculty, and for the candidness of the interim report in addressing the challenges of meeting these goals. As the report indicates, in the past five years, Yale has realized some increase in the number of women "ladder faculty"—from 25% to 28.4% university-wide—but the percentage of black faculty has essentially remained the same. In a 2002 study assessing efforts with recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty conducted by a group of private universities, Yale ranked near the middle of the group for women faculty and ranked last for minority faculty. As part of the fall 2009 comprehensive evaluation, the Commission looks forward to learning about Yale's continuing efforts as guided by the standard on *Faculty* which asks that "the institution observes pertinent legal requirements related to equal employment opportunity and compatible with its mission and purposes, addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity of race, gender, and ethnicity (5.4). As one suggestion, perhaps some efforts in providing historical data on female or minority faculty would help shed some light on the situation.

It is clear to the Commission that through the interim report Yale continues to grapple with the ongoing issue faced in varying degree by many institutions within the New England higher education community—that of presenting sufficient and convincing evidence in relation to claims of progress. In this interim report, this pertains particularly to addressing the four issues identified for emphasis—to what degree have these issues been satisfactorily resolved. We respect Yale's efforts within this interim report process, and we look forward to learning through the next comprehensive evaluation about Yale's continued success in stressing the importance of evidence in supporting claims that it meets and/or exceeds the standards. Two of the *Planning and Evaluation* standards speak most comprehensively about this as exemplified by the following excerpts. "The institution systematically collects and uses data necessary to support its planning efforts and to enhance institutional effectiveness." (2.3) "To the extent possible, evaluation enables the institution to demonstrate through verifiable means its attainment of purposes and objectives both inside and outside the classroom" (2.4). Also, the *Policy on Institutional Effectiveness* provides guidance regarding the ongoing development of assessment processes as a resource for demonstrating institutional effectiveness. The following excerpt indicates the scope and tone of the Policy:

The Commission expects each institution, as part of its dedication to institutional improvement, to monitor its effectiveness in achieving its mission and purposes. Accordingly, the institution collects and analyzes relevant data and uses this information in the institutional planning process as a basis for sustaining quality and self-improvement. Thus, assessment functions as a tool for the encouragement of such improvement as well as a basis for quality assurance.

Finally, the scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall, 2009 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive visit at least once every ten years. Given that the November 1999 comprehensive evaluation and this interim report focused almost exclusively on Yale College, the Commission would like to encourage Yale to look at the entire institutional 'community' in the next comprehensive evaluation. Our current and revised standards (which will take effect in 2006), and the mission statement adopted by the Yale Corporation in 1992 serve as useful guides for this. Specific to the University's mission statement, we note that the Corporation defines the University as a "community comprised of Yale College, a Graduate School with broad coverage of the arts and sciences, and an array of professional schools in arts, sciences, and learned professions."

Dr. Richard C. Levin
December 16, 2004
Page 4

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.

You are encouraged to share this letter and the team's complete report with all of the University'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. Roland Betts. The institution is free to release information about the report 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 in 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 Charles M. Cook, Director of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Terrence J. MacTaggart

TJM/scf

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Roland Betts