

Dear Members of the New Paltz Campus Community:

I want to share the GREAT news that SUNY New Paltz has been reaccredited! This action was taken formally by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education at its meeting on June 23.

Congratulations to everyone who worked so hard on the self-study and site-visit process, and – more fundamentally – to every member of the College for your work and accomplishments that resulted in such a positive assessment of our institution and its quality.

The formal language of the Commission’s resolution approved on June 23 is “To reaffirm accreditation and to commend the institution for the quality of its self-study process.” Several weeks ago, the Commission’s “Committee on Evaluation Reports” met to review our self-study, the evaluation team report, and the evaluation team chair’s confidential brief to the Commission. Shippensburg University President William Ruud, chair of our site-visit team, informed me after that meeting that the Committee’s recommendation to the full Commission would be that we have met each of the 14 standards and should be reaccredited. Dr. Ruud also told me that, of the several institutions whose reports were reviewed at the committee meeting, New Paltz “stood out” in all respects.

Now that the Commission has acted, we are able to make public the final action of the Commission as well as the report of the evaluation team; both are posted [here](#). The evaluation team report is worth reading in detail, both because it highlights many of our strengths and contributions and also because the suggestions of the reviewers provide a “road map” for many key directions on which to focus our energy and attention in the coming years. Indeed, the Commission strongly encourages that the evaluation team report be used “to stimulate further thought within the institution.”

As we shared earlier this spring, the evaluation team report included what should be regarded as an unprecedented **five** “commendations” – significant accomplishments worth highlighting for special attention. We can now share the language of these more fully. These read: “The Evaluation Team commends...”

“the institution and its senior leadership for an honest and transparent communication about the current budget challenges.”

“the institution for the culture of assessment that it has cultivated to date among faculty and staff who, in large part, value the role of assessment to support evidence-based decision-making and improve programs and services.”

“the institution for progressively higher retention and graduation rates that places the institution at higher-than-national-average levels, both overall and for students from underrepresented groups. The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) has a significant positive impact on retention and graduation rates of economically disadvantaged students, and we commend the program for its evidence of structural changes and expansion based on assessment results.”

“the institution for its outstanding commitment to student success by faculty and staff and evidence of structural changes and expansion of student support services based on assessment results.”

“the leadership and staff of the Dorsky Museum for its sound planning and evaluative practices, resourcefulness, and outreach to the campus and regional community to make art relevant in many forms and for many purposes.”

The Commission affirmed the one recommendation of the evaluation team. A “recommendation” is a finding that “institutional action is needed for the institution to continue to meet the Commission’s standards in Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education.” Dr. Ruud informed me that the new practice of the Commission is to require a progress report on **every** recommendation. Consequently, we must provide a progress report by April 1, 2013 documenting:

- (1) Further implementation of a comprehensive, organized and sustained process for the assessment of institutional effectiveness, including evidence that assessment has been implemented in all administrative units (Standard 7), and
- (2) Further implementation of a comprehensive, organized and sustained process for the assessment of student learning outcomes, including evidence that all course syllabi include identified student learning outcomes, that assessment has been implemented in all academic units, and that assessment results are used to improve teaching and learning (Standards 11 and 14).

Thus, although we were commended for having built a “culture of assessment,” we have more work to do, and will need to document progress in these areas. The evaluation team report and our self-study provide more insight and detail on some of the changes that we need to undertake. This will be a significant part of our work during the next year and a half and will inform the progress report. We subsequently will need to produce the regular “Periodic Review Report” due on June 1, 2016 (half-way to our next full accreditation review in 2021!).

We will take up action on this and the many suggestions raised both in our self-study and in the evaluation team report at the start of the coming year. But for the present we have much cause for celebration about our reaccreditation and the overwhelmingly positive assessment that the accreditation review process has given us.

Sincerely,

Donald P. Christian
President