



April 5, 2023

Dr. Cheryl Lesser  
President  
Great Bay Community College  
320 Corporate Drive  
Portsmouth, NH 03801

Dear President Lesser:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 3, 2023, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Great Bay Community College and voted to take the following action:

that the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Great Bay Community College (GBCC) be accepted;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2027 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2027 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in:

- 1) achieving enrollment and financial goals for the GBCC Rochester Campus;
- 2) implementing its plans to gather and analyze student success data related to the institution's Math and English corequisite initiative;
- 3) developing and implementing ancillary plans in support of the goals specified in the institution's strategic plan.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Great Bay Community College was accepted because it responded to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letters of December 3, 2018, February 8, 2021, and February 4, 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 Great Bay Community College for submitting a well-written and comprehensive interim report that details the institution's accomplishments since its comprehensive evaluation. In particular, we congratulate Dr. Cheryl Lesser on her recent (March 2022) appointment as GBCC President, and we acknowledge with approval the collaboration of the entire campus community that resulted in the "reactivation" of the strategic planning process and the development of a new strategic plan aligned with the Community College System of New Hampshire's (CCSNH)

Strategic Plan that was adopted by the Board in July 2022. The report provided evidence that GBCC's academic programs are thoughtfully developed and delivered by faculty who are dedicated, well-qualified, and competent. We also note with approval the College's commitment to Information Literacy instruction; the expansion of institutional capacity to include a new full-time enrollment staff member; and the recently established Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Committee that is "in the beginning stages" of identifying its goals. Finally, although enrollment declined due to the pandemic, \$2.5 million of HEERF funding allowed the College "to cover expenses during the two years of the pandemic" and, with about \$8.7 million of tuition revenue and fees in FY2023 (compared to about \$11.2 million in FY2019) the College remains "relatively strong financially." With the continued commitment of its engaged Board, dedicated leadership team, and capable faculty and staff, Great Bay Community College is well positioned to continue "to expand [] intellectual and economic opportunity by providing affordable higher education in an environment that embodies excellence, innovation, and collaboration."

The reflective essay included with the interim report highlights the many ways in which Great Bay Community College supports student achievement through initiatives including Early College and Running Start programs that allow high school students an "affordable jump start to a college degree and career skills;" implementation of "Hyflex" courses that are designed to "increase [] access, engagement, motivation, participation & course quality for students;" and implementation of the Academic Planner in Navigate that allows new students to work with a professional Academic Advisor and "to plan for their course schedule for their first semester of college and map out each subsequent semester through graduation based on their intended level of enrollment progression." GBCC's "holistic approach to strategic care for the whole student" and the commitment of faculty to use Open Educational Resources to "increase student learning and student access to high quality, innovative learning materials at a substantially lower cost" are also noteworthy. Collectively, these initiatives and others have resulted in an "overall course completion rate [averaging] 94.2% over the past four academic years," and licensure passage rates in Nursing, Surgical Technology, and Veterinary Technology programs that have "consistently exceeded the national pass rate and are competitive with or exceeded state averages."

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. The three items the Commission asks to be given special emphasis within the self-study prepared for the comprehensive evaluation are matters related to our standards on *Institutional Resources, Students, Planning and Evaluation, and Educational Effectiveness*.

We appreciate the College's candid acknowledgement that achieving enrollment and financial goals at the GBCC Rochester Campus (formerly named the Advanced Technology and Academic Center) has been a challenge due to two key factors: the COVID pandemic and the expiration of grant funding that created "a financial burden that affected the entire institution." Although the Welding program at this location has increased from 37 students in 2018 to 54 students in 2022, we note that enrollment in other programs including Motorcycle Maintenance Repair and Computer Numeric Control has declined, and the Advanced Composite Manufacturing program is "on hold." Therefore, the "significant steps" Great Bay Community College is taking to reduce expenses and enhance the diversity of the credit and non-credit programs and courses offered at the Rochester Campus are noted positively, and we are encouraged by the institution's optimism that "the immediate future holds much promise as the College explores programming and training to meet New Hampshire's workforce needs in critical areas such as energy and advanced manufacturing." The self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2027 comprehensive evaluation will provide the College an opportunity to update the Commission on its success regarding this matter as evidence that the Rochester Campus is "financially stable" (7.5), and that GBCC "sets and achieves realistic goals to enroll students who are broadly representative of the population the

institution wishes to serve” (*Students*, Statement of the Standard). We are further guided here by our standard on *Institutional Resources*:

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 institution’s financial planning, including contingency planning, is integrated with overall planning and evaluation processes. The institution demonstrates its ability to analyze its financial condition and understand the opportunities and constraints that will influence its financial condition and acts accordingly. It reallocates resources as necessary to achieve its purposes and objectives. The institution implements a realistic plan for addressing issues raised by the existence of any operating deficit (7.14).

According to the report, since implementing the Complete College America corequisite model in Spring 2018, Great Bay Community College has enrolled “many more students” directly into credit-bearing, college-level Math and English courses while “simultaneously providing the additional support they need in corequisite courses.” Indicators of student success include the percentage of students completing courses (ranging from over 90% in Math to 100% in English), and the percentage of students who earned passing grades (ranging from 70% to 80+% in Math and over 70% in English). To further validate student learning outcomes, GBCC is exploring “possible data collection and analysis options to understand/evaluate how the expanded use of multiple measures has impacted student success.” In addition, the College plans to gather and analyze data to compare completion rates and grade distributions for students in these corequisite Math and English courses with those of students enrolled in the traditional developmental education courses and also with those of students enrolled in the college-ready English and Math courses without the corequisite support. These analyses will include an assessment of persistence rates and overall GPAs one or two semesters out from taking the co-requisite course(s). To affirm that GBCC has a “demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning” (2.5), we look forward, in Fall 2027, to receiving an update on the College’s success in implementing its plans to gather and analyze student success related to the institution’s Math and English corequisite initiative. Our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *Educational Effectiveness* will further inform this portion of the self-study:

The institution has a demonstrable record of success in using the results of its evaluation activities to inform planning, changes in programs and services, and resource allocation (2.8).

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 institution integrates the findings of its assessment process and measures of student success into its institutional and program evaluation activities and uses the findings to inform its planning and resource allocation and to establish claims the institution makes to students and prospective students (8.10).

Finally, we appreciate learning that although strategic initiatives (e.g., improved financial planning and analysis, intentional year-round course planning, and targeted marketing) are in place at both the CCSNH and GBCC levels to address the College's enrollment challenges, Great Bay Community College is also developing additional plans (e.g., Strategic Enrollment Management Plan and Student Affairs Annual Plan) in an effort to "further reverse the decline in student enrollment and improve persistence." GBCC is also committed to strengthening its student engagement and outreach efforts to reduce barriers that "prevent students from connecting to resources in order to maximize their enrollment and persistence in achieving educational and career goals." We look forward, in the Fall 2027 self-study, to receiving information on the institution's continued success in developing and implementing ancillary plans in support of the goals specified in the institution's strategic plan as evidence that the College has a "demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning" (2.5). Our standard on *Planning and Evaluation* further notes:

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).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Great Bay 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 Ms. Katharine Bogle Shields and Dr. Mark Rubinstein. 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,



Russell C. Carey

RCC/jm

cc: Ms. Katharine Bogle Shields  
Dr. Mark Rubinstein

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions