

February 17, 2019

Dr. Barbara Brittingham  
President  
New England Commission for Higher Education  
3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100  
Burlington MA 01803

Dear Dr. Brittingham,

On behalf of Berkshire Community College, I write to thank the Commission for the opportunity the self-study afforded us to assess and reflect upon our mission, purpose and effectiveness. The Interim ( Fifth-Year) Report was a helpful introduction to the rigors of the self study. We learned much about the process of looking collectively at our work and about our strengths and areas of challenge.

The Visiting Team chaired by President Tim Crowley (Northern Maine Community College) was superb. President Crowley visited with the campus community in April and immediately allayed concerns and energized us to complete our self-study.

We appreciated the efforts of the Visiting Team in gathering data and preparing their report. The strengths they identified included placing students at the center of decision making, recognizing the investment made to upgrade teaching and learning spaces, and understanding the connectedness of the College's Foundation to the central mission of the College.

We want to update the Commission on our recent efforts related to the concerns that were cited in the report.

1. *In some cases, courses that have the same title and course number may not have common course learning outcomes. This difference was noted in courses that run during the day compared to the same course offered in the evening that is more likely to be taught by and adjunct faculty member. It would benefit students to have clearly defined course outcomes for common courses of the same title and number regardless of whether the instructor is full-time faculty or adjunct.*

We are grateful to the Visiting Team for pointing out this inconsistency in the delivery of our courses. In response, we have put in place supports to inform adjunct faculty about learning outcomes for their courses. We know that the transition to outcomes-based learning comes with challenge, and we are prepared to support faculty in meeting those challenges. We have arranged adjunct-specific professional learning opportunities as well as identifying a faculty outcomes fellow who will work with all faculty on strengthening instruction aligned with student learning outcomes. Faculty support has been a key theme in the last few years of work at BCC. We now have a solid infrastructure with which to focus on the most salient issues in teaching and learning, and we are confident that framing outcomes-



based teaching as an equity issue, while providing support for faculty innovation and change, will resonate with our committed faculty.

- 2. The College has made important steps forward in its efforts to utilize the data they are gathering to enhance institutional effectiveness. That being said, the communication of the data being gathered, and the processes being used to determine the data to be gathered would benefit from additional review.*

Our Institutional Effectiveness Office does a tremendous amount of work to collect, collate and assist in analysis of data across all areas of the College. Now that the office has secure processes for managing data, it is turning its attention to mentoring the campus community to interpret and apply the various data streams. We are offering opportunities for faculty and administration to work with data and imagine how it could improve their work supporting students in the classroom, as advisors, in recruitment, in reviewing programs and in innumerable other ways.

- 3. The College has been effective in managing its budget in times of declining tuition revenue. However, understanding the budget and the decisions that are associated with it could be enhanced if the process to develop the budget was more inclusive and open.*

While we have found ways to meet financial needs, the process of developing the budget has not been as engaging as it could be. This year, we have provided every department with two prior years of actual spending (by spending category), the current year's budget and the opportunity to project for FY 21. We have also asked each department to provide information on special needs or programming for FY 21. Additionally, and possibly most importantly, we are asking each department to share goals and aspirations. To date, the majority of academic department or program chairs have reviewed this data and met with their respective Deans with anecdotal evidence of fruitful discussions. We anticipate similar conversations with Administration & Finance and Student Affairs & Enrollment Management.

- 4. Campus committees would benefit from having clearly defined roles and responsibilities.*

The College identified this issue as a priority and noted it as a projection. We began by engaging in collaborative discussion last summer. Approximately 40 employees representative of the faculty and administration have been working on an updated shared governance structure to be launched in Fall 2020. Instead of a multitude of committees and tasks forces that each attempt to define how issues or efforts flow to and through them, the College is moving toward creating categories (academic affairs, planning and assessment, infrastructure, etc.), and each will have a charge and set of bylaws. We are also developing a definition of what shared governance means on our campus.

- 5. The College lacks clear processes and procedures that will continue the professional growth and development of its faculty and staff. The Human Resources Department would benefit from developing processes, procedures and training for the campus community utilizing technology.*

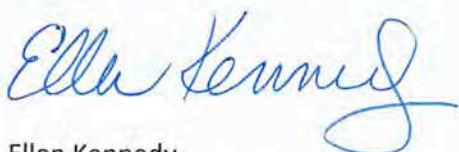
The College acknowledges that it has historically lacked clear, written processes and procedures for the benefit of its employees. The College's plan to address this omission is multi-faceted. An example of our efforts to date include two (2) ad hoc committees that recommended policies and procedures to the Director of Human Resources on searching for new hires/search committees and on-boarding new employees. These are in the final stages of college-wide review and will be implemented later this

spring. The Director of Human Resources has begun and expects to publish a procedure for utilizing and routing Human Resource forms by the fall of 2020. The College is embracing a culture of clarity and communication.

The College supports many employees in their pursuit of professional development, from participation in the Berkshire Leadership Program and New England Leadership Institute, to employees receiving support to attend discipline or department/division specific conferences. Faculty professional development has always been a priority and a component in annual planning. With the creation of a Dean of Teaching and Learning Innovation this year, we are making major strides in providing professional development on a consistent and intentional basis. By way of example, we are focusing on college-wide professional development on issues around equity, technology, and learning outcomes and more specific professional development for supervisors and maintainers and to all on campus who could benefit from better understanding and utilizing software.

We wish to reiterate our gratitude for the efforts made by our visiting team and the NECHE Commission. We are moving forward with a sharp focus on the identified challenges and, also, renewed energy around our strengths and assets.

With kind regards,



Ellen Kennedy