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Emerson College

President of the Commission
Lawrence M. Schall
lschall@neche.org

Senior VP of the Commission
Patricia M. O'Brien, SND
pobrien@neche.org

Vice President of the Commission
Carol L. Anderson
canderson@neche.org

Vice President of the Commission
Laura M. Gambino
lgambino@neche.org

Vice President of the Commission
Paula A. Harbecke
pharbecke@neche.org

Vice President of the Commission
Aaron Perkus
aperkus@neche.org



January 27, 2021

Dr. Mark Anarumo
President
Norwich University
158 Harmon Drive
Northfield, VT 05663-1004

Dear President Anarumo:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on November 20, 2020, the New England Commission of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Norwich University:

that Norwich University be continued in accreditation;

that the substantive change proposal to offer an Associate of Science (A.S.) program with majors in Cybersecurity, Computer Science, Data Analytics, and Business Administration be accepted and the Associate of Science program be encompassed within the institution's accreditation, with an effective date of November 20, 2020;

that the University's accreditation at the associate level be limited to the A.S. program with majors in Cybersecurity, Computer Science, Data Analytics, and Business Administration and the institution be reminded that, should it plan to offer additional programs at the associate level, including additional majors in the A.S. program, it needs to submit a report to the Commission, in keeping with the Policy on Substantive Change;

that an on-site evaluation of the A.S. program be scheduled within 18 months of initiation;

that the report prepared in advance of the evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in implementing the new A.S. degree program, with particular attention to achieving its financial, enrollment, and retention goals;

that the institution submit an interim (fifth-year) report for consideration in Fall 2025;

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

1. achieving its goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion;

2. strengthening its assessment efforts across all programs and using assessment results in decision-making processes;
3. achieving its goals for financial stability;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2030.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

Norwich University is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

The Commission thanks Norwich University (NU) for its candid, comprehensive self-study that was developed through an inclusive, participatory process. Along with the visiting team, we commend the University for being “mission-focused” and for the ways the University’s mission and guiding values inform all institutional areas. We note with favor the University’s strategic planning efforts, including the completion of its NU2019 plan and the development of its newest plan, Norwich University after Next (NUaN), which is grounded in the University’s value of “service before self.” The Commission is gratified to learn that enrollment increased from 1,554 in 2004 to 2,513 in 2018 and that graduation rates increased from 52% for the 2003 cohort to 62% for the 2012 cohort. We note from the visiting team report the University’s “robust” study abroad programs and its range of co-curricular learning and service opportunities. We understand that NU transitioned to a “3-4 teaching model for tenure track faculty, allowing for higher faculty engagement with scholarship.” It is clear that with its new president, strong senior leaders, and committed faculty and staff, Norwich University is well-positioned to continue to provide students “an education that shall be American in its character” and “to qualify them for those high responsibilities resting upon a citizen in this free republic” well into the future.

The report submitted by Norwich University was accepted, and the A.S. program with majors in Cybersecurity, Computer Science, Data Analytics, and Business Administration encompassed within the institution’s accreditation because the Commission finds that the proposed program fits within the institution’s mission and fulfills the *Standards for Accreditation* and relevant Commission policies.

The Commission thanks Norwich University for its report regarding the A.S. degree program that was developed in response to the U.S. Navy’s Request for Proposals related to the establishment of a U.S. Navy Community College. We understand that, if the proposal is approved by the U.S. Navy, this program will be offered as a “closed-cohort program for qualified Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard enlisted personnel.” The program, which will be delivered online, will consist of 27 credits of general education, a minimum of 24 credits in the major, and a maximum of nine elective credits; we note with favor that the institution has a range of student services available to support online students. The Commission concurs that the A.S. degree program is aligned with Norwich University’s mission and core values.

We remind you that any plans to offer additional programs at the associate level, including additional majors for the A.S. program, will need to be reviewed by the Commission, consistent with our Policy on Substantive Change. It is generally the case that before granting general approval at a new degree level within the institution’s range of academic offerings, the Commission expects to see developed capacity at the new degree level, success with initial programs, and, as appropriate, the development of an institutional culture supporting academic programming at the new degree level.

Commission policy requires an on-site evaluation of the new A.S. program within two years of initiation and before the first class is graduated. We understand that Norwich University hopes to implement the program beginning in Fall 2021; the on-site evaluation should take place within 18 months of program implementation. The report prepared for the visit should update the Commission to reflect and assess actual experience in implementing the degree program. A copy of the relevant policy and procedures is enclosed for your information.

In addition, the institution is asked, in the report prepared in advance of the on-site evaluation to give emphasis to a matter related to our standards on *Institutional Resources* and *Students*.

We understand that Norwich University anticipates an annual enrollment of 240 students in the A.S. program and projects a positive net income each year. The Commission appreciates that NU will analyze retention and success rates of students in the program as part of its assessment plan. We look forward to learning, in the report prepared in advance of the on-site evaluation, of Norwich University's success in achieving its financial, enrollment, and retention goals for the A.S. program. We are guided here by our standards on *Institutional Resources* and *Students*:

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).

Consistent with its mission, the institution 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).

Commission policy requires an interim (fifth-year) 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 interim reports, Norwich University is asked, in Fall 2025, to report on three matters related to our standards on *Students; Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship; Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure; Educational Effectiveness; and Institutional Resources*.

The Commission is gratified to learn of Norwich University's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts which include "establishing an Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as well as a DEI committee." We appreciate that DEI is an area of ongoing attention for NU and understand that a search for a new cabinet-level position, the Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, will be launched with an anticipated May 2021 appointment date. There are also plans to create a Campus Climate Team and provide training for faculty and staff "on best practices for fair and inclusive searches." We look forward to learning, through the Fall 2025 interim report, of Norwich University's success in achieving its goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion, as informed by our standards on *Students; Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship; and Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure*:

The institution addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity among its students and provides a safe environment that fosters the intellectual and personal development of its students (*Students*, Statement of the Standard).

The institution...addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity among its faculty and academic staff. Hiring reflects the effectiveness of this process and results in a variety of academic and professional backgrounds, training, and experience (6.5).

The institution ... fosters an inclusive atmosphere within the institutional community that respects and supports people of diverse characteristics and backgrounds (9.5).

The Commission concurs with the report of the visiting team that “significant progress has been made assessing educational effectiveness.” We recognize that more work needs to be done and appreciate learning that NU has a “strong institutional commitment” to developing its assessment culture. Plans include reviewing all program goals and student learning outcomes, “creating assessment instruments to evaluate advising effectiveness,” and integrating annual assessment reports into a “program’s annual report to the Deans.” The Fall 2025 interim report will provide Norwich University an opportunity to apprise the Commission of its success in strengthening its assessment efforts across all programs and using assessment results in decision-making processes. We are guided here by our standard on *Educational Effectiveness*:

Assessment of learning is based on verifiable statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. The process of understanding what and how students are learning focuses on the course, competency, program, and institutional level. Assessment has the support of the institution’s academic and institutional leadership and the systematic involvement of faculty and appropriate staff (8.3).

The results of assessment and quantitative measures of student success are a demonstrable factor in the institution’s efforts to improve the learning opportunities and results for students (8.8).

We share the concern of the visiting team that Norwich faces financial challenges due to a negative net cash flow, decreases in tuition revenue, and increases in its discount rate. We are gratified, therefore, to learn that Norwich University is “focusing on expanding and strengthening its revenue” and is continuing “to monitor all financial parameters.” We also note that there are plans for a 2020-2023 fundraising initiative with a goal of raising \$28 million. The Commission welcomes further information, through the Fall 2025 interim report, of Norwich University’s success in achieving its goals for financial stability, as guided by our standard on *Institutional Resources*:

The institution is financially stable. Ostensible financial stability is not achieved at the expense of educational quality. Its stability and viability are not unduly dependent upon vulnerable financial resources or an historically narrow base of support (7.5).

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 scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2030 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.

We remind you that the *Standards for Accreditation* have undergone the mid-course review, and the new standards went into effect on January 1, 2021. Therefore, all reports submitted after that date, including the report prepared in advance of the on-site evaluation of the A.S. degree program and the Fall 2025 interim report, should reference the 2021 standards.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the self-study prepared by Norwich University and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Sandra Affenito, Provost & Dean of the Faculty, Lauren Wobby, Chief Financial Officer, and Michael Alfultis, 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 Mr. Alan DeForest. The institution is free to release information about the evaluation and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with the enclosed policy on Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions.

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 Lawrence M. Schall, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



George W. Tetler

GWT/jm

cc: Mr. Alan DeForest
Visiting Team

Enclosure:

Procedures for the Substantive Change Evaluation Visit
Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions