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November 8, 2006

Dr. Dennis D. Berkey
President
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
100 Institute Road
Worcester, MA 01609-2280

Dear President Berkey:

It is my pleasure to inform you that at its meeting on September 21, 2006, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the fifth-year interim report submitted by Worcester Polytechnic Institute and voted to take the following action:

that the fifth-year interim report submitted by Worcester Polytechnic Institute be accepted;

that the next comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2011 be confirmed;

that the self-study undertaken in preparation for the comprehensive evaluation give particular emphasis to the College's success with the Gateway Park Project, and its plans for new and renovated residence hall and library facilities.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

With great admiration, we commend the Institute for an excellent fifth-year report. It was well written, addressed prior concerns in detail, provided pertinent data, and addressed the new standards thoroughly. In addressing WPI's own goals for diversity among its students and faculty, the institution has diligently carried out a number of initiatives. Reorganizing the Office of Diversity Programs to focus on all areas of diversity including religion, sexual orientation, other underrepresented minority populations, and women's issues has given the institution an integrated approach to addressing its diversity goals. We were also pleased to note that WPI has developed new outreach programs to increase enrollment, retention and graduation of underrepresented minority students in STEM disciplines. As a consequence, WPI has

experienced steady growth in the numbers of students that are underrepresented minorities as well as women. Admittedly, greater diversity in the faculty remains a challenge, though half of the faculty members hired since 1996 are from the underrepresented categories of minorities and women.

We commend WPI for devoting significant new resources to enhancing the effectiveness of the research faculty and the research aspect of its mission, and we congratulate the institution for bringing in a record \$16.5 million in new grants in FY2005. The Institute's collaboration with the Worcester Business Development Corporation to develop a jointly owned Gateway Park project will provide a large multi-use research facility that will nurture research and development related to the bio-sciences and technologies, provide lab space for WPI research faculty, and also serve as a commercial facility. Development of Gateway Park will also relieve the campus of some of its current space constraints and provide additional housing for graduate students.

Finally, we are pleased to note that the Institute has completed a new campus master plan to address all of its physical resource needs, which include renovating buildings, replacing an aging steam plant and most significantly, starting construction on a new \$40 million "Life Sciences and Education" research building.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2011 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive visit at least once every ten years.

The areas that the Commission requests be given special emphasis in the self-study prepared for the Institute's next comprehensive evaluation relate to our standards on *Mission and Purposes*, *The Academic Program*, *Faculty*, and *Physical and Technological Resources*.

We look forward to learning about the progress made regarding the Gateway Park initiative as it appears to advance the Institute's mission as "a technological university committed to teaching and research, with special emphasis on science, mathematics, engineering, and technology," and it also supports the Institute's current goals to further develop the research portfolio, provide additional support to enhance the graduate student population, and support one of the major redevelopment efforts in the region. We would also appreciate an update on the plans for new and renovated residential and library facilities. In addressing these initiatives, we urge attention be given to our standards on *Mission and Purposes*, *The Academic Program*, *Faculty*, and *Physical and Technological Resources*:

The institution's purposes are concrete and realistic and further define its educational and other dimensions, including scholarship, research, and public service. Consistent with its mission, the institution endeavors to enhance the communities it serves (1.3).

The institution undertakes academic planning and evaluation as part of its overall planning and evaluation to enhance the achievement of institutional mission and program objectives. These activities are realistic and take into account stated goals and available resources. The evaluation of existing programs includes an external perspective and assessment of their effectiveness. Additions and deletions of programs are consistent with institutional mission and capacity, faculty expertise, student needs, and the availability of sufficient resources required for the development and improvement of academic programs. The institution allocates resources on the basis of its academic planning, needs, and objectives (4.9).

Where compatible with the institution's purposes and reflective of the level of degrees offered, research is undertaken by faculty and students directed toward the creation,

revision, or application of knowledge. Physical, technological, and administrative resources together with academic services are adequate to support the institution's commitment to research and creative activity. Faculty workloads reflect this commitment. Policies and procedures related to research, including ethical considerations, are established and clearly communicated throughout the institution. Faculty exercise a substantive role in the development and administration of research policies and practices (5.20).

The institution's physical and technological resources, including classrooms, laboratories, network infrastructure, materials, equipment, and buildings and grounds, whether owned or rented, are commensurate with institutional purposes. They are designed, maintained, and managed at both on- and off-campus sites in a manner that serves institutional needs. Proper management, maintenance, and operation of all physical facilities, including student housing provided by the institution, are accomplished by adequate and competent staffing (8.1).

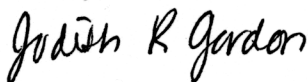
You will note that the Commission has specified no length or term of accreditation. Accreditation is a continuing relationship that is reconsidered when necessary. Thus, while the Commission has indicated the timing of the next comprehensive evaluation, the schedule should not be unduly emphasized because it is subject to change.

You are encouraged to share this letter with all of the Institute'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. Donald Peterson. The institution is free to release information about the evaluation 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 Barbara Brittingham, Director of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Judith R. Gordon

JRG/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Donald Peterson