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NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES, INC.  
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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G. Fitzgerald

June 1, 2016

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Dr. John W. Miller  
President  
Central Connecticut State University  
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Central Connecticut State University  
New Britain, CT

Dear President Miller:

It is my pleasure to inform you that at its meeting on April 22, 2016, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the report submitted by Central Connecticut State University regarding its plans to offer a Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice program and voted to take the following action:

that the substantive change proposal to offer a Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice (DNAP) program submitted by the University be accepted and the DNAP be encompassed within the institution's accreditation, with an effective date of April 22, 2016;

that the University's accreditation at the doctoral level be limited to the Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice and the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, and the institution be reminded that, should it plan to offer additional programs at the doctoral level, it needs to submit a report to the Commission, in keeping with the Policy on Substantive Change;

that an on-site evaluation of the DNAP program be included as part of the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2018;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, as well as the matters specified in our letter dated November 7, 2013, the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2018 comprehensive evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in implementing its DNAP program with attention to:

1. assessing student learning outcomes with emphasis on assuring that students are achieving levels of progress required by the Council of Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Programs;
2. assuring that clinical practicum advisors and capstone committee advisors are sufficient in number and appropriately qualified;

3. ensuring that library and other information resources are sufficient to support the DNAP program.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The report submitted by Central Connecticut State University was accepted, and the Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice degree program 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 commends Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) for preparing a comprehensive and cogent report detailing its plans to phase out its MS in Anesthesia program and instead to offer a Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice degree program to meet the Council of Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Programs (COA) requirement that all entry-level nurse anesthetists hold a doctoral degree. According to the proposal, the DNAP program will be offered in a hybrid format and will comprise two specializations: a three-year (including summers), 81-87 credit entry-level specialization that prepares qualified baccalaureate-degree students to become Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNA); and a two-year, 33-42 credit advanced specialization for master's level practicing nurse anesthetists to increase their knowledge of biology and anesthesia. We note with favor that the DNAP is well integrated into the University's governance structure and that a faculty member in the Biology Department has been designated as the coordinator of the proposed program. We are further pleased to learn a doctorally prepared clinical anesthetist will be hired to supplement the four faculty members teaching in the current MS in Anesthesia program and a PhD-level physiologist will soon be hired to oversee doctoral capstone projects. As enrollment in the DNAP increases, the University will hire appropriately qualified part-time faculty as well as an additional full-time doctorally prepared physiologist. In addition, we note positively that the University has established program learning outcomes for the DNAP based upon the competencies required by COA.

We remind you that any plans to offer additional programs at the doctoral level 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 the higher degree level within the institution's range of academic offerings, the Commission expects to see developed capacity at the higher degree, success with initial programs, and, as appropriate, the development of an institutional culture supporting academic programming at the higher degree.

Commission policy requires an on-site evaluation of the new program within two years of its initiation and before the first class is graduated. As Central Connecticut State University is scheduled for a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2018, we ask that the on-site evaluation of the DNAP program be included as part of that evaluation.

In addition to the information included in all self-studies, as well as the matters specified in our letter dated November 7, 2013, we ask that the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2018 comprehensive evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in implementing its DNAP program with attention to three matters related to our standards on *The Academic Program*, *Faculty*, and *Library and Other Information Resources*.

According to the report, CCSU will evaluate student learning outcomes using a variety of assessment methods, including portfolio assessments, capstone projects, and a comprehensive examination to ensure that students are progressing through the DNAP program and achieving the competencies required by COA for the CRNA practitioner at the clinical doctorate level. We look forward to learning, in the self-study submitted in advance of the Fall 2018 comprehensive evaluation, of the University's success in assessing student learning outcomes in the DNAP

program with emphasis on assuring that students are achieving levels of progress required by the Council of Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Programs. Our standard on *The Academic Program* is relevant here:

The institution implements and provides support for systematic and broad-based assessment of what and how students are learning through their academic program and experiences outside the classroom. Assessment is based on clear statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. Assessment provides useful information that helps the institution to improve the experiences provided for students, as well as to assure that the level of student achievement is appropriate for the degree awarded (4.48).

The institution's approach to understanding student learning focuses on the course, program, and institutional level. Evidence is considered at the appropriate level of focus, with the results being a demonstrable factor in improving the learning opportunities and results for students (4.49).

We understand from the proposal that "during the clinical practicum portion of the DNAP program, students will be advised by one of the program directors of the CCSU affiliated hospital schools of nurse anesthesia." During the capstone portion of the program, the DNAP Program Coordinator will coordinate capstone committees that will consist "at a minimum" of two advisors: the committee chair who will be a doctorally qualified, full-time CCSU faculty member of the Department of Biology, and at least one other appropriately qualified CCSU faculty member or external advisor who will not be required to hold a doctoral degree but "should be a CRNA (with minimum of two years of experience), physician, or other professional." We ask that the Fall 2018 self-study provide evidence that clinical practicum advisors and capstone committee advisors are sufficient in number and appropriately qualified, in keeping with our standard on *Faculty*:

The preparation and qualifications of all faculty are appropriate to the field and level of their assignments. Qualifications are measured by advanced degrees held, evidence of scholarship, advanced study, creative activities, teaching abilities, and relevant professional experience, training, and credentials (5.2).

The institution has in place an effective system of academic advising that meets student needs for information and advice and is compatible with its educational objectives. Faculty and other personnel responsible for academic advising are adequately informed and prepared to discharge their advising functions. Resources are adequate to ensure the quality of advising for students regardless of the location of instruction or the mode of delivery (5.19).

The proposal includes evidence that library and information resources at CCSU are sufficient to support students "in the existing programs," and we note with approval that the University has allocated funding to expand its library holdings through the purchase of subscriptions and other resource materials. We seek assurance, through the Fall 2018 self-study, that library and other information resources are sufficient to support the DNAP program in accordance with our standard on *Library and Information Resources*:

Institutional planning and resource allocation support the development of library, information resources and technology appropriate to the institution's mission and academic program. The institution provides sufficient and consistent financial support for the library and the effective maintenance and improvement of the institution's information resources and instructional and information technology (7.2).

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We remind you that the *Standards for Accreditation* have been revised, and the new standards go into effect on July 1, 2016. Therefore, the self-study prepared by Central Connecticut State University in advance of the Fall 2018 comprehensive evaluation should reference the 2016 standards.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Central Connecticut State University and hopes its preparation contributed to institutional improvement. It appreciates your cooperation with the effort to provide public assurance of the quality of higher education in New England.

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. Nicholas M. Donofrio. 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 Barbara Brittingham, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Patricia Maguire Meservey

PMM/jm

Enclosures

cc: Mr. Nicholas M. Donofrio