



April 29, 2022

Dr. Darryl Reome
Campus Chief Executive Officer
Tunxis Community College
271 Scott Swamp Road
Farmington, CT 06032-3187

Dear Dr. Reome:

I write to inform you that at its meeting on March 4, 2022, the New England Commission of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Tunxis Community College:

that Tunxis Community College be continued in accreditation;

that, should the anticipated consolidation of the Connecticut community colleges into Connecticut State Community College not be completed as planned by July 1, 2023, Tunxis Community College submit a report by January 1, 2024 for consideration in Spring 2024 that provides an update about its success in:

1. achieving its enrollment goals;
2. assuring the sufficiency of resources to support its mission;

that, subject to modification pending the outcome of the proposed consolidation of the Connecticut community colleges, an interim report be scheduled for submission in Fall 2026 and a comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2031.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

Tunxis Community College is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

The Commission commends Tunxis Community College (TCC) for its commitment to its mission to offer its students “a quality, yet affordable education in an accessible and supportive environment.” As acknowledged in both the self-study and the team report, the College is fulfilling its mission during a time of “significant uncertainty” as the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) System proceeds with plans to consolidate the state’s 12 community colleges. The Commission appreciates that while some on campus have expressed “confusion” and/or “concern” about the consolidation, all members of the campus community are “demonstrably committed” to student success. We join the team in congratulating the institution on its “thoughtful, purposeful and innovative use of resources” to maintain its classrooms, laboratories, and student engagement spaces, and we note with particular favor the establishment of the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center. The Commission is gratified to learn

that the College has hired 17 Guided Pathways advisors to provide “holistic” services to its students and that it is implementing recommendations made by its SOAR (Student Outcomes and Retention) team to address achievement gaps. The institution’s efforts to support adult learners are also commendable, as are its PASS (Promoting Academically Successful Students) and Fresh Start programs and the changes it has made to developmental education to support greater student success in college-level English and math classes. We further note with favor the College’s “strategic use of federal COVID-19 assistance” to assist students and rebuild reserves and its successful pivot to a “mostly remote campus learning environment” during the pandemic.

The Commission understands that CSCU anticipates the consolidation of the 12 Connecticut community colleges into Connecticut State Community College will be completed by July 1, 2023, at which time each of the 12 colleges, including Tunxis, will relinquish its separate accreditation. Should this timetable be delayed and the consolidation not be accomplished as planned, Tunxis Community College is asked to submit a progress report by January 1, 2024 for consideration in Spring 2024 to address two matters related to our standards on *Students* and *Institutional Resources*.

The Commission shares the concern of the visiting team about the “downward trend in enrollment” Tunxis Community College has experienced. While we appreciate that many community colleges have seen decreased enrollment and that the trend has been exacerbated by the pandemic, the College’s success in rebuilding enrollment is critical to its financial stability given that tuition and fees represent “significant revenue” for the College. We are pleased to learn that there is optimism at TCC that the “enrollment momentum” experienced prior to the pandemic will return, and we understand that the College anticipates both higher retention due to improved student services and increased new-student enrollment resulting from use of “system-wide research and marketing for recruitment and enrollment.” Consistent with our standards on *Students* and *Institutional Resources*, the Spring 2024 progress report will afford TCC an opportunity to demonstrate its success in achieving its enrollment goals:

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).

The institution demonstrates its ability to admit students who can be successful in the institution’s academic program, including specifically recruited populations. The institution’s goals for retention and graduation reflect institutional purposes, and the results are used to inform recruitment and the review of programs and services (5.6).

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 Commission appreciates the forthright discussion in the self-study about the College’s “struggles” with finances and its acknowledgment that TCC may experience deficits in FY2023 and FY2024. These struggles are also highlighted in the report of the visiting team, as are concerns about the adequacy of staffing in some departments and the challenges the College has faced with respect to engaging in strategic and financial planning. We are gratified to learn that TCC currently has \$2.7 million in unrestricted net reserves, the “highest level in over a decade,” and we note with favor the institution’s intention, should its revenue projections not be realized, to undertake contingency planning and “adjust expenses and other budgetary variables in a manner least disruptive to students.” The Spring 2024 progress report will enable Tunxis Community College to present evidence that it “preserves and enhances available financial resources sufficient to

support its mission” (7.4) and that its “financial planning, including contingency planning, is integrated with overall planning and evaluation processes” (7.14).

Finally, consistent with its decennial evaluation cycle and its Policy on Periodic Review, the Commission establishes the following monitoring schedule for Tunxis Community College: an interim report to be submitted for consideration in Fall 2026 and a comprehensive evaluation to take place in Fall 2031. This schedule may be modified pending the outcome of the proposed consolidation of the Connecticut community colleges.

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.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the self-study prepared by Tunxis Community College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, James Lombella, Regional President, North-West Region, Connecticut Community Colleges; Gennaro DeAngelis, Chief Regional Fiscal Officer, North-West Region, Connecticut Community Colleges; Amy Feest, Associate Vice President of Programs and Curriculum for Connecticut State Community College; Michael Rooke, Interim President of Connecticut State Community College; and Lucille Jordan, 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 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 Mr. Matt Fleury and Mr. Terrence Cheng. 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.

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. Matt Fleury
Mr. Terrence Cheng
Visiting Team

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions