

George W. Tetter, Chair (2022)  
Worcester, MA

Russell Carey, Vice Chair (2023)  
Brown University

Eleanor Baker (2021)  
Falmouth, ME

Peter L. Ebb (2021)  
Trustee Member, Boston, MA

Gregory W. Fowler (2021)  
Southern New Hampshire  
University

Dennis M. Hanno (2021)  
Wheaton College

Ellen L. Kennedy (2021)  
Berkshire Community College

David Quigley (2021)  
Boston College

Abdallah A. Sfeir (2021)  
Lebanese American University

John M. Sweeney (2021)  
Providence College

Elaine Collins (2022)  
Northern Vermont University

Harry E. Dumay (2022)  
College of Our Lady of the Elms

P. Michael Lahan (2022)  
Norwich, CT

Jeffrey J. McMahan (2022)  
Burlington, VT

Peggy Newell (2022)  
Harvard University

Francesco C. Cesareo (2023)  
Assumption University

F. Javier Cevallos (2023)  
Framingham State University

Rick Daniels (2023)  
Cohasset, MA

Matthew Derr (2023)  
Sterling College

Pam Y. Eddinger (2023)  
Bunker Hill Community College

Kimberly M. Goff-Crews (2023)  
Yale University

James Herbert (2023)  
University of New England

Susan D. Huard (2023)  
Community College System of NH

Scott Jordan (2023)  
University of Connecticut

Todd Leach (2023)  
University System of  
New Hampshire

Jean MacCormack (2023)  
Trustee, Bridgewater State  
University

David Proulx (2023)  
Rhode Island School of Design

Andrew Shennan (2023)  
Wellesley College

Michaele Whelan (2023)  
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 13, 2021

Rev. Philip L. Boroughs, S.J.  
President  
College of the Holy Cross  
One College Street, 119 Fenwick Hall  
Worcester, MA 01610

Dear President Boroughs:

I write 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 College of the Holy Cross:

that College of the Holy Cross be continued in accreditation;

that the institution be asked to submit a report for consideration in Fall 2023 that gives emphasis to the institution's success in:

1. ensuring that its governance structures, decision-making processes, policies, and communications are effective and inclusive;
2. ensuring that the new president and Board of Trustees are engaged in addressing its governance issues;

that submission of the report be followed by a visit to validate its contents;

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. continuing to enhance the effectiveness of its governance structures and communication processes;
2. achieving its goals for faculty, staff, and student diversity, equity, and inclusion;
3. integrating assessment activities across the College and using assessment data to make improvements;
4. implementing its strategic plan;

3 Burlington Woods Drive, Suite 100, Burlington, MA 01803-4514  
Toll Free: 855-886-3272 | Tel: 781-425-7785 | Fax: 781-425-1001

[neche.org](http://neche.org)

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Spring 2030.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

College of the Holy Cross is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

Along with the visiting team, the Commission commends College of the Holy Cross (Holy Cross) for its remarkable achievements as a Jesuit liberal arts institution and its continued commitment to education as well as to “supporting a culture of service and community engagement.” We appreciate Holy Cross’ introspection and candor regarding its strengths and challenges. Particularly noteworthy among its strengths is the ongoing focus on student achievement and success, resulting in a graduation rate that is consistently over 90%. The Commission concurs with the College’s assessment that it “has a strong record of translating its strategic priorities into tangible outcomes” as evidenced by the success of initiatives such as Vocare, Arts Transcending Borders, and the ENGAGE Summit. We are gratified to learn that the College’s recently completed fundraising campaign, “Become More,” resulted in commitments of \$420 million exceeding its \$400 million goal. The Commission appreciates that Holy Cross’ 2015-2020 strategic plan, “Mind, Body, Spirit, Community,” has been “almost completely executed” and that the past decade has seen the “largest design and construction effort in the College’s history” including a new residential hall, new and renovated athletic spaces, and a new contemplative center. We further note positively that, over the past decade, the College hired approximately 30 additional FTE positions to maintain a 10:1 student-faculty ratio as enrollment increased. The Commission understands that the College’s president, Father Philip Boroughs, will step down in June 2021. We thank Father Boroughs for his many years of service and leadership to the College of the Holy Cross and his contributions to higher education in New England. As the institution prepares to transition to a new president, it is clear that College of the Holy Cross is well-positioned to “lead all its members to make the best of their own talents, to work together, to be sensitive to one another, to serve others, and to seek justice within and beyond the Holy Cross community” well into the future.

The items the institution is asked to report on in the report prepared in advance of the focused evaluation scheduled for Fall 2023 are related to our standard on *Organization and Governance*.

The Commission shares the concern of the visiting team that there “appears to be a lack of clarity regarding the roles and responsibility of faculty, staff, and administrators in shared governance” and that a “severe and potentially debilitating trust deficit” exists among those groups. We note positively the steps taken by College of the Holy Cross since the comprehensive evaluation visit to address these matters including clarifying processes and weekly open conversations between the faculty and provost. The Commission appreciates that the College recognizes that “more work – and deeper work – is needed” and that there is a commitment to restoring trust in shared governance. As guided by our standard on *Organization and Governance*, the report prepared in advance of the Fall 2023 focused evaluation visit will provide College of the Holy Cross with an opportunity to apprise the Commission on its success in ensuring that its governance structures, decision-making processes, policies, and communications are effective and inclusive:

The institution has a system of governance that facilitates the accomplishment of its mission and purposes and supports institutional effectiveness and integrity (*Organization and Governance*, Statement of the Standard).

The authority, responsibilities, and relationships among the governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and sponsoring entity (if any) are clearly described in the institution’s by-laws, or an equivalent document, and in a table of organization that displays the working order of the institution. The board, administration, staff, and faculty understand and fulfill their

respective roles as set forth in the institution's official documents and are provided with the appropriate information to undertake their respective roles (3.1).

The institution's organizational structure, decision-making processes, and policies are clear and consistent with its mission and support institutional effectiveness. The institution's system of governance involves the participation of all appropriate constituencies and includes regular communication among them (3.2).

The effectiveness of the institution's organizational structure and system of governance is improved through periodic and systematic review (3.19).

Relatedly, we appreciate learning that the "frequency of communication has increased" among the Board of Trustees and its subcommittees. We note with favor that the "College is considering further opportunities for faculty/Board interaction" as the Board plays an important role in the institution's governance processes. As noted above, the Commission also understands that a search for the next president of College of the Holy Cross is currently underway. As the College continues to examine and strengthen its governance processes, we look forward to learning, through the Fall 2023 focused evaluation report, of the success of Holy Cross' new president and Board of Trustees to work collaboratively to address its governance issues. We are informed here by our standard on *Organization and Governance* (cited above and below):

Utilizing the institutional governance structure, the board establishes and maintains appropriate and productive channels of communication among its members and with the institutional community (3.9).

The chief executive officer, through an appropriate administrative structure, effectively manages the institution so as to fulfill its purposes and objectives and establishes the means to assess the effectiveness of the institution. The chief executive officer manages and allocates resources in keeping with institutional purposes and objectives and assesses the effectiveness of the institution. The chief executive officer assures that the institution employs faculty and staff sufficient in role, number, and qualifications appropriate to the institution's mission, size, and scope (3.12).

In accordance with established institutional mechanisms and procedures, the chief executive officer and senior administrators consult with faculty, students, other administrators, and staff, and are appropriately responsive to their concerns, needs, and initiatives. The institution's internal governance provides for the appropriate participation of its constituencies, promotes communications, and effectively advances the quality of the institution (3.13).

A copy of the procedures for the Fall 2023 focused evaluation are enclosed for your information and use.

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, the College is asked, in the Fall 2025 interim report, to give emphasis to its success in enhancing the effectiveness of its governance structures by continuing to address the areas specified above for attention in the Fall 2023 focused evaluation visit. The Commission recognizes that these matters do not lend themselves to rapid resolution and will require the College's sustained attention over time; hence, we ask that further information be provided in the interim report. The College is also asked, in Fall 2025, to report on three additional matters related to our standards on *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship; Students; Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure; Educational Effectiveness; and Planning and Evaluation*.

The Commission is gratified to learn that Holy Cross “has undertaken a series of measures with a view toward diversifying the faculty” and that the percentage of faculty of color increased from 13% in 2011 to 18% in 2018. We understand from the visiting team report that staff diversity has increased from 11% to 12.5% since 2015. The Commission concurs with the visiting team’s assessment that while there is a commitment to faculty and staff diversity and retention, “more improvement is needed.” We further note that Holy Cross has engaged in a “critical self-examination” of its campus climate for faculty, staff, and students, and we are gratified to learn that the College continues to “build on recent progress and momentum” in this area. The Fall 2025 interim report will provide an opportunity for College of the Holy Cross to update the Commission on its success in achieving its goals for faculty, staff, and student diversity, equity, and inclusion, as informed by our standards on *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship; Students; and Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure:*

The institution ensures equal employment opportunity consistent with legal requirements and any other dimensions of its choosing; compatible with its mission and purposes, it 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 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 ...fosters an inclusive atmosphere within the institutional community that respects and supports people of diverse characteristics and backgrounds (9.5).

College of the Holy Cross’ progress in assessing and understanding student learning is notable; efforts include ongoing assessment of programs and majors as well as experiential and co-curricular learning. We appreciate that assessment practices incorporate direct and indirect measures. The Commission is gratified to learn that the College established a goal to develop a “multi-year college-wide assessment plan” that will provide a “more holistic assessment of student learning at Holy Cross.” In keeping with our standard on *Educational Effectiveness*, we anticipate being appraised, through the Fall 2025 interim report, of the College’s progress towards this goal:

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 understand that College of the Holy Cross began a strategic planning process in Fall 2020 with the goal of creating a plan that will be “owned and embraced” by the entire community. Working groups will develop strategic priorities and a draft plan will be submitted to the Board of Trustees in late spring 2021. The new president will have an opportunity to provide input on the plan with a “final report submitted to the Board for their consideration in fall 2021.” We look forward to learning, as part of the Fall 2025 interim report, of the College’s success in finalizing and implementing its new strategic plan. We remind you of our standard on *Planning and Evaluation:*

Planning and evaluation are systematic, comprehensive, broad-based, integrated, and appropriate to the institution. They involve the participation of individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes and include external perspectives. Results of planning and evaluation are regularly communicated to appropriate institutional constituencies. The institution allocates sufficient resources for its planning and evaluation efforts (2.1).

The institution has a demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning (2.5).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2030 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years.

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 reports requested above, should reference the 2021 standards.

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 College of the Holy Cross and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Margaret Freije, Provost & Dean of the College, Denise Schaeffer, Director of Strategic Initiatives, and Jo Ann Rooney, 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. Richard Patterson. 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. Richard Patterson  
Visiting Team

Enclosures:

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