



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

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April 15, 2019

Dr. Elizabeth H. Sibolski
President
Middle States Commission on Higher Education
3624 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Dear Dr. Sibolski:

This letter is in response to the report of the follow-up Team visit to the University of Maryland, College Park on March 31 – April 2, 2019.

We have reviewed the substantive report of the Team and accept its findings. The report identifies several concerns related to the University's ability to comply with Standard VII, which requires "evidence of a clearly articulated and transparent governance structure that outlines roles, responsibilities, and accountability for decision making by each constituency."

While the findings point to concerns that are external to the University, and may be beyond its direct control to resolve, I will offer a few observations and indicate actions that we will undertake to move the campus towards compliance. I hope these comments will provide useful context for the Commission when it meets in June 2019.

1. The Team did not comment on our campus governance policies and procedures. We interpret this as a confirmation of the 2017 external team's commendation of our shared governance practices, with a "vital University Senate" that includes broad representation, clarity of its role in decision-making, and a collegial working relationship with the president. While the University Senate experienced turmoil during fall 2018, the roots of the relationship between the Senate and the administration remain strong.
2. Current State regulations and Board policies and procedures are not sufficiently specific in some areas to clearly demonstrate alignment with the requirements of Middle States Standard VII. We will carefully review the relevant documents and suggest revisions that would bring them in alignment with the Middle States standards. Examples include, but may not be limited to, the Board of Regents Bylaws (specifically articles I and VII)¹, the Board Policy VII-10.00² requiring prior review of proposed employment agreements on the Regents'

¹ See

https://president.umd.edu/sites/president.umd.edu/files/documents/policies/BYLAWS_OF_THE_BOARD_OF_%20REGENTS.pdf

² See <https://www.usmd.edu/regents/bylaws/SectionVII/VII1000.pdf>.

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behalf, and several articles in the Maryland Annotated Code³. While the university does not have the authority to revise Board policy or State law, we will work with the Board and the University System of Maryland (USM) leadership to pursue revisions that align with Standard VII.

3. In the 2019 Maryland legislative session, a bill was enacted by both the Senate ([SB0719](#)) and the House ([HB0533](#)), requiring changes to the composition and practices of the Board of Regents to be in place by July 1, 2019. Changes in composition include an increase in the number of Board members from 17 to 21, with two members selected by President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House, respectively. Additionally, one member must have experience in higher education administration. Changes in practice include the requirement of live and archived video streaming of all open meetings, time for public comment, and the public recording of all votes taken in either open or closed sessions. Board members are also expected to undergo training on “governance policies, fiduciary responsibilities, legal obligations, oversight of personnel policies, and oversight of constituent institutions.”
4. As an example of progress in improved communication and shared governance between the Board, the USM office, and the University, Board Chair Linda Gooden invited me to meet with the full Board to provide updates on several issues of importance to our campus, including update on the athletic reforms undertaken over the past several months. I also appreciate the periodic meetings with the four-member Executive Committee – comprised of the Board Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and USM Chancellor – that has helped restore the trusting and healthy relationship that prevailed during the first 7+ years of my presidency.

Finally, while the University is not in a position, on its own, to ensure that the regulations, policies, and procedures of the State, Board, and University are aligned with Standard VII, we welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively together, and with our campus governance bodies, so that the flagship institution of the State of Maryland operates with the “appropriate autonomy” essential to carrying out its academic mission and goals.

I thank President Barron, Dr. Mayer, and Dr. Colón Plumey for their visit to our campus and for their careful investigation and report.

Sincerely,



Wallace D. Loh
President

³ See the Maryland Statutes on the role of the Board (http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2019RS/Statute_Web/ged/10-208.pdf) and the role of the University System of Maryland (http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2019RS/Statute_Web/ged/10-209.pdf).