



January 16, 2025

Susan L. Mingo
President
Washington County Community College
One College Drive
Calais, ME 04619

Dear President Mingo:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on November 21, 2024, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the report submitted by Washington County Community College regarding its offering of online certificate and associate degree programs at four correctional facilities in Maine (Mountain View Correctional Facility, Southern Maine Women's Reentry Center, Downeast Correctional Facility, and Women's Center at Maine Correctional Facility) as well as the report of the evaluator, and took the following action:

that the report regarding Washington County Community College's online certificate and associate degree programs offered at the four correctional facilities (Mountain View Correctional Facility, Southern Maine Women's Reentry Center, Downeast Correctional Facility, and Women's Center at Maine Correctional Facility) be accepted and inclusion of the programs within the institution's accreditation be confirmed;

that Washington County Community College be granted general approval to offer distance education certificate and associate degree prison education programs;

that Washington County Community College submit a report by January 15, 2026 for consideration in Spring 2026 on its success in implementing its online prison education programs with attention to confirming the oversight entity's "best interest determination";

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Spring 2029 be confirmed.

The Commission accepted the report regarding Washington County Community College's (WCCC) online certificate and associate degree programs (Associate Degrees in Business Management, Human Services, Liberal Studies, and Production Technician, as well as its Certificate Programs in Entrepreneurship, Substance Use and Recovery, and Production Technician) offered at the four Maine correctional facilities and confirmed inclusion of the programs within the institution's accreditation because the report was responsive to the concerns raised in our letter of June 13, 2023 and provided evidence that the institution is implementing distance learning prison education programming at the additional locations in a manner consistent with Commission standards and policies.

The Commission thanks Washington County Community College for its report and applauds the College's commitment "to ensuring that justice-involved individuals

within Maine's adult correctional facilities have equitable access to postsecondary and workforce educational opportunities through WCCC." We note with favor that students enrolled in the College's distance learning prison education programs are achieving outcomes comparable with those of the institution's other matriculated students. Incarcerated students have an average GPA of 3.0 (compared with 3.01 for all students) and successfully complete 86.8% of all credits attempted (compared with 91.2% for all students). The Commission further appreciates learning that faculty and staff "appear fully invested in the program" and that incarcerated students are able to "fully integrate into the WCCC community and take part in all the services and resources provided by the college to any online student."

The Commission grants general approval to Washington County Community College to offer its certificate and associates degree prison education programs through distance education. We appreciate that the College has "built a robust framework for supporting all students, including those who are justice-involved," and we note favorably the availability of online tutoring, academic and career advising, and mental health services to the WCCC's incarcerated students.

The Commission commends Washington County Community College for receiving approval, on June 13, 2024, from the United States Department of Education to offer Pell-Eligible Prison Education Programs (PEP). Consistent with PEP requirements, we ask that WCCC submit a progress report in Spring 2026 that updates the Commission on its success in implementing its distance education prison education programs with attention to confirming the oversight entity's "best interest determination."

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2029 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the reports prepared by Washington County Community College and the evaluator and 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.

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 Peter DelGreco and David Daigler. 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.

If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Lawrence M. Schall, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Michael Whelan

MW/sjp

cc Peter DelGreco
David Daigler
Evaluator

Attachment: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions