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MINUTES OF THE EMERGENCY MEETING OF AUGUST 2, 2018

An emergency meeting of the Higher Education Commission was held at 3 Barrell Court, Concord, New Hampshire at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, August 2, 2018 with the following members present:

Michele Perkins, Chair
Donald Birx, Vice Chair
Sr. Paula Marie Buley (via telephone)
John Curran (via telephone)
Todd Leach
Mark Laliberte
Paul LeBlanc (via telephone)
Charles Lloyd (via telephone)
David Mahoney
Kim Mooney (via telephone)
Mark Rubinstein
Melinda Treadwell (via telephone)

The following members were unable to attend:

James Dean
Steven DiSalvo
Frank Edelblut
Ross Gittell
Peter Koch

- 1) Chair Perkins called the meeting to order.
- 2) Mr. Leach moved, seconded by Mr. Birx, to accept the minutes of June 19, 2018. The motion passed without dissent, with Mr. Laliberte abstaining.
- 3) Richard Gustafson, Chair, presented the request from Signum University to operate in New Hampshire and offer the Master of Arts degree program in Language and Literature with concentrations on Tolkien Studies, Imaginative Literature, Classical, Medieval, and Renaissance Literature, and Germanic Philology.

As Signum University is an entirely virtual institution with all processes online, the evaluation was held at the NH Department of Education, 101 Pleasant Street, Concord, NH on July 17, 2018. Other evaluators included Mr. Eric M. Norman, Vice President for Finance and CFO, Saint Anselm College, Dr. John Slefinger, English Lecturer, Keene State College and Saint Anselm College, Dr. Scott A. Stanley, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Granite State College

This was a full-day process of face-to-face discussions with President Corey Olsen and two staff members, and a series of online discussions with thirteen (13) other faculty, staff, students and trustees. These online conversations took place in as many as three different conference rooms so individual evaluation team members could focus on their assigned Standards. Discussions were wide ranging with several opportunities to talk more than once with Signum staff to pursue follow-up questions and to gain access to additional documentation via the Signum website.

The current process utilizes a series of independent software systems to generate and maintain students' academic and financial records. Student records are cloud based, backed up hourly and daily. Written policies regarding access and duplication of student records are lacking, but controls are reported to be in place. There is a reliance on the third-party systems for this functionality. All Commission standards were met.

The evaluation committee recommended the Commission vote to approve Signum University to operate in New Hampshire and offer the Master of Arts degree program in Language and Literature with concentrations on Tolkien Studies, Imaginative Literature, Classical, Medieval, and Renaissance Literature, and Germanic Philology through December 31, 2020, with annual reports due on December 31, 2018 and December 31, 2019. The Commission would conduct an evaluation team visit in the summer/fall of 2020 regarding continued program approval. These annual reports would provide general updates on the University's operations, including enrollments, budget and finance, curricular changes, and personnel matters. In addition, these annual reports are to address progress or completion of the following:

- 1) Ascertain changes to the University Bylaws to reflect the recommendations made by the evaluation team, along with minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees.
- 2) Achievement of incorporation of the University in the State of New Hampshire.
- 3) Re-establishment of 501(c),(3) designation as a not-for-profit organization by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service.
- 4) Provide an updated organizational chart which identifies the several units of the University and the Divisions within the Signum Graduate School, along with the names and responsibilities of the Division Leads.
- 5) Document evidence of continued efforts to ensure that courses offered maintain appropriate rigor for graduate level work.
- 6) Document the increasing percentages of courses being offered by faculty holding doctoral degrees.

- 7) Develop a library plan that accounts for personnel and fiscal resources needed to serve projected enrollment goals. Access to interlibrary loan services and other local library services are needed for students conducting research in medieval, early modern or related literary periods.
- 8) Develop and implement a technology plan that brings increasing integration and improved internal and external security to the campus in the cloud. This includes an operations manual addressing access to and responsibilities for enrollment, student, human resources and financial data.
- 9) Develop a realistic three year rolling financial plan that builds directly from actual enrollment and other revenue streams. The plan should identify current and projected revenues and expenses, including an annual independent CPA's review report, for the several units within the University, as well as a roll-up total for the whole University.
- 10) The University, as a cloud based enterprise, must stay attuned and be in compliance with the laws, rules, and regulations which govern student enrollment, human resources, financial and other operational disclosures. Likewise, consumer protection information and processes need to be easy to access on the University website. Demonstration of compliance and ease of access to such information is expected.
- 11) Per Hedc 405.10 (f) (4) *"Provide evidence to demonstrate fiscal soundness including... An existing realistic plan addressing issues... in the event of a significant financial challenge or actual financial crisis to the institution or program, and reflecting significant assets to guarantee student protection."* This protection could be in the form of a surety bond, term deposit, or letter of credit sufficient to protect students enrolled at any given time.

Apprise the Commission of the status, progress and outcome of the University's initiatives to receive degree-granting authority from the New Hampshire General Court.

Apprise the Commission of the status, progress and outcome of the University's initiatives to achieve accreditation from the Distance Education Accreditation Commission (DEAC). This includes providing copies of all correspondence and reports to/from the University and the DEAC regarding the University's work with the DEAC. In addition, the Commission shall be invited to attend any site visit(s) as an observer.

This approval was with the condition that the Commission receives the required annual reports and that the Commission receives current information on the status of legislation regarding degree-granting authority and accreditation activities with the DEAC.

This approval was also contingent upon Signum University obtaining evidence to demonstrate fiscal soundness in the form of a surety bond, term deposit, or letter of credit sufficient to protect students enrolled at any given time.

Sr. Paula Marie Buley moved, seconded by Mr. Rubinstein, to accept the recommendations. The motion passed without dissent.

The meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m.