University of the Virgin Islands

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Office of the President

March 28, 2008

Dr. Jessica S. Kozloff, Chair
Middle States Commission on Higher Education
3624 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104-2680

Dear Dr. Kozloff:

Pursuant to a meeting of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), a letter dated November 16, 2007 was received by the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) on the status of its application for reaffirmation of accreditation. The letter, which included Statement of Accreditation Status (SAS) attachment, requests a progress letter from UVI. The progress letter, documenting the development and implementation of a faculty handbook that includes policies related to promotion and tenure (Standard 10), is due April 1, 2008.

The enclosed document, then, responds to MSCHE's requirement that a progress letter be submitted regarding UVI's accreditation status. The university values its continuing relationship with Middle States and is working to address the issues raised by the most recent site visit.

Sincerely,

LaVerne E. Ragster, Ph.D.
President

Enclosures

pc: Dr. Auguste Rimpel
UVI Board Chair

Dr. Andrea Lex,
MSCHE Liaison

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Progress Letter to Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)

i. Abstract
ii. State of a faculty policy document at the time of site visit
iii. Reaffirmation of accreditation conditions from Middle States Commission on Higher Education
iv. Progress since the April 2007 Re-Affirmation Site Visit by Visitation Team
    a. Process
    b. Outcomes
v. Future development
vi. Conclusion
vii. Appendices

Abstract

The reaffirmation of accreditation site visit to the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) by MSCHE occurred in April 2007. At MSCHE's November meeting, the university's accreditation standing was reaffirmed with conditions. In particular, UVI was asked to provide a progress report on the status of a faculty policy manual. Realizing the importance of a faculty policy manual, the university continued working in earnest during the summer following the visit and continued this work throughout the fall and spring semesters of the 2007-2008 academic year. As a result of the joint activities of the faculty and administration, the Board of Trustees (BOT) approved completed sections of the 2008 Faculty Policy Manual (FPM) for use in conjunction with the 2003 Teaching Faculty Policy Manual (TFPM). It is expected that a completed 2008 FPM will be available for review and approval by the date of the next Board meeting in June 2008.

State of the Faculty Policy Document at the time of Site Visit

The policies governing the teaching faculty were not aligned with the June 2004 University of the Virgin Islands Board of Trustees (BOT) approved administrative structure which was subsequently implemented on July 1, 2005. Because steps were not taken timely to align the existing policies with the administrative restructuring prior to its implementation, there were serious and significant policy and structural contradictions resulting in administrative challenges and general frustrations among faculty and administration.

The University began to modify the 2003 Teaching Faculty Policy Manual (TFPM) with the intention of realigning the policy to conform to the current administrative structure. This included establishing, in 2005, a university-wide ad hoc committee to work on updating the TFPM. The committee was called the Ad Hoc Committee on the Faculty Policy Manual (FPM) and tasked with assembling all the input pertaining to the TFPM from

other ad hoc committees, which had been established during the same period to work on key areas or initiatives that were expected to be folded into a new FPM. There was a key difference; the new policy manual would include the integration of all faculty: teaching, research and library faculty. In November 2005, the BOT was informed by the Provost that updating the FPM and other policy documents had become an issue of singular priority to the University. Some progress was made between November 2005 and April 2006 and the relevant reports from the various ad hoc committees were folded into a Draft FPM in March 2006.

However, at the faculty meeting in April 2006, a major setback arose when faculty decided to form a new FPM Committee, consisting entirely of faculty, in April 2006. This action rendered the previous collaboration efforts between administration and faculty ineffective and stalled. Despite this setback, the University continued to forge ahead. Notwithstanding the sincere efforts by all parties, no acceptable or tangible document could be produced. At the time of the MSCHE visit in April 2007, the University faculty and administration had been operating without a faculty policy manual that was aligned with the existing administrative structure for almost two academic years.

Reaffirmation of UVI Accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)

As noted previously, in its session on November 15, 2007, MSCHE took action "to reaffirm accreditation and to request a progress letter, due April 1, 2008, documenting the development and implementation of a faculty handbook that includes policies related to promotion and tenure (Standard 10)".

Progress since the April 2007 MSCHE Site Visit

Process

Soon after the MSCHE visit, it became very clear that contrary to what might have been the expectations of some stakeholders, the students, faculty, administration and BOT were held culpable for the situation in which the University found itself. Thus, the MSCHE report served as an impetus for all involved to galvanize and redouble efforts to expeditiously address the challenges associated with the completion of the revised and expanded FPM. The faculty FPM committee merged with the Ad-Hoc Committee on FPM to form a Faculty Policy Manual Committee. Not only was the newly formed committee charged with working on the current faculty policy manual, but also with the responsibility for ensuring that regular updates are incorporated into the revised and expanded FPM, moving forward.

To accelerate the process of developing a FPM, the administration contracted a group of faculty, at significant expense to the University, to work on an administration-modified version of a Draft FPM that came out of committee work in spring 2007. The intent was to have faculty review the draft FPM and to produce a FPM that could be ratified by faculty

and approved by administration before being submitted to the BOT at the November 2007 meeting. This contracted group was called the Temporary Working Group (TWG). It was anticipated that the TWG would produce a fully revised faculty policy document that could be submitted to the BOT for approval in fall 2007. Unfortunately, the strategy actually set the university back. What in fact happened was that the TWG discarded the draft document that came out of the 2006-2007 committees and started a new document.

On August 27, 2007, the TWG submitted a draft document in excess of 90 pages. It should be noted that all the teaching faculty policy documents since 1988 had been 30-32 pages in length. From the administration's perspective, the TWG Draft FPM was a "union contract" and not a faculty policy document. This became a contentious issue between faculty and the administration and it took months to finally reconcile these differences. In October 2007, to resolve this stifling issue, the faculty and administration held a day-long meeting on St. Thomas to try to reconcile the differences in the drafts. It was decided that a small sub-committee of the group should work and resolve issues and submit the completed document to the entire group by the end of November 2007. This group was called the FPM Small Working Group (FPM-SWG) and consisted of two administrators and four faculty members. Since then, steady and significant progress has been made. Structures and processes were established for approval of a policy document. The process included:

i. Established agreement and consensus on each article by the special sub-committee of the Faculty and Administration;

ii. The faculty body as a whole reviewed documents on blackboard and met as a group to ratify the agreed-upon sections of the FPM;

iii. Administrative review, including legal review and approval by the Cabinet;

iv. Presentation of University approved areas to the Academic, Research, and Student Affairs (ARSA) Committee of the BOT; and,

v. Recommendation from the ARSA Committee to the full Board for action. (Document C, Appendix III)

Outcomes

A major philosophical shift occurred between the 2003 policy document and the revised and expanded FPM. The 2003 policy document was a "Teaching Faculty Policy Manual." The 2008 policy document will be a "Faculty Policy Manual" with provisions included for the full integration of teaching, as well as research and library faculty. New sections have been included to address the issue of development and implementation of policies related to promotion and tenure (Standard 10) as requested in the SAS from MSCHE (Document D, Appendix IV).

Special outcomes include:

i. Agreement on the general format of the FPM
ii. Reorganization of the FPM into 10 chapters by clustering related groups
iii. Approval of the Table of Contents
iv. Approval of chapters 1-3
v. Approval of sections of chapter 4 except sections [Sections not yet approved: 4.i (definition of faculty), 4.i.c (adjuncts faculty) and 4.i.d (visiting faculty)]
vi. Approval of chapter 5 sections 5.ii through 5.viii.b [Sections not yet approved: 5.i (faculty load) and 5.iii (outside activities and conflict of interest)]
vii. Approved sections to be used in conjunction with the 2003 FPM
viii. Continued work on the 2008 FPM by the faculty and administration with the intention of producing a fully revised and expanded document for Board approval by the June 2008 Board meeting

The BOT, at the March 15, 2008 meeting, took the following action: that, "The sections of the Faculty Policy Manual in which there has been mutual agreement between the faculty and the administration of the University are hereby approved; provided however, to the extent any provision approved hereby conflicts with the Faculty Policy Manual approved by the Board of Trustees in 2003, then these March 15, 2008 changes shall take precedence and that the President is authorized to take such action as is necessary to implement this resolution." (Note: The complete resolution appears in Appendix I as Document A and the approved Provisional 2008 Faculty Policy Manual appears in Appendix II as Document B.)

Since the BOT meeting on March 15, 2008, significant progress has been made on some of the other outstanding items of the 2008 FPM. Specifically, the following actions have occurred:

i. Ratification of the agreed sections of chapter 5
ii. Ratification of the agreed sections of chapter 6
iii. Ratification of portions of chapter 7
iv. Legal reviews of recently ratified sections

Future Development

With the passing of the BOT motion on March 15, 2008, the University has a partial working document to guide decisions.

The following activities will be undertaken:

i. Meeting to resolve areas of disagreement.
ii. The faculty and the administration's positions on unresolved areas will be submitted to the ARSA Committee for resolution.
iii. Completion and presentation of the 2008 FPM to the full Board in June 2008.

Conclusion

The faculty and administration have made significant progress in completing major portions of the FPM over the course of the past two months and most recently since the BOT approved sections of the FPM at the March 15, 2008 meeting. The timeline of submitting a completed 2008 FPM is realistic. The process has been slow but the lessons learned have been very valuable.

Appendices

I.	Document A:	Board of Trustees Resolution
II.	Document B:	The Provisional 2008 FPM
III.	Document C:	Status of FPM
IV.	Document D:	Peer review system of the 2008 FPM

APPENDIX I

Document A: Board of Trustees Resolution

UNIVERSITY OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
BOARD OF TRUSTEES RESOLUTION
FACULTY POLICY MANUAL

Purpose: To approve sections of the Faculty Policy Manual that have been ratified by the faculty and approved by the administration of the University.

WHEREAS, the faculty and the administration of the University have agreed mutually on the *Purpose and Scope* of the Faculty Policy Manual; and

WHEREAS, the faculty and the administration of the University have agreed mutually on the *Table of Contents* of the Faculty Policy Manual; and

WHEREAS, the faculty and the administration of the University have agreed mutually on all sections of chapters one, two and three of the Faculty Policy Manual, which addresses *Institutional Context*, *Principles* and *Terms of Employment*; and

WHEREAS, the faculty and the administration of the University have agreed mutually on all of chapter four, which addresses *Faculty,* with the exception of sections 4.i *Definition of Faculty;* 4.i.c *Adjunct Faculty;* and 4.i.d *Visiting Faculty*; and

WHEREAS, the faculty and the administration of the University have agreed mutually on portions of chapter five from 5.i through 5.viiib, which addresses *Faculty Responsibilities and Evaluation for Retention, Promotion and Tenure,* with the exception of sections 5.i *Faculty Load,* and 5.iii *Outside Activities and Conflict of Interest*; and

WHEREAS, the approved sections of the Faculty Policy Manual will be used in conjunction with the 2003 Faculty Policy Manual until such time that the faculty and the administration of the University have mutually agreed on the areas of disagreement; and

WHEREAS, by March 6, 2008 the faculty and the Cabinet had concluded ratification of the sections of mutual agreement in the Faculty Policy Manual with the administration of the University; and

WHEREAS, on March 7, 2008 the Academic, Research and Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees approved this proposal and hereby submits this resolution to the Board of Trustees for approval;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE UNIVERSITY THAT:

1. The sections of the Faculty Policy Manual in which there has been mutual agreement between the faculty and the administration of the University are hereby approved; provided however, to the extent any provision approved hereby conflicts with the Faculty Policy Manual approved by the Board of Trustees in 2003, then these March 15, 2008 changes shall take precedence and that the President is authorized to take such action as is necessary to implement this resolution.

2. This resolution shall become effective March 15, 2008.

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and exact copy of a resolution of the Board of Trustees of the University of the Virgin Islands and adopted at its meeting on Saturday, March 15, 2008, as recorded in the minutes of the said meeting.

Chairman of the Board — Date: 3-27-08

Secretary of the Board — Date: 3/27/08

			ratified		
	6.ii.a	agreement	Amended and ratified	pending	
	6.ii.b	disagreement			
	6.ii.c	agreement	remanded		
	6.ii.d	agreement	remanded		
	6.ii.e, g	agreement	ratified	pending	
	6.ii.f	disagreement			
Chapter 7	7.i	agreement	ratified	pending	
	7.i.e	agreement	remanded		
	7.ii.a-7.ii.j	agreement	Amended and ratified	pending	
	7.iii	agreement			
	7.iv	agreement			
Chapter 8	all	agreement			
Chapter 9	some	disagreement			
Chapter 10	all	agreement			

APPENDIX IV

Document D: Table of Peer-review system of the 2008 FPM

Dual peer-review of 2008 FPM

Generic Title		2000 FPM	2003 FPM	2008 FPM
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)		President	President	President
Chief Academic Officer (CAO)		Provost	Provost	Provost
Unit		Campus	Division	School
Unit Manager		Chancellor	Academic Chair	Dean
Academic Supervisor		Division Chair		
University-level Tenure Peer Review		FRAC	FRAC	University Promotion and Tenure Committee
Unit-level Tenure Peer Review		Not Available	Not available	Retention and Promotion Committee
University-level Promotion Peer Review		Contract Committee	Contract Committee	University Promotion and Tenure Committee
Unit-level Promotion Peer Review		Not available	Not available	Retention and Promotion Committee
Unit-level Retention Peer Review		Not available	Not available	Retention and Promotion Committee