



**Academic  
Quality Improvement  
Project**

The Higher Learning Commission NCA

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November 22, 2002

Dr. Judith I. Bailey, President  
Northern Michigan University  
1401 Presque Isle Ave.  
Marquette MI 49855

Dear President Bailey:

I am proud to echo Steve Crow's congratulations on Northern Michigan University's being accepted as a participant in our Academic Quality Improvement Project (AQIP). Our AQIP Application Admissions Panel met to review the materials of applying institutions and, in approving your application to participate, recognized your appreciation of the potential benefits that can come from recasting accreditation activities so that they better support an institution's program for continuous improvement. Its decision to include Northern Michigan University testifies to the Application Review Panel's recognition of your readiness to join this undertaking, your appreciation of both its challenge and potential reward, and your willingness to collaborate with us in finding new ways to use accreditation to provide value to member institutions.

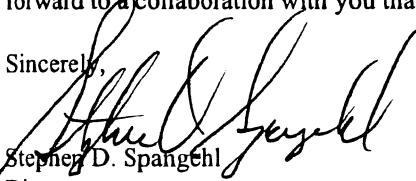
In particular, the panel members asked me to convey to you their observations concerning your application: I hope these comments are helpful.

As Northern Michigan considers possible action projects during the strategy forum, attention should be paid to the implementation of the University's assessment plan.

As the enclosed agreement indicates, participating in AQIP envisions a continuing collaboration, with a seven-year period preceding your next *reaffirmation of accreditation*, which we have now scheduled for the 2009-10 academic year. During the intervening years, we expect Northern Michigan University to be a full partner in AQIP, participating in a Strategy Forum during the coming year, a Systems Portfolio and Appraisal process approximately three years later, as well as Annual Updates; and then continuous cycles of Strategy Forums, Annual Updates and Systems Portfolios and Appraisals. The agreement also specifies the timetable we both agree to follow in the unlikely event that Northern Michigan University decides, within the next five years, to cease participating in AQIP and return to the Commission's standard accreditation process. Please sign the agreement and return it to us, within two weeks, using the enclosed envelope, retaining a copy for your records. If you have any questions about the agreement before you sign it, please call me.

In signing the agreement you agree to participate in your first AQIP Strategy Forum within 12 months of the effective date of your agreement. Enclosed is a Strategy Forum Date Selection form with Guidelines to help you choose the best date for your institution. Upon your acceptance of the agreement, your official liaison with the Commission will become the collective AQIP staff — although you can and should continue to call upon any other member of the AQIP staff who can be helpful to you and your institution in any way. Also enclosed is a listing of the AQIP staff and their areas of expertise and interest; this information will also be updated on the AQIP website. I encourage you to make the fullest possible use of the resources and information we can provide for you. Crafting a new accreditation process, and a new relationship between member colleges and universities and their accrediting agency is no small challenge. We will make mistakes, and we count on you to call our attention to them, quickly and frankly. We welcome your suggestions on ways to make what we do more valuable to your institution and we welcome your advice on essential information and services to which we might help you get access. We look forward to a collaboration with you that will be stimulating, productive, and enjoyable for both you and AQIP.

Sincerely,

  
Stephen D. Spanghel  
Director