



March 23, 2020

Dr. Michael S. Roth
President
Wesleyan University
229 High Street, Wesleyan Station
Middletown, CT 06459

Dear President Roth:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 6, 2020, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the report submitted by Wesleyan University regarding the establishment of additional instructional locations at Cheshire Correctional Institution and York Correctional Institution in the state of Connecticut, and took the following action:

that the report be accepted and the instructional locations at the Cheshire Correctional Institution and York Correctional Institution in Connecticut be included in the institution's accreditation, with an effective date of March 6, 2020;

that a visit to the new sites be scheduled for Fall 2020;

that the report prepared in advance of the Fall 2020 site visit give emphasis to the institution's success in:

- 1) transitioning from an associate-level program to a baccalaureate-level program with attention on ensuring that the rigor of upper division courses is similar to those offered on Wesleyan's main campus and faculty are appropriately qualified;
- 2) maintaining sufficient funding to support the Bachelor of Liberal Studies Program at the Cheshire and York Correctional Institutions.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The report submitted by Wesleyan University was accepted and the instructional locations at Cheshire Correctional Institution and York Correctional Institution in Connecticut encompassed within the institution's accreditation because the Commission finds the activity to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation* and relevant Commission policies.

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The Commission thanks Wesleyan University (Wesleyan) for its well-conceived proposal detailing its plans to offer its Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS) program at the Cheshire Correctional Institution and York Correctional Institution in Connecticut – a natural step in the continuum of Wesleyan fulfilling its academic and social missions by extending a well-functioning prison education program that the University has been operating in collaboration with Middlesex Community College (MxCC) since 2009. We appreciate learning that the BLS program will be integrated into Wesleyan’s governance structure; Wesleyan faculty will maintain a high level of involvement in its delivery; and Wesleyan’s Center for Prison Education (CPE) will continue to manage the critical relationship with the Connecticut Bureau of Prisons and the wardens and staff at both facilities. We are gratified to learn that faculty, administration, and student volunteers (who serve as tutors, TAs, and library resource assistants) are deeply committed to the program. We also note that prisoner-students are equipped with laptops to complete assignments but, because of the strict policy that these laptops can have no online access of any kind, library and other materials are requested and brought in via print or thumb drive.

In keeping with Commission policy on the establishment of additional instructional locations, an on-site evaluation of the Bachelor of Liberal Studies program offered at the Cheshire Correctional Institution and York Correctional Institution in Connecticut will be scheduled for Fall 2020. A copy of the relevant procedural statement is enclosed for your information and use.

In the report prepared in advance of the Fall 2020 site visit, the institution is asked to give emphasis to two matters related to our standards on *The Academic Program; Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*; and *Institutional Resources*.

According to the report, the Bachelor of Liberal Studies degree offered at the proposed locations will require completion of 32 credits (courses), at least 16 of which will be earned through Wesleyan courses, and the completion of a concentration consisting of at least eight credits (courses) numbered 201 or higher. We appreciate learning that the University will oversee the development and delivery of BLS courses, which will be taught by both Wesleyan and Middlesex Community College faculty, and that its Faculty Advisory Committee will continue to vet and approve MxCC faculty to ensure they are appropriately qualified to teach upper division courses. However, we also note that this will be the first baccalaureate-level program Wesleyan will offer through its Center for Prison Education; therefore, we ask that the report submitted in advance of the Fall 2020 site visit include an update on the institution’s success in transitioning from an associate-level program to a baccalaureate-level program with attention to ensuring that the rigor of upper division courses is similar to those offered on Wesleyan’s main campus and faculty are appropriately qualified. We are informed here by our standards on *The Academic Program and Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*:

Through its system of academic administration and faculty participation, the institution demonstrates an effective system of academic oversight, assuring the quality of the academic program wherever and however it is offered (4.5).

The preparation and qualifications of all faculty and academic staff are appropriate to the nature of their assignments. Qualifications are measured by advanced degrees held, evidence of scholarship, advanced study, creative activities, and teaching abilities, as well as relevant professional experience, training, and credentials (6.3).

In addition, we understand that since Wesleyan received a \$200,000 seed grant from the Bard Prison Initiative in 2009, “CPE has maintained a record of financial solvency ... through a combination of foundation funding, individual donation, and Second Chance Pell monies through Middlesex Community College.” We look forward, in the Fall 2020 report, to receiving an update on the University’s success in maintaining sufficient funding to support the Bachelor of Liberal Studies Program at the Cheshire and York Correctional Institutions as assurance that Wesleyan’s

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“multi-year financial planning is realistic and reflects the capacity of the institution to depend on identified sources of revenue and ensure the advancement of educational quality and services for students” (7.6).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Wesleyan University and hopes its preparation has contributed to institutional improvement. We appreciate your cooperation with the effort to provide public assurance of the quality of higher education in New England.

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 of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Ms. Donna S. Morea. The institution is free to release information about the report 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 Barbara Brittingham, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,



David Quigley

DQ/jm

cc: Ms. Donna S. Morea

Enclosures:

Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions
Procedures for Substantive Change visit