



March 15, 2023

Dr. Michael S. Roth  
President  
Wesleyan University  
229 High Street, South College Building  
Middletown, CT 06459

Dear President Roth:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 3, 2023, the New England Commission of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Wesleyan University:

that Wesleyan University be continued in accreditation;

that Wesleyan University be granted limited approval for distance education;

that the institution be reminded that any plans to offer new programs 50% or more online need to be submitted to the Commission for approval prior to implementation;

that the institution submit an interim (fifth-year) report by August 15, 2027, for consideration in Fall 2027;

that, in addition to the information included in all interim reports, the institution give emphasis to its success in:

- 1) engaging members of the community, including faculty, in the implementation of the University's strategic plan, *Towards Wesleyan's Bicentennial*;
- 2) addressing its deferred maintenance;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2032.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

Wesleyan University is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

The Commission commends Wesleyan University (Wesleyan) for its comprehensive and informative self-study. We concur with the visiting team that Wesleyan is "an historic and distinguished institutional exponent of the ideals of liberal learning." We are pleased to learn of the University's "extensive" planning activities and its "strong culture of data-informed

decision making.” The Commission notes positively that “Wesleyan’s success in achieving its financial goals allowed it to address the impact of the pandemic from a position of strength.” We further understand that the institution is constructing a new science building and is renovating its Public Affairs Center. Particularly noteworthy is the University’s “open curriculum” which “challenges students to create their own educational plan.” We are gratified to note from the report of the visiting team that Wesleyan offers a “wide and appropriate variety of student services” and that there “appears to be deep and authentic collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs.” Lastly, the Commission commends Wesleyan for its undergraduate retention rate which ranged between 95% and 97% over the past three years and its six-year graduation rate which ranged between 89% and 92% over that same time period. Given its strong leadership team and dedicated faculty and staff, it is evident that Wesleyan University is well-positioned to continue to “provid[e] an education in the liberal arts that is characterized by boldness, rigor, and practical idealism” and “build a diverse, energetic community of students, faculty and staff” well into the future.

The Commission grants Wesleyan University limited approval for distance education because the Commission finds the institution’s plans for distance education to be in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation* and relevant Commission policies. We understand that the faculty recently voted to approve a “3-year pilot to allow online courses as part of Winter and Summer Session.” Online Graduate Liberal Studies (GLS) courses have also been approved, and we understand that the University plans to “include a mix of online and on-campus courses” in the GLS program moving forward. The Commission notes with favor the comprehensive suite of support services available to students in online courses. We are further gratified to learn that Wesleyan will “collect a wide variety of data” from its online courses to ensure the quality of the student learning experience.

Given Wesleyan University’s limited approval for distance education, we remind you that any plans to offer new programs 50% or more online need to be submitted to the Commission for approval prior to implementation, in keeping with the Commission’s Policy on Substantive Change.

Commission policy requires an interim (fifth-year) report of all institutions on a decennial evaluation cycle. Its purpose is to provide the Commission an opportunity to appraise the institution’s current status in keeping with the Policy on Periodic Review. In addition to the information included in all interim reports the University is asked, in Fall 2027, to report on two matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *Institutional Resources*.

The Commission acknowledges that the University’s most recent strategic plan, *Towards Wesleyan’s Bicentennial*, was “[d]rafted by the President” and “reflects the input of faculty, trustees, staff, alumni, and students.” We look forward to learning, as part of the Fall 2027 interim report, of the University’s success in engaging all members of the community, including faculty, in implementing its strategic plan. We are guided here by our standard on *Planning and Evaluation*:

Planning and evaluation are systematic, comprehensive, broad-based, integrated, and appropriate to the institution. They involve the participation of individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes and include external perspectives. Results of planning and evaluation are regularly communicated to appropriate institutional constituencies. The institution allocates sufficient resources for its planning and evaluation efforts (2.1).

The Commission appreciates Wesleyan's candor that its deferred maintenance backlog per gross square footage is "greater than the peer average." We are, therefore, gratified to learn from the visiting team report that "the University is actively managing how to address this challenge." As informed by our standard on *Institutional Resources*, the Fall 2027 interim report will provide Wesleyan University an opportunity to apprise the Commission on its success in addressing its deferred maintenance:

The institution has sufficient and appropriate information, physical, and technological resources necessary for the achievement of its purposes wherever and however its academic programs are offered. It devotes sufficient resources to maintain and enhance its information, physical, and technological resources (7.21).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2032 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years.

You will note that the Commission has specified no length or term of accreditation. Accreditation is a continuing relationship that is reconsidered when necessary. Thus, while the Commission has indicated the timing of the next comprehensive evaluation, the schedule should not be unduly emphasized because it is subject to change.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the self-study prepared by Wesleyan University and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you during its deliberations.

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 John Frank. 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.

The Commission hopes that the evaluation process has contributed to institutional improvement. It appreciates your cooperation with the effort to provide public assurance of the quality of higher education.

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

Sincerely,



Russell Carey

RC/sjp

cc: John Frank

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions