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December 7, 2017

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 September 28, 2017, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Wesleyan University and voted to take the following action:

that the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Wesleyan University be accepted;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2022 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2022 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in:

- 1) continuing to achieve its financial goals;
- 2) achieving enrollment goals for its graduate programs.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Wesleyan University was accepted because it responded to the matters specified by the Commission in its letter of April 10, 2013 and addressed each of the nine standards, including a reflective essay for Standard 8: *Educational Effectiveness* on student learning and success.

The Commission commends Wesleyan University for an exemplary and candid interim report that documents the University's success in offering "a liberal arts education characterized by boldness, rigor, and practical idealism." We are pleased to learn of Wesleyan's "conservative spending policies and strong endowment returns over time" that have resulted in a strong financial position for the University with \$1.3 billion in assets. We are gratified to learn of the collaborative "broad participation" of the campus community

regarding the institution's plans for increased expenditures proposed in *Beyond 2020—Strategies for Wesleyan*. Operational ramifications of financial decisions are reviewed by the Human Resource Advisory Group and discussed at the monthly meetings of the Budget Priorities Committee comprised of administrators, faculty, staff, and students. We commend Wesleyan University for its commitment to affordability as evidenced by need-blind admissions for 90% of each class, and keeping student debt at a minimum (average of \$19,000 for four years). The University has also been responsive in making improvements to advance the internal and external visibility of its graduate programs by renovating the physical space of the Office of Graduate Student Services, initiating a speaker series, updating its website, and featuring relevant articles about graduate programs in its publications. The website highlights the BA/MA degrees that enable science majors to stay at Wesleyan for a fifth year to earn an MA degree at no additional cost, and we note with favor the introduction of an "innovative new graduate degree," the low-residency MA in Performance Curation for professional performance curators. In addition, we are pleased to learn of the significant work done to improve student advising, including implementing the recommendations from the task forces, combining major and pre-major advisee loads with more equitable distribution among faculty, piloting a student-peer advisor program, developing a new advising handbook, and implementing an online advising dashboard. The University has also implemented two new "enhanced advising programs" for students in the Posse Foundation Veterans Program and the Mathematics and Science Scholars Program; these resulted in impressive retention rates of 100% and 90% respectively. Finally, we take favorable note of the University's thoughtful community-wide planning processes, the commitment of additional resources to the Institutional Planning Office, and the establishment of the Center for Pedagogical Innovation and Life Long Learning.

The Commission also commends Wesleyan University for its cogent reflective essay that documents the University's commitment to evidence-based practices, evaluation of student outcomes, and its "Translational Liberal Learning" focus. We understand that assessment efforts at Wesleyan are led by the Assessment Task Force and include the adoption of four new competencies, Mapping, Expressing, Mining and Engaging, and the evaluation of the University's essential learning outcomes which are tied to the "high impact practices" unique to Wesleyan's brand of liberal education. We note with approval the University's comprehensive approach to the assessment of these competencies that incorporates a variety of direct and indirect, quantitative and qualitative measures. We are gratified to learn from the results of the 2015 senior survey and the 2013 alumni survey that 77-90% of respondents report that Wesleyan contributed positively to their writing skills; 64% of the seniors responded that the institution positively contributed to their global awareness; and 61% responded that they were "prepared to use quantitative tools." With respect to post-graduation success, we are pleased to learn that 71% of 2016 graduates are employed (15% in tech/engineering/sciences), and 13% are continuing their education; between 2011 to 2015, the acceptance rates of alumni into medical, dental and veterinary schools was 55-66%, well above the national average of 41-46%. Wesleyan's "stability in retention and graduation rates" over the past five years – 95% and 92% respectively – is commendable, as are the graduation rates for African American undergraduate students which ranged from 89% to 93%, and those for master's program students which ranged from 91% to 100%.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2022 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. The items the Commission asks to be given special emphasis within the self-study prepared for the comprehensive evaluation are two matters related to our standards on *Institutional Resources* and *Students*.

The Commission is gratified to learn of Wesleyan's strategic goal which is to "work within a sustainable economic model while retaining core values." We note that Wesleyan has implemented a new debt strategy, which has provided the University with an influx of cash it has

used to invest in its facilities and programs. We understand that the decrease in long-term investments - from \$884 million in FY 2015 to \$798 million in FY 2016 - was offset by \$44 million received in bond proceeds. As part of its plan to “move aggressively to ensure economic sustainability in the future,” the University lowered its endowment spending rate to 4.2%, and intends to raise \$40 million annually. We welcome an update, in the self-study submitted in advance of the Fall 2022 comprehensive evaluation, on the University’s continued success in achieving its financial goals. Our standard on *Institutional Resources* will guide this section of the report:

The institution preserves and enhances available financial resources sufficient to support its mission. It manages its financial resources and allocates them in a way that reflects its mission and purposes. It demonstrates the ability to respond to financial emergencies and unforeseen circumstances (7.4).

The institution’s 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).

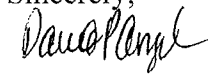
As noted above, Wesleyan University has implemented several commendable measures to enhance its graduate programs and anticipates that these changes will result in increased enrollment in those programs. The data forms submitted with the interim report note an anticipated increase of 6.6% in graduate FTE for FY2018. We look forward to learning, through the Fall 2022 self-study, of Wesleyan University’s success in achieving its enrollment goals for graduate programs, as evidence that “the institution sets and achieves realistic goals to enroll students who are broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve” (*Students*, Statement of the Standard).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Wesleyan University and hopes the evaluation process has contributed to institutional improvement. It appreciates your cooperation in 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 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 P. Angel

DPA/sjp

Enclosures

cc: Ms. Donna Morea