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Director of the Commission
BARBARA E. BRITTINGHAM
E-Mail: bbrittingham@neasc.org

Deputy Director of the Commission
PATRICIA M. O'BRIEN, SND
E-Mail: pobrien@neasc.org

Associate Director of the Commission
ROBERT C. FROH
E-Mail: rfroh@neasc.org

Associate Director of the Commission
LOUISE A. ZAK
E-Mail: lzak@neasc.org

Assistant Director of the Commission
JULIE L. ALIG
E-Mail: jalig@neasc.org

October 26, 2007

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

Dear President Roth:

I write to inform you that at its meeting on September 21, 2007, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the fifth-year interim report submitted by Wesleyan University and voted to take the following action:

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

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2012 be confirmed;

that the self-study developed in preparation for the comprehensive evaluation give particular emphasis to the following:

- 1) strengthening the decisions students make regarding courses so that they achieve a more coherent education at Wesleyan;
- 2) utilizing a variety of measures of institutional effectiveness, particularly direct measures of student performance;
- 3) assessing the impact of the institution's planned major investments in financial aid, additional faculty, diversity, student services, campus computing, and fund raising;
- 4) evaluating the success of the new Usdan University Center in serving as a focal point of activity for the campus community.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

We commend Wesleyan for responding thoroughly, clearly, and with candor to the areas identified by the Commission for special emphasis in this report, and for providing an overview of the institution's efforts in relation to each of the Standards. The institution strengthened the tenure process by redefining a faculty committee responsible for this review, as well as clarifying the role of the president in the tenure process. Senior staff have provided more insight and detail regarding the development of the annual operating budget. Faculty refined the capabilities they seek to achieve in student learning and developed a course labeling system to enhance navigation through the curriculum to aid students in attaining these capabilities. We are pleased to note that the University endowment has grown significantly through a successful campaign that raised \$281 million, realizing a reduction in endowment spending with a target of a 5.5% draw by FY 2008/09, and thereby enabling strong endowment returns.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2012 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive visit at least once every ten years. Through the self-study prepared in advance of the evaluation, the Commission looks forward to learning of the University's success in matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation, The Academic Program, Faculty, Physical and Technological Resources* and *Financial Resources*.

Through the self-study prepared for the Fall 2012 evaluation, we look forward to learning about how the institution has strengthened the choices students make regarding courses to achieve a coherent education at Wesleyan. We understand that the University plans to accomplish this by reviewing the structure of the curriculum with a goal of enhancing its coherence, and by establishing guidelines for both students and faculty to maximize the use of the advising relationship. We would like to be informed regarding the results from the assessments that enable constructive feedback from students to faculty and will appreciate being apprised as to how this feedback helps to improve coherence of education at Wesleyan. Our standards on *The Academic Program* and *Faculty* inform us here:

Degree programs have a coherent design and are characterized by appropriate breadth, depth, continuity, sequential progression, and synthesis of learning (4.5).

The institution implements and supports a systematic and broad-based approach to the assessment of student learning focused on educational improvement through understanding what and how students are learning through their academic program and, as appropriate, through experiences outside the classroom... (4.44).

... The effectiveness of instruction is periodically and systematically assessed using adequate and reliable procedures; the results are used to improve instruction. Faculty collectively and individually endeavor to fulfill their responsibility to improve instructional effectiveness... (5.16).

The institution has in place an effective system of academic advising that meets student needs for information and advice and is compatible with its educational objectives ... (5.17).

We encourage Wesleyan to continue utilizing a variety of measures of institutional effectiveness with effort given to developing direct measures of student performance to augment measures of satisfaction, course evaluations, and COFHE surveys. In developing these measures, the institution might consider such efforts as analyzing student transcripts or reviewing samples of student work to check for accomplishment of the identified capabilities. Through the self-study prepared for Fall 2012 evaluation, we look forward to learning about the institution's ongoing

efforts here as guided by the standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *The Academic Program* (cited with 4.44 above and 4.50 below):

The institution regularly and systematically evaluates the achievement of its mission and purposes, giving primary focus to the realization of its educational objectives. Its system of evaluation is designed to provide relevant and trustworthy information to support institutional improvement, with an emphasis on the academic program. The institution's evaluation efforts are effective for addressing its unique circumstances. These efforts use both quantitative and qualitative methods (2.4).

The institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students. Inquiry may focus on a variety of perspectives, including understanding the process of learning, being able to describe student experiences and learning outcomes in normative terms, and gaining feedback from alumni, employers, and others situated to help in the description and assessment of student learning. The institution devotes appropriate attention to ensuring that its methods of understanding student learning are trustworthy and provide information useful in the continuing improvement of programs and services for students (4.50).

We are gratified to learn of the institution's planned major investments in financial aid, additional faculty, diversity, student services, campus computing, and fund raising. Within the self-study prepared for the Fall 2012 evaluation, we look forward to learning about the impact of increased investments in these areas. Our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*, and *Financial Resources* pertain here:

The institution undertakes short- and long-term planning, including realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. The institution systematically collects and uses data necessary to support its planning efforts and to enhance institutional effectiveness. It plans for and responds to financial and other contingencies, establishes feasible priorities, and develops a realistic course of action to achieve identified objectives. Institutional decision-making, particularly the allocation of resources, is consistent with planning priorities (2.2).

Evaluation enables the institution to demonstrate through verifiable means its attainment of purposes and objectives both inside and outside the classroom. The results of evaluation are used systematically for improvement and to inform institutional planning, especially as it relates to student achievement and resource allocation (2.6).

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. The governing board reviews and approves the institution's financial plans (9.3).

We commend the institution for the completion and opening of the new Usdan University Center this fall. The self-study prepared for the Fall 2012 evaluation will afford the University an opportunity to report its evaluation of the success of this new venture in serving as a focal point of activity for the campus community. We understand that both soliciting ongoing feedback from the community and exploring best practices at sister institutions will be primary methods of assessment. Our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* (presented above and below) and *Physical and Technological Resources* provide direction here:

The institution has a system of periodic review of academic and other programs that includes the use of external perspectives (2.5).

The institution undertakes physical resource planning linked to academic and student services, support functions, and financial planning. It determines the adequacy of existing physical and technological resources and identifies and plans the specified resolution of deferred maintenance needs. Space planning occurs on a regular basis as part of physical resource evaluation and planning, and is consistent with the mission and purposes of the institution (8.4).

You are encouraged to share this letter with members of the University's community. 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 Mr. James van B. Dresser. The institution is free to release information about the evaluation and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

The Commission hopes that 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.

If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Barbara Brittingham, Director of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Judith R. Gordon

JRG/slo

Enclosure

cc: Mr. James van B. Dresser