



March 21, 2023

Dr. Frederick W. Clark, Jr.
President
Bridgewater State University
131 Summer Street, Boyden Hall
Bridgewater, MA 02325-0001

Dear President Clark:

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 Bridgewater State University:

that Bridgewater State University be continued in accreditation;

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. developing and implementing its Strategic Plan 2.0;
2. enhancing its student advising processes;
3. continuing to assess the Core Curriculum;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2032.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

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

The Commission commends Bridgewater State University (BSU or Bridgewater) for its thorough and well-written self-study. We join the team in acknowledging the “positive culture” that contributes to the institution’s success as evidenced by a “strong inculcated sense of purpose and mission,” a commitment to shared governance, and a “deep trust” among the divisions of the University. We share the view of the visiting team that BSU is “exemplary in its diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice efforts.” This work is woven into the fabric of the institution and evidenced by the ongoing work of the Leading for Change: Racial Equity and Justice Institute and the President’s Racial Justice Task Force, which, to date, has generated numerous recommendations from engaged students, alumni, and the campus community. We note with favor that the Office of Assessment has “created an exemplary Annual Program Assessment process” that provides “substantial feedback to programs” to

“significantly enhance the continuous improvement progress for academic programs.” Despite a decline in total undergraduate FTE enrollment from 8,288 in Fall 2018 to 7,071 in Fall 2021, the University remains in a “strong financial position” with “\$56 million in cash and equivalents and \$45 million invested in the pooled endowment.” The Commission appreciates that the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on enrollments at BSU’s off-campus locations, and we are gratified to learn that the University is exploring “alternative and synergistic approaches” to ensure effective use of these instructional sites. With its long-serving and dedicated leadership, committed and caring faculty and staff, and a deeply engaged student body, Bridgewater State University is well-positioned to continue its mission to strive “to transform lives and improve the human condition” well into the future.

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, Bridgewater State University is asked, in Fall 2027, to report on three matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*; *Students; Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*; and *The Academic Program*.

We understand that BSU has “largely completed implementation of its 2018 Strategic Plan 1.0” and is well underway in the development of Strategic Plan 2.0, scheduled to be completed in 2023. At “the heart” of both the current and the future BSU strategic plans is “the importance of racial justice” and the University “will aim squarely at infusing focus on the equity agenda at all levels.” We further note with favor that “nested” divisional and departmental priorities were developed concurrently with the strategic plan to ensure alignment throughout the University and that BSU plans to utilize its data dashboard created through Tableau to track and assess progress towards the plan’s goals and objectives. The Fall 2027 interim (fifth-year) report will provide the institution with an opportunity to update the Commission on its success in implementing its Strategic Plan 2.0. We are guided here by our standard on *Planning and Evaluation*:

The institution undertakes planning and evaluation to accomplish and improve the achievement of its mission and purposes. It identifies its planning and evaluation priorities and pursues them effectively (*Planning and Evaluation*, Statement of the Standard).

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 institution has a demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning (2.5)

The Commission appreciates that BSU sees improving its advising processes as “central to ... ongoing retention efforts,” and we note positively that “academic advising continues to be an area of growth and development.” We are pleased to learn that, in 2021, BSU formed the Advising Network to “share best practices in advising and build additional supports for both students and advisors especially for departments with particularly high advising loads” and that the University seeks to “improve the transition of students from the Academic Achievement Center advising to academic department advising.” We look forward to learning, in the Fall

2027 report, of Bridgewater's success in further enhancing its academic advising processes. Our standards on *Students and Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship* provide guidance here:

The institution provides advising and academic support services appropriate to the student body. The institution's faculty and professional staff collectively have sufficient interaction with students outside of class to promote students' academic achievement and provide academic and career guidance (5.10).

The institution's system of academic advising meets student needs for information and advice compatible with its educational objectives. The quality of advising is assured regardless of the location of instruction or the mode of delivery (6.19).

Responsibility for assessment of the Core Curriculum at Bridgewater State University is shared by the Core Curriculum Steering Committee (CCSC), the Office of Undergraduate Studies, and the Office of Assessment. The Commission understands that assessment of core skills is currently conducted every five years, with the most recent assessment having taken place in 2022. We appreciate the institution's candor that "the CCSC needs to formalize its long-term strategy for assessment of the Core Curriculum." In keeping with our standard on *The Academic Program*, the Commission asks that the Fall 2027 interim report give emphasis to the University's continued success in assessing the Core Curriculum:

The institution develops, approves, administers, and on a regular cycle reviews its academic programs under institutional policies that are implemented by designated bodies with established channels of communication and control. Review of academic programs includes evidence of student success and program effectiveness and incorporates an external perspective. Faculty have a substantive voice in these matters (4.6).

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 Bridgewater State University and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you, Karim Ismaili, Executive Vice President and Provost, and Michael Young, Senior Associate Provost and Chief Data Officer, 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 and the head of the system of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Dr. Jean MacCormack and Dr. Noe Ortega. 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.

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

Sincerely,



Russell C. Carey

RCC/jm

cc: Dr. Jean MacCormack
Dr. Noe Ortega
Visiting Team

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions