



Bridgewater State University

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### 2013 Accreditation Decision Letter from NEASC

Commission on Institutions Of Higher Education, New England Association of Schools & Colleges, Inc.

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Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria  
President  
Bridgewater State University  
131 Summer Street, Boyden Hall  
Bridgewater, MA 02325

Dear President Mohler-Faria:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on April 19, 2013, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Bridgewater State University:

that Bridgewater State University be continued in accreditation;

that the University submit a fifth-year interim report for consideration in Fall 2017;

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

1. implementing changes to planning, curriculum development, and the University's definition of student success based on the institution's reflection on values, mission and purpose;
2. enhancing the assessment of student learning and using the results to support continuous improvement;
3. assuring the effectiveness of student advising, with particular emphasis given to the role of faculty and staff in advising;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2022.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

Bridgewater State University (BSU) is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*. Bridgewater State University submitted a comprehensive and thoughtful self-study. We commend the institution on its effectiveness in working through a period of significant growth and maturation for the institution; we concur with the visiting team that "Bridgewater State University is a vibrant institution with dedicated faculty



and staff who are involved in all aspects of campus life." The success of the University is reflected especially in strong practices of planning and evaluation, fiscal reporting, and a culture of open communication and transparency within organizational governance. We note with favor steps taken by the University to expand its outreach efforts to include international engagement and programs and a focus on sustainability and social justice. We commend Bridgewater State University for the significant commitment and goodwill of faculty, staff, and administration which *is* exemplified by the promotion of excellence through faculty development and scholarly productivity.

Commission policy requires a fifth-year interim 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 fifth-year reports the University is asked, in Fall 2017, to report on three matters related to our standards on *Mission and Purposes, Planning and Evaluation, and Faculty*.

The Commission is gratified to learn of the extent to which the values and mission of Bridgewater State University guide academic and financial planning, curriculum development, and the definition of student success. At the same time, we concur with the visiting team that the institution's "overarching strategic plan is in a relatively early stage of implementation." As part of the Fall 2017 fifth-year interim report, we look forward to learning about the institution's continued effectiveness in implementing strategic planning, curriculum development, and assessment of student learning in ways consistent with its values, mission and purposes. We are guided here by our standards on *Mission and Purposes* and *Planning and Evaluation*:

The mission and purposes of the institution are accepted and widely understood by its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students. They provide direction to the curricula and other activities and form the basis on which expectations for student learning are developed. Specific objectives, reflective of the institution's overall mission and purposes, are developed by the institution's individual units (1.4).

The institution determines the effectiveness of its planning and evaluation activities on an ongoing basis. Results of these activities are used to further enhance the institution's implementation of its purposes and objectives (2.8).

The assessment of student learning and of program quality at Bridgewater State University appears to be somewhat uneven at this point, with some excellent examples of success, but also courses and programs where the culture and practice of assessment is not well developed. We concur with the visiting team's judgment that further articulation of learning outcomes at course and program levels is needed. We appreciate the institution's candid appraisal that "programs differ substantially in the degree to which they embrace sound system practices" and are pleased to learn of BSU's commitment to develop a plan to bring all academic programs to the "next level" of assessment. The fifth-year interim report submitted for consideration in Fall 2017 will provide the institution with the opportunity to reflect on its success in bringing consistent quality to program review and the assessment of student learning at the course, program, and institutional levels, and using evaluative information for continuous improvement. Our standard on *The Academic Program* is informative here:

The institution implements and provides support for systematic and broad-based assessment of what and how students are learning through their academic program and experiences outside the classroom. Assessment is based on clear statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. Assessment provides useful information that helps the

institution to improve the experiences provided for students, as well as to assure that the level of student achievement is appropriate for the degree awarded (4.48).

The institution's approach to understanding student learning focuses on the course, program, and institutional level. Evidence is considered at the appropriate level of focus, with the results being a demonstrable factor in improving the learning opportunities and results for students (4.49).

We note with favor that Bridgewater State University has been working to strengthen student advising. As noted in both the self-study and the report of the visiting team, however, enhancing the effectiveness of the advising system is still a work in process. We are gratified to learn of the institution's commitment to use the "strong foundation" provided by the May 2012 report on advising to improve the University's "advising infrastructure." Through the next interim report, we look forward to learning about the institution's success in strengthening its system of advising. Our standard on *Faculty* is relevant here:

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. Faculty and other personnel responsible for academic advising are adequately informed and prepared to discharge their advising functions. Resources are adequate to ensure the quality of advising for students regardless of the location of instruction or the mode of delivery (5.19).

The institution periodically evaluates the sufficiency of and support for the faculty and the effectiveness of the faculty in teaching and advising, scholarship, service, and as appropriate to institutional mission, research and creative activity. The results of these evaluations are used to enhance fulfillment of the institution's mission (5.24).

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.

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, Howard London, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Anna Bradfield, Executive Director of University Initiatives, and Dr. John Miller, team chair, during its deliberations.

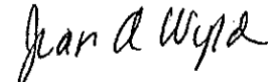
You are encouraged to share this letter with all of the institution's constituencies. It is Commission policy to inform the chairperson of the institution's governing board of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Louis M. Ricciardi. The institution 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 with the effort to provide public assurance of the quality of higher education in New England.

Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria  
June 2t 2013  
Page4

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

Sincerely,



Jean A. Wyld

JAW/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Louis M. Ricciardi  
Visiting Team