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June 25, 2014

Dr. H. Kim Bottomly  
President  
Wellesley College  
106 Central Street  
Wellesley, MA 02481-8203

Dear President Bottomly:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on April 24, 2014, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the fifth-year interim report submitted by Wellesley College and voted to take the following action:

that the fifth-year interim report submitted by Wellesley College be accepted;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Spring 2019 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Spring 2019 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in:

1. continuing to address the areas specified for attention in the interim report, as articulated in the College's "three broad goals" for the future;
2. implementing its Campus Renewal Plan;
3. implementing plans for the assessment of student learning.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The fifth-year interim report submitted by Wellesley College was accepted because it responded to the matters identified by the Commission in its letter of January 8, 2010, addressed each of the eleven standards, and included a reflective essay on student learning and success.

The Commission commends Wellesley College for a well-written and detailed report. We are pleased to learn that the College's priority is "continuous assessment to achieve [its] mission and shared community value for excellence," and that this mission-focused commitment drives the institution's planning and

allocation of resources. We are pleased to learn of the effectiveness of the Provost Model and the Provost's Council that serves as a forum for key academic and institutional decisions. In addition, Wellesley has taken an institutional approach to the promotion of diversity and inclusion, and the *Partnership for Diversity and Inclusion* has engaged the campus in four strategic focus areas and implemented initiatives to cultivate a commitment to a diverse campus community.

The institution developed "An Academic Plan for Wellesley 2011-2015" through the leadership of the Academic Planning Committee and three task forces on innovation in the academic program. The principal goals of the plan include maintaining the breadth and diversity of the curriculum while allowing for innovation in both the curriculum and pedagogy; the First-Year Seminar, a program in public speaking, and a seminar in public writing have been implemented to achieve these goals. The College considers faculty its "greatest assets," and diversification of the faculty remains a priority. We are pleased to learn that the implementation of a single integrated system to evaluate all faculty has had a "significant" impact on faculty morale. We note with favor Wellesley's progress in assessing and improving its website, under the purview of the Communications and Public Affairs team, with plans to publish measures of success and improve the utility of the student portal.

The Commission commends Wellesley College for its strong reflective essay detailing the multiple direct and indirect measures of effectiveness used across the College. We note with favor the use of capstone experiences, portfolio assessments, and opportunities for students to reflect on their own learning, as well as the "strong survey cycle" that captures student experiences from the summer before the first year to up to 40 years after graduation. The College sponsors two "annual day-long, campus-wide celebrations of student accomplishment," the Ruhlman and Tanner conferences, to showcase academic research and out-of-classroom learning respectively. Over the next five years the College will focus on four key academic actions: support and assessment for diverse student populations; assessment of the academic initiative; support of new teaching methods and expanded research opportunities; and integrating the academic and co-curricular learning experience.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2019 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 related to our standards on *Physical and Technological Resources* and *The Academic Program*.

The College is asked, in the Spring 2019 self-study, to give emphasis to its continued success in addressing the areas of focus specified for the interim report as they relate to the "three broad goals" Wellesley identifies in its report: an outstanding education for women; a strong financial plan; and valuing diversity. The Commission recognizes that these matters do not lend themselves to rapid resolution and will require the College's sustained attention over time; hence, we ask that further information be provided in the self-study.

The Commission commends Wellesley College for the development of a long-range campus renewal plan. The Wellesley 2025 Plan for Campus Renewal outlines renovations to 16% of the campus to include new and upgraded facilities in student services, studio arts, residential, dining, labs, classrooms, offices and recreational facilities. The plan, which represents a commitment of \$365-\$550 million over the next decade, is the "single largest commitment of its kind in a century," and the College has developed effective mechanisms to monitor implementation. The College acknowledges the challenge it faces in realizing the resources necessary to accomplish the plan and has put measures in place to closely monitor funding over the life of the renewal plan. We anticipate being apprised, in Spring 2019, of the College's progress with the Plan for Campus Renewal, as expressed in our standard on *Physical and Technological Resources*:

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).

We are pleased to learn that Wellesley College commits itself to a “new cycle of evidence-driven actions to improve effectiveness at each level of mission, goals and learning outcomes,” exemplified by the institution’s plans to progress in its annual assessment initiatives including support for faculty development of course-level learning outcomes and measures; review of the Student Evaluation Questionnaire tool to evaluate student learning and faculty teaching; assessment of civic engagement, leadership and other experiences outside the classroom; assessing and benchmarking as a “strategic priority” student transfer, retention and graduation rates; and tracking outcomes of alumnae. The College acknowledges the institution needs to substantiate its claim that it provides an “outstanding education for women,” by developing assessment initiatives in the areas of teaching, grading, faculty, and the success of its graduates. We ask that the Spring 2019 report give emphasis to the College’s implementation of its planned assessment, retention, and success initiatives. We remind you of our standard on *The Academic Program*:

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).

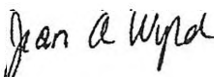
Expectations for student learning reflect both the mission and character of the institution and general expectations of the larger academic community for the level of degree awarded and the field of study. These expectations include statements that are consistent with the institution’s mission in preparing students for further study and employment, as appropriate (4.50).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Wellesley College and hopes that its preparation 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. Laura Gates. The institution is free to release information about the report and the Commission’s action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

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

Sincerely,



Jean A. Wyld

JAW/jm  
Enclosure

cc: Ms. Laura Gates