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January 8, 2021

Dr. Paula A. Johnson
President
Wellesley College
106 Central Street
Wellesley, MA 02481-8203

Dear President Johnson:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on November 20, 2020 the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the distance education expedited review report submitted by Wellesley College and took the following action:

that the report submitted by Wellesley College be accepted, and the institution be granted approval to offer its current courses and academic programs via distance education through Spring 2024;

that the institution be reminded that any plans to offer new programs 50% or more online need to be submitted to the Commission for approval prior to implementation;

that the interim (fifth-year) report scheduled for Spring 2024 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all interim (fifth-year) reports, as well as the matters specified in our letter of October 22, 2019, the Spring 2024 interim report include an update on the institution's success in developing, offering, and assessing its current courses and academic programs via distance education.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The distance education expedited review report submitted by Wellesley College was accepted and the institution granted approval to offer its current courses and academic programs via distance education through Spring 2024 because the Commission finds the proposed activity to be in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation* and relevant Commission policies.

The Commission thanks Wellesley College (Wellesley) for its detailed distance education expedited review report. We note that one major shift Wellesley made was moving to two seven-week sessions within the semester in consideration of student learning experiences. We are especially gratified to learn of the arrangements the College made to help students with mental health concerns arising from the pandemic and note with favor the January Project, an effort to connect Wellesley students to their communities through a meaningful activity. Lastly, the attention the College has given to faculty training, integrity of credit,

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and solutions for lab and performance courses is commendable.

Given Wellesley College's limited experience in offering courses and programs via distance education, we remind you that any plans to offer new programs 50% or more online need to be submitted to the Commission for approval prior to implementation, in keeping with the Commission's Policy on Substantive Change.

The Commission confirms the interim report scheduled for Spring 2024 and asks that, in addition to the information included in all interim reports and the matters specified in our letter of October 22, 2019, the report provide an update on the institution's success in developing, offering, and assessing its current courses and academic programs via distance education. We are guided here by our standards on *The Academic Program* and *Educational Effectiveness*:

The institution offering programs and courses for abbreviated or concentrated time periods or via distance or correspondence learning demonstrates that students completing these programs or courses acquire levels of knowledge, understanding, and competencies equivalent to those achieved in similar programs offered in more traditional time periods and modalities. Programs and courses are designed to ensure an opportunity for reflection and for analysis of the subject matter (4.45).

The institution defines measures of student success and levels of achievement appropriate to its mission, modalities and locations of instruction, and student body, including any specifically recruited populations. These measures include rates of progression, retention, transfer, and graduation; default and loan repayment rates; licensure passage rates; and employment (8.6).

We remind you that the *Standards for Accreditation* have undergone the mid-course review, and the new Standards went into effect on January 1, 2021. Therefore, all reports submitted after that date, including the College's Spring 2024 interim report, should reference the 2021 Standards.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Wellesley College and hopes its preparation has contributed to institutional improvement. We appreciate your cooperation with 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. Deborah de Hoyos. 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.

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

Sincerely,



George W. Tetler

GWT/sjp

Enclosures

cc: Ms. Deborah de Hoyos