

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 20, 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 i

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) for its thorough and well-written self-study.

“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 plan 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, data-based, integrated, and appropriate to the institution. They involve the participation of individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes and include internal 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 needs” 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

Dr. Frederick W. Clark, Jr.
March 21, 2023
Page 3

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:

Dr. Frederick W. Clark, Jr.
March 21, 2023
Page 4

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

Sincerely,

Russell C. O'Connell, Jr.

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