



January 19, 2022

Dr. Christina H. Paxson
President
Brown University
1 Prospect Street
Providence, RI 02912

Dear President Paxson:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on November 19, 2021, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the report submitted by Brown University regarding its plans to offer distance education programming and took the following action:

that the report submitted by Brown University be accepted, and the University be granted general approval to offer distance education programming within the scope of its mission, with an effective date of November 19, 2021;

that the interim report scheduled for consideration in Spring 2023 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all interim reports and the matters specified in our letters of October 22, 2018 and February 4, 2021, the Spring 2023 report provide an update on the institution's continued success in implementing its courses and academic programs via distance education.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The report submitted by Brown University (Brown) was accepted and the University granted general approval to offer distance education programming within the scope of its mission because the institution has demonstrated its capacity to offer high-quality academic programs through a variety of formats, including fully online, hybrid, blended, and low-residency models. Online learning is consonant with Brown's mission to "serve the community, the nation, and the world by discovering, communicating, and preserving knowledge and understanding in the spirit of free inquiry..." and the report provides evidence that students in the online environment are provided with the same high-quality educational experience as students who attend Brown on campus. Responsibility for curriculum as well as assessment resides with the faculty; online programs follow the same process of review and scrutiny as residential programs; and planning for new programs begins with the school dean and executive dean of finance and involves the provost's office, and often external market consultants, as well as operational teams across the University. Faculty are well prepared to teach in a variety of online formats, including

Zoom and the institution's Learning Management System (Canvas), and program directors in the School of Professional Studies (SPS) as well as academic and administrative staff in the various academic departments provide additional levels of student support. We note with approval that Brown University is a member of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), and the report assures that institutional resources are sufficient to support existing and planned distance education programming. For example, online students have 24/7 access to Brown's ejournals, ebooks, and over 500 research databases, and multi-year financial plans include significant allocations to online programming over the next ten years.

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 and the items specified for attention in the Commission's letters of October 22, 2018 and February 4, 2021, the University is asked, in the interim report submitted for consideration in Spring 2023, to provide an update on its distance education programming, as evidence of its "demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning" (2.5).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Brown University 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.

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 Samuel Menco. 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

cc: Samuel Menco

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions