



May 18, 2023

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 April 20, 2023, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Brown University and voted to take the following action:

that the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Brown University be accepted;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Spring 2028 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Spring 2028 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in:

1. continuing to address the matters specified for attention in the interim report;
2. implementing its new budgeting system, Adaptive Insights;
3. strengthening the student experience and implementing the Division of Campus Life's Strategic Roadmap.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Brown University was accepted because it responded to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letters of October 22, 2018, February 4, 2021, and January 19, 2022 and addressed each of the nine standards, including a reflective essay for Standard 8: *Educational Effectiveness* on student learning and success.

The Commission commends Brown University (Brown) for its comprehensive, reflective interim report. We note with favor that the University's strategic plan, *Building on Distinction*, has been "enormously consequential," providing a "clear and visible roadmap" for the institution; significant developments include establishing the Brown Arts Institute as well as the Carney Institute for Brain Science; accelerating growth of the School of Public Health; and strengthening the faculty ranks and supporting their scholarship. The institution has also made progress in implementing its Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, and we are pleased to learn that commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion are "integral to Brown's identity." The University has developed excellent financial planning processes and robust contingency plans, and

the success of the most recent capital campaign and endowment performance led to the institution's net assets reaching an all-time high of \$7.9 billion in June 2021. We acknowledge Brown's improvements to its faculty review process which aim to ensure that review, appointment, and promotion standards "establish and maintain a high and consistent standard of excellence." The Commission also commends Brown for the "significant expansion" of master's- and doctoral-level education over the past decade and appreciates its attention to improving the rigor of review processes at the graduate level. Lastly, we are also pleased to learn of the careful attention the University has given to exploring distance education opportunities to "enhance the experience of students and faculty."

The Commission also thanks Brown University for its reflective essay, which describes the institution's educational effectiveness efforts. We note positively the institution's commitment to empowering students to "set goals for their own intellectual and personal development" with an Open Curriculum "rooted in the liberal arts tradition of intellectual discovery" and centered on eleven Liberal Learning Goals. The Commission further appreciates that Brown views student self-assessment of learning as "a critical skill that is also valued in the evaluation of all programs of study." Particularly commendable are the University's efforts to ensure "an inclusive learning and work environment that promotes equitable learning outcomes and experiences." We are also gratified to learn that the University will, looking ahead, assess several "critical dimensions of educational effectiveness that are central to [its] strategic goals," including evaluating its distance education offerings, new modes of instruction, and capstone experiences.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2028 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. In addition to the information included in all self-studies, the institution is asked, in the self-study prepared for the evaluation, to give emphasis to its continued success in addressing the matters specified for attention in the Spring 2023 interim report. We acknowledge the progress made in each of these areas, but also recognize that these matters do not lend themselves to rapid resolution and will require the University's sustained attention over time; hence, we ask that further information be provided in the self-study. In addition, the Commission asks the institution to give special emphasis to two matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*, *Institutional Resources*, and *Students*.

We understand that Brown University is implementing a new budgeting system, Adaptive Insights, which uses a zero-based budgeting approach, with the goal to develop "an increasingly predictable budget." The self-study prepared in advance of the Spring 2028 comprehensive evaluation will provide the University with an opportunity to update the Commission on its success in "implementing the results of its planning" (2.5) with respect to its new budgeting system. We are further informed here by our standard on *Institutional Resources*:

The institution ensures the integrity of its finances through prudent financial management and organization, a well-organized budget process, appropriate internal control mechanisms, risk assessment, and timely financial reporting to internal and external constituency groups, providing a basis for sound financial decision-making (7.12).

The Commission appreciates that the past five years have been a "significant period of transition and transformation for the Division of Campus Life" at Brown University, with initiatives implemented to improve the residential experience, support health and wellness, and foster operational excellence. We are also pleased to learn of the Strategic Roadmap developed to guide the work of the Division of Campus Life over the next few years as it works "to ensure that equity and justice are embedded in all the Division's processes, structures, and programs." As guided by our standard on *Students*, we look forward to learning, through the Spring 2028 self-study, of Brown's success in this matter:

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In providing services, in accordance with its mission and purposes, the institution adheres to both the spirit and intent of equal opportunity and its own goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion (5.12).

Through a program of regular and systematic evaluation, the institution assesses the effectiveness of its efforts to achieve an equitable educational experience for all of its students and the appropriateness and effectiveness of its student services to advance institutional purposes. Information obtained through this evaluation is used to revise these efforts and services and improve their achievement (5.20).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Brown University and hopes its preparation has contributed to institutional improvement. It appreciates your cooperation in 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 Mr. Samuel M. Mencoff. The institution is free to release information about the report 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,



Russell C. Carey

RCC/jm

cc: Mr. Samuel M. Mencoff

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions