



January 25, 2022

Dr. Michaele Whelan  
President  
Wheaton College  
120 Boylston Street  
Boston, MA 02116

Dear President Whelan:

I write to inform you that at its meeting on November 18, 2021, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the report submitted by Wheaton College and took the following action:

that the report submitted by Wheaton College be accepted;

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

that, in addition to the information included in all interim reports, as well as the matters specified in our letter of October 8, 2019, the institution give emphasis, in the Spring 2024 interim report, to its continued success in addressing the four areas specified for attention in the Fall 2021 progress report, namely:

1. developing and implementing a comprehensive plan for assessing student learning;
2. achieving a balanced operating budget;
3. addressing the College's deferred maintenance and facilities needs;
4. assuring the effectiveness of its policies and procedures to ensure alignment of its award of credit with Commission policy.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The report submitted by Wheaton College was accepted because it was generally responsive to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letter of October 8, 2019.

We appreciate the report prepared by Wheaton College and welcome the news of the institution's progress to address the issues identified by the Commission. We are pleased to learn that the new Compass curriculum was launched in Fall 2020 and commend the work of the Curriculum Implementation Team and Assessment Steering Committee to ensure that assessment of student learning outcomes was incorporated "from the start." Building on their development of an assessment plan during Summer 2020, the Faculty Curriculum Committee now oversees the assessment processes that began in Fall 2020 with a pre- and post-test for First Year Experience students to self-evaluate their learning gains and a rubric designed to score student projects. We give

credit to Wheaton College, too, for its successful shift to online education during the pandemic, particularly its “focus on a formative assessment of operations” that led to implementation of a Teaching and Learning Assistant program created to improve student engagement in the virtual classroom environment. The “positive strides” made by Wheaton College toward its goal to achieve a balanced operating budget over the next five years are also acknowledged. While negative operating results persisted in FY2021 (\$5.3 million operating budget deficit projected despite federal funding received to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and fundraising results exceeding \$21 million), the institution’s liquidity remained strong with estimated cash and short-term investments of \$23 million and endowment investments valued at \$251 million as of March 31, 2021. Recognizing that enrollment growth is a prerequisite to positive operating results, we are encouraged that both Fall 2019 and Fall 2021 enrollment exceeded 1,700 and that the offering of new academic majors in fields such as nursing and design are planned to help drive future growth. In addition, introduction of a January term that attracted 150 students in January 2021 is noteworthy. We further support the College’s “proactive” approach to addressing its deferred maintenance and facilities needs by investing nearly \$70 million over the last three years with projects that included renovations of the Admissions Building (\$1.5 million) and Old Science Center (\$31 million), a new 178-bed residence hall, and technology upgrades to improve access and ensure security. Finally, to clarify the institution’s application of its credit-hour policy, we understand that statements for inclusion on course syllabi and in the College’s Catalog have been developed and that the Faculty Curriculum Committee plans to conduct a study of out-of-class time spent on academic activities in AY2021-22.

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, as well as the matters specified in our letter of October 8, 2019, the College is asked, in the Spring 2024 interim report, to give emphasis to its continued success in addressing all four areas specified for attention in the Fall 2021 progress report. The Commission recognizes that these matters do not lend themselves to rapid resolution and will require the institution’s sustained attention over time; hence, we ask that further information be provided in the interim report.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Wheaton College and hopes that its preparation has contributed to institutional improvement. It appreciates 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 Ms. Janet Lebovitz. 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,



George W. Tetler

GWT/jm

cc: Ms. Janet Lebovitz

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions