



Founded in 1885

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES, INC.
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

DAVID P. ANGEL, Chair (2018)
Clark University

DAVID QUIGLEY, Vice Chair (2018)
Boston College

G. TIMOTHY BOWMAN (2018)
Harvard University

THOMAS L. G. DWYER (2018)
Johnson & Wales University

JOHN F. GABRANSKI (2018)
Haydenville, MA

KAREN L. MUNCASTER (2018)
Brandeis University

CHRISTINE ORTIZ (2018)
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

JON S. OXMAN (2018)
Auburn, ME

ROBERT L. PURA (2018)
Greenfield Community College

ABDALLAH A. SFEIR (2018)
Lebanese American University

REV. BRIAN J. SHANLEY, O.P. (2018)
Providence College

HARRY E. DUMAY (2019)
College of Our Lady of the Elms

JEFFREY R. GODLEY (2019)
Groton, CT

COLEEN C. PANTALONE (2019)
Northeastern University

MARIKO SILVER (2019)
Bennington College

GEORGE W. TETLER (2019)
Worcester, MA

KASSANDRA S. ARDINGER (2020)
Trustee Member, Concord, NH

RUSSELL CAREY (2020)
Brown University

FRANCESCO C. CESAREO (2020)
Assumption College

F. JAVIER CEVALLOS (2020)
Framingham State University

RICK DANIELS (2020)
Cohasset, MA

DONALD H. DEHAYES (2020)
University of Rhode Island

PAM Y. EDDINGER (2020)
Bunker Hill Community College

THOMAS S. EDWARDS (2020)
Thomas College

KIMBERLY M. GOFF-CREWS (2020)
Yale University

THOMAS C. GREENE (2020)
Vermont College of Fine Arts

MARTIN J. HOWARD (2020)
Boston University

SUSAN D. HUARD (2020)
Manchester Community College (NH)

JEFFREY S. SOLOMON (2020)
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

President of the Commission
BARBARA E. BRITTINGHAM
bbrittingham@neasc.org

Senior Vice President of the Commission
PATRICIA M. O'BRIEN, SND
pobrien@neasc.org

Vice President of the Commission
CAROL L. ANDERSON
canderson@neasc.org

Vice President of the Commission
PAULA A. HARBECKE
pharbecke@neasc.org

Vice President of the Commission
TALA KHUDAIRI
tkhudairi@neasc.org

April 24, 2018

Dr. Clayton S. Rose
President
Bowdoin College
5700 College Station
Brunswick, ME 04011-8448

Dear President Rose:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 2, 2018, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Bowdoin College:

that Bowdoin College be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit an interim (fifth-year) report for consideration in Fall 2022;

that, in addition to the information included in all interim reports, the College give emphasis to its success in:

1. comprehensively assessing the Bowdoin College experience – academic and co-curricular – at the course, program, and institutional levels with evidence of using the results for improvement;
2. advancing diversity and inclusion on campus;
3. managing its resources to have the capacity to continue to address the College's deferred maintenance needs and other financial requirements;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2026.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

Bowdoin College is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

Along with the visiting team, we commend Bowdoin College for its commitment over the past decade to fulfilling its "Offer of the College" to students and for its continued drive to make "an already strong institution even

better.” We appreciate the advantages of the College’s decentralized planning process that makes use of working groups to engage the community – trustees, faculty, staff, and students – in discussions about strategic opportunities and challenges that help to shape the institution’s priorities. To support this process, Bowdoin has made substantial investments to strengthen the Office of Institutional Research, Analytics & Consulting, including the use of modern data warehousing tools and peer data. We also note with approval that reorganizing the Board’s committees around “cross-cutting issues” has led to improved effectiveness and increased trustee engagement. Recognizing the resources provided to increase faculty lines 20% over the past decade and to maintain a 9:1 student-to-faculty ratio, we concur with the visiting team that Bowdoin faculty are instrumental to the success of the College and their collaboration with students is one of the “defining qualities of the Bowdoin experience.” We further note Bowdoin’s commitment to advancing affordability and access as demonstrated by its comprehensive financial aid programs that include need-blind admission, grants, and stipends for unpaid internships that have helped to increase the percentage of domestic students of color from 22.6% of the entering class in Fall 2006 to 31% in Fall 2016. In addition, the College’s retention rates that in 2016-17 exceeded 90% across the board – first generation (94%), students of color (91%), and aided students (94%) – are noteworthy, as is the active involvement of Bowdoin’s alumni who during FY2014-16 contributed some \$43.3 million to support the institution’s mission. We share the visiting team’s observation that the College’s financial resources are “substantial and managed prudently,” as evidenced by a history of operating surpluses and a current endowment of \$1.3 billion. With a remarkable sense of shared purpose and values, Bowdoin College’s devoted trustees, trusted leadership, and dedicated faculty, staff, students, and alumni, can take pride in achieving the institution’s goal of offering an exceptional liberal education relevant for today’s students, even while exploring the “dispositions and skills” graduates will need in the decade ahead.

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 the College is asked, in Fall 2022, to report on three matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation; Students; Educational Effectiveness; Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship; Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure; and Institutional Resources*.

While 100% of Bowdoin College’s academic departments have formally articulated learning goals, the College acknowledges that continued efforts are needed to ensure it comprehensively measures student learning and understands the success of its graduates. We are therefore pleased to learn of the work underway to “articulate assessment plans that map and link student opportunities to meet learning goals at the course, program, and institutional levels.” We are further encouraged that this effort to develop a comprehensive approach to collecting and analyzing data on student learning and “translat[ing] findings into program improvement” will be a College-wide initiative involving departmental meetings and faculty summer working groups, with support from the Center for Learning and Teaching and the Office of Institutional Research, Analytics & Consulting. We view positively the steps taken to date that include the addition of an assessment section to the annual departmental report, the development of a *Statement on Liberal Education* that defines the College’s institution-level goals, and the identification of a set of “aspirational values” and leadership development objectives articulated by Student Affairs. We welcome further information, in the Fall 2022 interim report, on the College’s progress to comprehensively assess the Bowdoin College experience – academic and co-curricular – at the course, program, and institutional levels with evidence of using the results for program improvement. We remind you of our standards on *Planning and Evaluation, Students, and Educational Effectiveness*:

The institution's principal evaluation focus is the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of its academic programs. Evaluation endeavors and systematic assessment are demonstrably effective in the improvement of academic offerings, student learning, and the student experience (2.7).

Through a program of regular and systematic evaluation, the institution assesses the appropriateness and effectiveness of its student services to advance institutional purposes. Information obtained through this evaluation is used to revise these goals and services and improve their achievement (5.20).

Assessment of learning is based on verifiable statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. The process of understanding what and how students are learning focuses on the course, competency, program, and institutional level. Assessment has the support of the institution's academic and institutional leadership and the systematic involvement of faculty and appropriate staff (8.3).

The institution with stated goals for students' co-curricular learning systematically assesses their achievement (8.4).

The institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods and direct and indirect measures to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students, employing external perspectives including, as appropriate, benchmarks and peer comparisons (8.5).

The results of assessment and quantitative measures of student success are a demonstrable factor in the institution's efforts to improve the learning opportunities and results for students (8.8).

Over the last ten years, the student body at Bowdoin College has become notably more diverse. We understand Bowdoin has set a goal to ensure that the College "recruits a broadly diverse community of faculty and students and that all can thrive," and we note with favor the many initiatives underway to support diversity and inclusion on campus, including the appointment of a Senior Vice President for Inclusion and Diversity who reports to the President, dedicated admissions recruiting and the development of partnerships to cultivate high-achieving underrepresented applicants, the BASE advising program, the THRIVE initiative set to launch this summer, and, as noted above, comprehensive financial aid awards to ensure "a greater level of equity for aided students." While the percentage of non-white and non-international tenure-track faculty hires has been increasing, we concur that fostering an inclusive learning environment will also depend on the College's ability to retain faculty of color which remains "an issue of significant concern." The Fall 2022 interim report will afford the institution the opportunity to reflect on its efforts to advance diversity and inclusion on campus, an initiative owned by the entire Bowdoin College community. This request is in keeping with our standards on *Students; Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*; and *Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure*:

The institution addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity among its students and provides a safe environment that fosters the intellectual and personal development of its students (*Students*, Statement of the Standard).

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 (5.12).

The institution ensures equal employment opportunity consistent with legal requirements and any other dimensions of its choosing; compatible with its mission and purposes, it addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity among its faculty and academic staff (6.5).

The institution adheres to non-discriminatory policies and practices in recruitment, admissions, employment, evaluation, disciplinary action, and advancement. It fosters an inclusive atmosphere within the institutional community that respects and supports people of diverse characteristics and backgrounds (9.5).

Even given Bowdoin College's tremendous financial strength, as recognized by both the visiting team and the institution, 85% of the College's revenue comes from net tuition and endowment payout. There will be increasing pressure on the institution to "drive down spending growth." For example, the amount of financial aid required to achieve the College's goal to diversify its student body is likely to grow (a \$5.0 million increase is projected between FY2016 and FY2018), and long-term endowment returns are not certain to match those of recent years. In addition, it is anticipated that the cost of health care benefits, currently around \$13 million, will climb and, as identified in the self-study, the College is investigating options for increasing the amount allocated for deferred maintenance projects and to improve the accessibility of campus facilities. We understand that the institution has developed a "disciplined budget outlook" that limits non-personnel spending growth to 1-2% annually and restricts staff growth so that it is able to focus available resources on competitive compensation to attract and retain talented faculty and staff. We anticipate being apprised, in the Fall 2022 interim report, that "[t]he institution preserves and enhances available financial resources sufficient to support its mission" and that it "allocates them in a way that reflects its mission and purposes" (7.4). Our standard on *Institutional Resources* provides this additional guidance:

The institution has sufficient and appropriate information, physical, and technological resources necessary for the achievement of its purposes wherever and however its academic programs are offered. It devotes sufficient resources to maintain and enhance its information, physical, and technological resources (7.21).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2026 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. Since Bowdoin College delayed its comprehensive by one year, scheduling the comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2026 returns the College to its original evaluation schedule.

You will note that the Commission has specified no length or term of accreditation. Accreditation is a continuing relationship that is reconsidered when necessary. Thus, while the Commission has indicated the timing of the next comprehensive evaluation, the schedule should not be unduly emphasized because it is subject to change.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the self-study prepared by Bowdoin College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you and Carol Quillen (by phone), team chair, during its deliberations.

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 Dr. Michele G. Cyr. 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.

Dr. Clayton S. Rose
April 24, 2018
Page 5

The Commission hopes that the evaluation process has contributed to institutional improvement. It appreciates your cooperation with the effort to provide public assurance of the quality of higher education in New England.

If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Barbara Brittingham, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David P. Angel".

David P. Angel

DPA/jm

Enclosure

cc: Dr. Michele G. Cyr
Visiting Team