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July 11, 2018

Mr. Roger H. Brown  
President  
Berklee College of Music  
1140 Boylston Street, MS-1140 OP  
Boston, MA 02215-3693

Dear President Brown:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on April 19, 2018, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Berklee College of Music and voted to take the following action:

that the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Berklee College of Music be accepted;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Spring 2023 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Spring 2023 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in:

1. completing implementation of its enterprise resource planning (ERP) system;
2. continuing to assess the effectiveness of the intervention programs implemented to improve the College's retention and graduation rates.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Berklee College of Music was accepted because it responded to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letters of October 31, 2017 and November 1, 2017 and addressed each of the nine standards, including a reflective essay for Standard 8: *Educational Effectiveness* on student learning and success.

The Commission commends Berklee College of Music (Berklee College) for its exemplary interim report that provides evidence of the progress made by the institution since its Spring 2013 comprehensive evaluation. We particularly note with approval the successful merger of Berklee College and

the Boston Conservatory, uniting “...two of the world’s preeminent music education institutions,” that provides students 250+ dual-listed courses and the opportunity to participate in programs and activities at both institutions. We understand that integration of the two libraries is nearly complete, and that Workday, a cloud-based enterprise resource planning system (ERP), has been selected to provide uniform financial and enrollment management systems institution-wide. We concur that the combined faculty of the College and the Conservatory is “even more accomplished and powerful,” and recognize the steps taken to improve the working conditions of Conservatory faculty including committing \$1.5 million to improve salaries and benefits. We appreciate, too, the information provided to document the College’s compliance with the Commission’s policies on the award of credit and student identification in Berklee Online courses, including the Code of Conduct that “details expectations regarding honesty in academic work.” We are pleased to learn that enhanced data-driven decision-making continues to be a priority, and view positively that Conservatory programs have been incorporated into the College’s established academic program review process and that the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment was expanded and a data governance council established. Finally, as demonstrated by its successful \$100 million capital campaign, a consolidated endowment of \$359 million, “solid” enrollment trends and growing online enrollment, and a record of operating surpluses, Berklee College remains financially strong.

Guided by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, Berklee College of Music has developed an impressive culture of assessment that includes the measurement of student achievement at the course, program, and institution levels, and we note with favor that the office’s website and annual factbook are used to communicate the results with the Berklee community. In addition, a biannual peer comparison report is completed to benchmark the institution against its peers on key metrics. We find the institution’s undergraduate one-year retention rates to be consistently strong – Berklee College, 84% (2015 and 2016) and the Conservatory, 90% (2015) and 83% (2016) – while Berklee Online retention rates are somewhat lower, 68% (2015) and 50% (2016). From the data collected through alumni surveys, we are pleased to learn that 70% of respondents report they are working in music or related fields, and those who spent a semester in Valencia express “extremely high levels of satisfaction” with the experience. Following the merger, exit surveys in 2017 also produced positive results: 86% of Berklee respondents and 74% of Conservatory respondents would recommend Berklee to others, and 87% and 81% respectively “are satisfied with their overall Berklee experience.”

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2023 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. The items the Commission asks to be given special emphasis within the self-study prepared for the comprehensive evaluation are matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*, *Institutional Resources*, and *Educational Effectiveness*.

The Commission shares the institution’s perspective that developing a unified technology system is fundamental to the success of its “One Berklee initiative,” and therefore appreciates the comprehensive and inclusive planning process the College has undertaken to select and plan for its new ERP system, Workday. With the assistance of IBM, benchmarks for completion of Workday’s component units have been set: HR and Payroll in January 2019 and Finance in June 2019. Implementation of the Student unit – including curriculum management, financial aid, academic advising, enrollment/student records, and student financials – will follow with a completion date of July 2020. The self-study prepared in advance of the institution’s Spring 2023 comprehensive evaluation will enable Berklee College to provide evidence that “the institution has a demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning” (2.5), and that it “uses information technology sufficient to ensure its efficient ability to plan, administer, and evaluate its programs and services” (7.26).

As noted above, both the College's and Conservatory's retention rates are admirable. Yet, while the institution reports that its six-year graduation rates for undergraduate students have been increasing since 2004 at the College (from 54% to 60%) and the Conservatory (62% to 72%), it also acknowledges that further improvement is needed, particularly given that variances exist based on demographics including gender, race, and ethnicity. We are encouraged that several "proactive" intervention initiatives have been implemented to supplement the College's "multilayered" academic advising system and the work of the Office of Success and Retention: a Smart Start program that requires one-on-one tutoring; extended foundational-level courses that run for longer than a semester; and the Summer Institute that offers Black and African American students a pre-orientation experience. In addition, based on findings from the 2016-17 Alumni Survey Report and NSSE survey results, a significant number of students cite financial issues as the primary reason for not graduating. In response, the institution is reviewing its award of financial aid with plans to "build a statistically driven model to inform Berklee's overall admission, award, and yield strategies." The student pathways research project is also designed to examine retention and graduation patterns and includes a focus on student demographics. As specified in our standards on *Planning and Evaluation* and *Educational Effectiveness*, the Spring 2023 self-study will provide an opportunity for the institution to report on the effectiveness of these and other intervention initiatives implemented to improve the College's retention and graduation rates.

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).

The institution defines measures of student success and levels of achievement appropriate to its mission, modalities and locations of instruction, and student body, including any specifically recruited populations. These measures include rates of progression, retention, transfer, and graduation; default and loan repayment rates; licensure passage rates; and employment (8.6).

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).

The institution integrates the findings of its assessment process and measures of student success into its program evaluation activities and uses the findings to inform its planning and resource allocation and to establish claims the institution makes to students and prospective students (8.10).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Berklee College of Music 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 in New England.

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. Susan Whitehead. 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.

Mr. Roger H. Brown  
July 11, 2018  
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If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Barbara Brittingham,  
President of the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David P. Angel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David P. Angel

DPA/sjp

Enclosures

cc: Ms. Susan Whitehead  
Visiting evaluator