



December 5, 2023

Dr. David Bogen  
Acting President  
Berklee College of Music  
1140 Boylston Street  
Boston, MA 02215-3693

Dear President Bogen:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on November 17, 2023, the New England Commission of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Berklee College of Music:

that Berklee College of Music be continued in accreditation;

that the institution be asked to submit a report by January 15, 2025, for consideration in Spring 2025 that gives emphasis to the institution's success in:

- 1) implementing its institution-wide mission and vision process;
- 2) developing its strategic plan;
- 3) continuing the integration of Boston Conservatory into the College;

that the institution submit an interim (fifth-year) report by January 15, 2028 for consideration in Spring 2028;

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

- 1) continuing the integration of Boston Conservatory into the College;
- 2) assuring sufficient physical resources to support academic programming and student housing needs;
- 3) assuring the effectiveness of the institution's governance structures and processes;
- 4) integrating systems, processes, and policies to enhance effectiveness and the student experience;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Spring 2033.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

Berklee College of Music is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

The Commission thanks Berklee College of Music (Berklee) for its preparation of a comprehensive, candid self-study. We join the visiting team in acknowledging the College's many strengths, including its "clear and consistent" sense of the institution's mission, purposes, and "brand" as well as the consistency of academic standards and program delivery across all its instructional locations and modalities of learning; its effective planning and assessment processes and its culture of data-informed decision-making; and its strong financial position, with over \$465 million in total net assets in FY2022. We understand that since the team's visit, the College has experienced a leadership transition, and we are pleased to learn of the interim leadership team's focus on community building and enhancing the engagement of the Board of Trustees. Berklee has "significantly" expanded its academic offerings since its last comprehensive evaluation through its merger with Boston Conservatory and through the development of dual degrees and academic partnerships, the establishment of the Power Station at the Berklee NYC campus, and the opening of the Music and Health Institute. We commend the College for its success in consistently enrolling an entering class that is "intellectually and artistically diverse" and note with favor Berklee's efforts to improve student persistence and retention, including the use of a "need-based funding strategy" and implementation of a "comprehensive" student support system. Graduates of the College experience high rates of success – 90% are employed or self-employed within 18 months, and 87% are engaged in roles related to their field of study. The Commission is gratified to learn that Berklee's faculty demonstrate an "exemplary dedication" to the institution's mission, an "abiding appreciation for the value of the liberal arts," and a strong commitment to student success. We share the assessment of the visiting team that, given these many strengths, Berklee College of Music is well positioned to continue to thrive as a "unique institution for the study of music and the performing arts."

The items the institution is asked to report on in Spring 2025 are related to our standards on *Mission and Purposes* and *Planning and Evaluation*.

The Commission understands that Berklee College of Music has launched an institution-wide mission and vision process that will lead to the development of a strategic plan. The process is being led by a steering committee and three subcommittees: synthesis and drafting; engagement; and communications. The process, which will involve a series of "community dialogues," is focused on three "core areas" highlighted in the report of the visiting team: the Boston Conservatory merger and integration; institutional governance; and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. We look forward, in Spring 2025, to learning about Berklee's success with the mission and vision process to demonstrate that the institution "periodically evaluates the content and pertinence of its mission and purposes, ensuring they are current and provide overall direction in planning, evaluation, and resource allocation" (1.5).

As noted above, Berklee's mission and vision process is intended as a prelude to the development of the College's next strategic plan. The institution anticipates a permanent president will be in place to oversee the planning process, which is expected to continue the "deeper engagement with the Berklee community" begun during the mission and vision process. The Spring 2025 report will afford Berklee College of Music an opportunity to update the Commission on its progress in engaging in planning that is "systematic, comprehensive, broad-based, integrated, and appropriate to the institution" (2.1). Our standard on *Planning and Evaluation* provides this additional guidance:

The institution plans beyond a short-term horizon, including strategic planning that involves realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. The

results of strategic planning are implemented in all units of the institution through financial, academic, enrollment, and other supporting plans (2.3).

The Commission shares the judgment of the visiting team that, to date, the College's "journey of alignment" following the merger with Boston Conservatory seven years ago has not enabled the institutions to harness fully the "post-merger potential." We appreciate Berklee's candid acknowledgement that the disruption of the pandemic "left the merger work unfinished" and therefore are gratified to learn of the College's commitment to "return to focusing organizationally, curricularly, and culturally where [it] left off." We anticipate being apprised, through the Spring 2025 report, of the College's continued progress with the integration of Boston Conservatory as evidence of the institution's "demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning" (2.5).

Please upload the requested report to the NECHE Institution Portal by January 15, 2025, using the S2025 Progress Report review.

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 Spring 2028, to report on four matters related to our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*, *Institutional Resources*, and *Organization and Governance*.

The interim report will afford Berklee College of Music an opportunity to update the Commission on the institution's continued success with the integration of Boston Conservatory. We realize that this matter will require Berklee's sustained attention over time; hence, we look forward to receiving evidence of further progress in Spring 2028. Our standard on *Planning and Evaluation* (cited above) will provide guidance for this section of the report.

As acknowledged in both the self-study and the report of the visiting team, Berklee is experiencing "significant space capacity challenges." We understand that 90% of academic space is being used on a regular basis, and we are, therefore, gratified to learn that the College has taken some "immediate steps" to address this matter, including initiatives intended to increase the percentage of Boston-based undergraduates who live in campus housing, and is also beginning a master planning process. We anticipate being apprised, through the Spring 2028 interim report, of the College's success in assuring that it has "has sufficient and appropriate ... physical ... resources necessary for the achievement of its purposes wherever and however its academic programs are offered" (7.21).

The Commission appreciates the update provided by Berklee College of Music regarding the steps taken by the institution to enhance the effectiveness of its governance structures and processes. These include a reorganization of the President's Council "around more collaborative and transparent governance relationships;" establishment of a trustee advisory group and realignment of board committee structures and meeting agendas to "enhance board engagement in the academic mission;" and the piloting of a new shared governance model between Academic Affairs and Student Enrollment. We look forward to learning, in Spring 2028, of the continued success of these and other efforts implemented to ensure that the College's "system of governance involves the participation of all appropriate constituencies and includes regular communication among them." (3.2). Our standard on *Organization and Governance* provides this additional guidance:

The board has a clear understanding of the institution's distinctive mission and exercises the authority to ensure the realization of institutional mission and purposes. The board approves and reviews institutional policies; monitors the institution's fiscal condition; and

approves major new initiatives, assuring that they are compatible with institutional mission and capacity. These policies are developed in consultation with appropriate constituencies. The board assures that the institution periodically reviews its success in fulfilling its mission and serving its students. The Board is effective in helping the institution make strategic decisions and confront unforeseen circumstances. It regularly reviews the institution's systems of enterprise risk management, external audits, regulatory compliance, internal controls, and contingency management. The board assures appropriate attention is given to succession planning for institutional leadership and, where applicable, the composition of the board itself (3.7).

In accordance with established institutional mechanisms and procedures, the chief executive officer and senior administrators consult with faculty, students, other administrators, and staff, and are appropriately responsive to their concerns, needs, and initiatives. The institution's internal governance provides for the appropriate participation of its constituencies, promotes communications, and effectively advances the quality of the institution (3.13).

Finally, the report of the visiting team identified several infrastructure-related matters that require Berklee's attention. These include the reconfiguration and optimization of Workday, the College's ERP system and investment in "the flexibility and resilience" of the institution's backup systems. We also share the visiting team's concern that the lack of standardization of curricular policies and integration of registration processes between Berklee and Boston Conservatory has led to student frustration. We are, therefore, pleased to learn that the College is committed to addressing these matters; efforts to date include instituting new curriculum and academic policy committee structures, creating a "cohesive" graduate studies division, and convening an SIS Optimization Subgroup. We ask that the Spring 2028 interim report include updates on the institution's progress with these initiatives as evidence that Berklee College of Music "effectively uses information technology to ensure its efficient ability to plan, administer, and evaluate its program and services" (7.26). Our standard on *Planning and Evaluation* (cited above) provides further guidance for this section of the report.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2033 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years.

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 Berklee College of Music and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you and Betsy Newman, Interim Executive Vice President, and Sharon Kramer, Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Institutional Research, Assessment, and Accreditation, 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 Mr. Martin Mannion. 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.

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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.

If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Lawrence M. Schall, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Russell C. Carey", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Russell C. Carey

RCC/jm

cc: Mr. Martin Mannion  
Visiting Team

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions