



February 6, 2023

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 November 17, 2022, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Bowdoin College and voted to take the following action:

that the interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Bowdoin College be accepted;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2026 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2026 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's continued success in addressing its diversity, equity, and inclusion goals and its success in three additional areas:

1. hiring and transitioning to a new president;
2. implementing its K-Report and campus plan;
3. improving the student experience and pre-major advising.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The interim (fifth-year) report submitted by Bowdoin College was accepted because it responded to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letters of April 24, 2018 and February 5, 2021 and addressed each of the nine standards, including a reflective essay for Standard 8: *Educational Effectiveness* on student learning and success.

The Commission commends Bowdoin College for its thoughtful, comprehensive interim report. The College's shared commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is noteworthy; recent efforts include the establishment of the Office of Inclusion and Diversity as well as the creation of three new positions: a director of institutional inclusion and diversity training, a director of institutional equity and compliance, and an ombudsperson. The Commission is further pleased to learn of the institution's THRIVE initiative, "designed to transform the college experience and improve the graduation rates" of students of color and students who are low-income and/or first-generation college students. We appreciate Bowdon's ongoing short- and long-term planning and evaluation efforts. The Commission further acknowledges the inclusive

process used to develop draft institutional learning goals for the College. Bowdoin's enrollment, which dropped slightly during the pandemic, was 1,948 in AY2022, a 10% increase from the prior year. We are also gratified to note that the College continues to "build out professional development and mentoring opportunities" for faculty. Lastly, we commend Bowdoin's commitment to "creating access and opportunity for all students" through its need-blind admissions process and appreciate that Bowdoin's "financial resources and long-term financial health remain strong."

The Commission concurs with Bowdoin's sense that it has "developed a strong culture of continuous improvement through ongoing assessment at all levels: academic, cocurricular, extracurricular, and institutional." Bowdoin's commitment to using assessment to improve student success for historically-excluded students, which includes the creation of an associate director of assessment position, is particularly noteworthy. In addition, we acknowledge the College's efforts to disaggregate its retention and graduation rates, appreciate the College's candor regarding the disparities in its four- and six-year graduation rates, and note positively the institution's efforts to address these gaps.

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. The College is asked, in the Fall 2026 self-study, to give emphasis to its continued success in addressing its diversity, equity, and inclusion goals. As noted above, the Commission appreciates the College's commitment to achieving these goals, and we recognize that continued progress will require the institution's sustained attention over time; hence, we ask that further information be provided in the self-study. In addition, the Commission asks that three matters be given special emphasis within the self-study prepared for the comprehensive evaluation. These matters are related to our standards on *Organization and Governance*, *Planning and Evaluation*, *Students*, and *Educational Effectiveness*.

The Commission understands that President Rose will step down in June 2023, and we appreciate that the College's priority for the next two years will be "the search for its sixteenth president and ensuring a smooth presidential transition." We look forward to learning, through the Fall 2026 self-study, of Bowdoin's success in this matter. The Commission is informed here by our standard on *Organization and Governance*:

The board appoints and periodically reviews the performance of the chief executive officer whose full-time or major responsibility is to the institution (3.10).

The chief executive officer, through an appropriate administrative structure, effectively manages the institution so as to fulfill its purposes and objectives and establishes the means to assess the effectiveness of the institution. The chief executive officer manages and allocates resources in keeping with institutional purposes and objectives and assesses the effectiveness of the institution. The chief executive officer assures that the institution employs faculty and staff sufficient in role, number, and qualifications appropriate to the institution's mission, size, and scope (3.12).

We appreciate that, in 2017, Bowdoin College created a working group to consider the question: "What knowledge, skills, and creative dispositions should every student who graduates from Bowdoin ten years from now possess?" The group issued a report, the K-Report, in 2018 which recommends "areas of change and emphasis." The Commission understands that implementing these recommendations is ongoing and includes efforts to support academic innovation and provide a "more cohesive sophomore experience." We also note that the College is implementing its 2017 campus master plan and will begin a process to update that plan in 2024, which will "focus[] on priorities through 2030." The Fall 2026 self-study will provide an opportunity for Bowdoin to update the Commission on its success in "implementing the results of its planning" (2.5) in these areas.

Bowdoin's ongoing efforts to improve student learning and success are, as noted above, commendable. We appreciate that the College administers a Senior Survey each year and understand that in some areas such as career knowledge and resolving conflicts, results were "slightly lower" than Bowdoin's peers. We also understand that recommendations from the K-Report are expected to improve the student experience in these areas. Additionally, improvements to pre-major advising are "intended to create a more equitable experience for all students in their first two years at Bowdoin" and will "help reduce gaps in graduation rates across different groups." In keeping with our standards on *Students* and *Educational Effectiveness*, the self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2026 evaluation will afford the institution an opportunity to update the Commission on its success in improving the student experience:

The institution ensures a systematic approach to providing accessible and effective programs and services designed to provide opportunities for enrolled students to be successful in achieving their educational goals. The institution provides students with information and guidance regarding opportunities and experiences that may help ensure their educational success (5.7).

The institution provides advising and academic support services appropriate to the student body. The institution's faculty and professional staff collectively have sufficient interaction with students outside of class to promote students' academic achievement and provide academic and career guidance (5.10).

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 curriculum and learning opportunities and results for students (8.8).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Bowdoin College 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. Scott B. Perper. 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,



Michael Whelan

MW/jm

cc: Mr. Scott B. Perper

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions