



April 4, 2022

Dr. John B. Clark
President
Western Connecticut State University
181 White Street
Danbury, CT 06810-6860

Dear President Clark:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on March 3, 2022, the New England Commission of Higher Education considered the distance education progress report submitted by Western Connecticut State University and took the following action:

that the report submitted by Western Connecticut State University be accepted and the institution be granted general approval for distance education;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Fall 2023 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies and the matters specified in our letters of February 1, 2019 and October 25, 2020, the self-study prepared for the Fall 2023 comprehensive evaluation provide an update on the institution's success in achieving its enrollment and financial goals for its distance education offerings.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The distance education progress report submitted by Western Connecticut State University was accepted and the institution granted general approval to offer distance education programming within the scope of its mission because the Commission finds the proposed activity to be in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation* and relevant Commission policies. The Commission thanks Western Connecticut State University (WCSU) for its comprehensive report detailing its distance education offerings. We understand that WCSU has been offering its Ed.D. in Nursing Education, M.S. in Applied Behavior Analysis, and M.F.A. in Creative and Professional Writing in online or low-residency formats for several years. The Commission appreciates that faculty “focus on teaching excellence as their first priority,” and the University’s Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching has recently directed its efforts to online pedagogies. We note with favor that WCSU provides access to “tutoring, library services, accessibility services, and career service in online modalities.” Lastly, the Commission concurs with the University’s assessment that it has grown its capacity to develop curricula for online delivery that is “pedagogically sound and attractive to adult learners.”

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2023 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years. In addition to the information included in all self-studies, as well as the matters specified in our letters of February 1, 2019 and October 25, 2020, Western Connecticut State University is asked to provide an update on its success in achieving its enrollment and financial goals for its distance education offerings. The Commission appreciates that WCSU, as outlined in the Proposed Degree Program and Certificate Information table, lists several proposed graduate and undergraduate programs to be offered via distance education along with the projected FTE enrollment for the first two years of each program. We understand that distance education is “essential” to the University’s ability to achieve its goal to grow graduate enrollment “by another 300-400 students in the next five years.” While no specific financial targets were included in the proposal, the Commission does note that the institution’s process for approving these programs includes a “thorough review of costs, staffing needs and the projected enrollments necessary to fund those costs.” The self-study prepared in advance of the Fall 2023 comprehensive evaluation will provide Western Connecticut State University an opportunity to apprise the Commission on its success in achieving its enrollment and financial goals for its distance education offerings. We are guided here by our standards on *Students* and *Institutional Resources*:

Consistent with its mission, the institution sets and achieves realistic goals to enroll students who are broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve. (*Students*, Statement of the Standard)

The institution’s multi-year financial planning is realistic and reflects the capacity of the institution to depend on identified sources of revenue and ensure the advancement of educational quality and services for students (7.6).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Western Connecticut State University 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 and the head of the system of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Matt Fleury and Terrence Chang. 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/sjp

cc: Matt Fleury
Terrence Change

Enclosure: Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions