



Founded in 1885

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

MARY JO MAYDEW, Chair (2012)
Mount Holyoke College

RICHARD L. PATTENAUDE, Vice Chair (2013)
University of Maine System

DORIS B. ARRINGTON (2012)
Capital Community College

NEIL G. BUCKLEY (2012)
Emmanuel College

DAVID E.A. CARSON (2012)
Hartford, CT

PETER V. DEEKLE (2012)
Roger Williams University

JUDITH B. KAMM (2012)
Bentley University

WILLIAM F. KENNEDY (2012)
Boston, MA

KIRK D. KOLENBRANDER (2012)
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

REV. JEFFREY P. VON ARX, S.J. (2012)
Fairfield University

JEAN A. WYLD (2012)
Springfield College

DAVID F. FINNEY (2013)
Champlain College

TERRENCE A. GOMES (2013)
Roxbury Community College

MARTY W. KRAUSS (2013)
Brandeis University

LINDA S. WELLS (2013)
Boston University

ANDREW B. EVANS (2014)
Wellesley College

DAVID S. GRAVES (2014)
Laureate Hospitality, Art & Design

R. BRUCE HITCHNER (2014)
Tufts University

MARY ELLEN JUKOSKI (2014)
Mitchell College

DAVID L. LEVINSON (2014)
Norwalk Community College

BRUCE L. MALLORY (2014)
University of New Hampshire

PATRICIA MAGUIRE MESERVEY (2014)
Salem State University

WALLACE NUTTING (2014)
Saco, Maine

CHRISTOPHER J. SULLIVAN (2014)
Concord, NH

Director of the Commission
BARBARA E. BRITTINGHAM
E-Mail: bbrittingham@neasc.org

Deputy Director of the Commission
PATRICIA M. O'BRIEN, SND
E-Mail: pobrien@neasc.org

Associate Director of the Commission
ROBERT C. FROH
E-Mail: rfroh@neasc.org

Associate Director of the Commission
PAULA A. HARBECKE
E-Mail: pharbecke@neasc.org

Associate Director of the Commission
CAROL L. ANDERSON
canderson@neasc.org

June 15, 2012

Dr. John Maeda
President
Rhode Island School of Design
4th Floor
20 Washington Place
Providence, RI 02903

Dear President Maeda:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on April 19, 2012, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the fifth-year interim report submitted by Rhode Island School of Design and voted to take the following action:

that the fifth-year interim report submitted by Rhode Island School of Design be accepted;

that the comprehensive evaluation scheduled for Spring 2016 be confirmed;

that, in addition to the information included in all self-studies, the self-study prepared in advance of the Spring 2016 evaluation give emphasis to the institution's success in:

1. implementing its plans to endorse and publicize student learning outcomes and to develop a process to determine that students are meeting the identified outcomes;
2. strengthening its use of data to inform decision making and future planning;
3. undertaking campus master planning, with particular attention to addressing deferred maintenance needs.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The fifth-year interim report submitted by Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) was accepted because it responded to the concerns raised by the Commission in its letter of November 14, 2006, and it also addressed each of the eleven standards.

We are gratified to learn that development of the new strategic plan broadly engaged the RISD community in articulating strategic priorities and outlining clear goals, while addressing the impact of the weak economy, the competition for top students, and curriculum development incorporating emerging technologies. We note with favor that three new multi-constituency committees are working in concert on the development of an integrated multi-year planning model for the operating and capital budgets. We commend RISD's academic departments for their strong culture of program review. Finally, we understand that racial and ethnic diversity has improved, with students of color representing 26.7% of the total student population in Fall 2011, and that a new Diversity Steering Committee implements supportive policies and practices, serves as a campus-wide resource on diversity, and regularly updates the president and cabinet.

The response to the eleven standards indicates that RISD is focused on its mission and is refining its organizational structure. We note with approval that the School continues to provide appropriate physical resources to fulfill its mission, and the FY2011 audited financial statements and management letter indicate a favorable position with increased total assets, decreased total liabilities, and an A1 Moody's bond rating. The E&S and Data First forms included with the report are complete, but the material could be discussed more extensively in the narrative. We ask that the institution give more attention to referencing data in these forms as part of the narrative of the self-study prepared in advance of the next comprehensive evaluation.

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Spring 2016 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*, *The Academic Program*, *Physical and Technological Resources*, and *Public Disclosure*.

We note with approval that RISD has defined the need to endorse and publicize clear and assessable learning outcomes and plans to develop a college-wide process to determine how well students are meeting these outcomes. The process will begin with the identification of individual course- and program-level outcomes in all departments, eventually expanding to institution-level outcomes which will include broad-based campus-wide outcomes for both undergraduate and graduate levels. We look forward to learning, in Spring 2016, of RISD's success here, as informed by our standards on *Planning and Evaluation*, *The Academic Program*, and *Public Disclosure*:

Based on verifiable information, the institution understands what its students have gained as a result of their education and has useful evidence about the success of its recent graduates. This information is used for planning and resource allocation and to inform the public about the institution (2.7).

The institution implements and provides support for systematic and broad-based assessment of what and how students are learning through their academic program and experiences outside the classroom. Assessment is based on clear statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. Assessment provides useful information that helps the institution to improve the experiences provided for students, as well as to assure that the level of student achievement is appropriate for the degree awarded (4.48).

The institution's approach to understanding student learning focuses on the course, program, and institutional level. Evidence is considered at the appropriate level of focus,

with the results being a demonstrable factor in improving the learning opportunities and results for students (4.49).

The institution publishes statements of its goals for students' education and the success of students in achieving those goals. Information on student success includes rates of retention and graduation and other measures of student success appropriate to institutional mission. As appropriate, recent information on passage rates for licensure examinations is also published (10.10).

Through the two-year development of the strategic plan, the School has become more strategic and intentional, with its orchestration of small focused working groups and subcommittees, and with large and inclusive public forums for discussion and debate. Going forward, the institution projects that over the next five years its growing facility and commitment to the use of data will inform decisions in future planning, which will ultimately develop and support a stronger culture of continuous assessment. The Spring 2016 self-study will provide the institution the opportunity to evaluate its effectiveness here, in keeping with our standards on *The Academic Program* (cited above) and *Planning and Evaluation*:

Planning and evaluation are systematic, comprehensive, broad-based, integrated, and appropriate to the institution. They involve the participation of individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes. Results of planning and evaluation are regularly communicated to appropriate institutional constituencies. The institution allocates sufficient resources for its planning and evaluation efforts (2.1).

Institutional research is sufficient to support planning and evaluation. The institution systematically collects and uses data necessary to support its planning efforts and to enhance institutional effectiveness (2.2).

As part of the campus master planning process, we understand that the School intends to complete a full assessment of its deferred maintenance needs and will include in the master plan a financial plan to address improvements over time. Through the self-study prepared in advance of the Spring 2016 comprehensive evaluation, we welcome information about RISD's success in undertaking master planning, in accordance with our standard on *Physical and Technological Resources*:

The institution undertakes physical resource planning linked to academic and student services, support functions, and financial planning. It determines the adequacy of existing physical and technological resources and identifies and plans the specified resolution of deferred maintenance needs. Space planning occurs on a regular basis as part of physical resource evaluation and planning, and is consistent with the mission and purposes of the institution (8.4).

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by Rhode Island School of Design and hopes that 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 Mr. Michael Spalter. The institution is free to release information about the report and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

Dr. John Maeda
June 15, 2012
Page 4

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Jo Maydew".

Mary Jo Maydew

MJM/jm

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Michael Spalter