January 6, 2014

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 November 22, 2013, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Berklee College of Music:

that Berklee College of Music be continued in accreditation;

that inclusion within the institution’s accreditation of the College’s branch campus in Valencia, Spain and the Master of Music and Master of Arts degrees offered at that location be confirmed;

that the Spring 2016 on-site evaluation of the College’s implementation of the Master of Music and Master of Arts degree programs at its main campus in Boston be confirmed;

that the College be reminded that its accreditation at the master’s level is limited to the Master of Music and Master of Arts degree programs and that any plans to offer additional programs at the master’s level need to be submitted to the Commission for review in keeping with the policy on Substantive Change;

that the College submit a fifth-year interim report for consideration in Spring, 2018;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Spring, 2023.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

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

The Commission commends Berklee College for its comprehensive and candid self-study that documents the remarkable progress made by the
institution since its last comprehensive evaluation, a period during which the institution broadened its focus beyond jazz to encompass all of contemporary music. We are pleased to learn that the implementation of a mandatory audition and interview as part of the admissions process tripled applications over the past decade leading to increased selectivity and also enabled the College to reach its Fall 2015 enrollment goal of 4,300 students in Fall 2012, three years ahead of schedule. In addition, we are aware that the percentage of domestic ALANA students doubled and the number of female students increased by 20%, thereby producing a more diverse and better balanced student body. The College’s increased investment in financial aid— from $10 million to $36 million—that included the establishment of the Presidential Scholars and Africa Scholars programs for students with demonstrated financial need is noteworthy, as is the development of a music theory and technology program for visually impaired musicians. We share the team’s observation that “institutional assessment and systematic review are in place in all areas of the institution,” as demonstrated most recently by the formation of an Institutional Assessment office and an Assessment Committee which will serve as “vehicles for institutionalizing a culture of evaluation throughout Berklee.” Berklee College benefits from robust financial resources and excellent physical and IT resources, exceeding its first capital campaign goal by raising $54.5 million and constructing its first “purpose-built” 16-story facility that will open in 2014. We also recognize the College’s plans to expand its online program, creating Berklee Online, and its launch of more than 100 online courses that now provide access to more than 10,000 students at a substantially lower tuition rate. Overall, the Commission concurs with the visiting team that the commitment and passion shared by the trustees, administrators, faculty, and staff for the institution and its students position Berklee College well to continue its institutional innovation and, as measured by the accomplishments of its graduates, to achieve its ambition to be “the world’s leading institute of contemporary music.”

The Commission confirmed inclusion of the College’s branch campus in Valencia, Spain and the Master of Music and Master of Arts degrees offered at that location within the institution’s accreditation because the self-study addressed the concerns raised in our letter of January 25, 2012 and provided evidence that the College is implementing the programs in a manner consistent with Commission standards and policies.

We commend the College for its “stunning” state-of-the-art facilities in the Palau de les Arts in Valencia, Spain that house Berklee’s graduate and study abroad programs. We note with approval that in Spring 2013 the Valencia campus had six full-time, 33 part-time, and two visiting faculty, and that Boston-based faculty regularly teach in Valencia to facilitate the relationship between the two campuses to “ensure that pedagogical links remain strong.” In addition, we appreciate that Berklee’s system of academic program reviews applies to both its Boston and Valencia campuses. We understand that a full complement of student services is available, including an International Career Center, and that significant investment has been made in the library resources needed to support the graduate programs offered. The fact that all 74 students in the master’s degree program first class graduated in July 2013 is impressive. Overall, we agree with the visiting team that Berklee College’s Valencia campus is “very well integrated with the Boston campus.”

The Commission confirms the Spring 2016 on-site evaluation of the College’s implementation of the Master of Music and Master of Arts degree programs at the main campus in Boston. We remind you that any plans to offer additional programs at the master’s level beyond those currently offered will need to be reviewed by the Commission, consistent with our policy on Substantive Change. It is generally the case that before granting general approval at the higher degree level within the institution’s range of academic offerings, the Commission expects to see developed capacity at the higher degree, success with initial programs, and, as appropriate, the development of an institutional culture supporting academic programming at the higher degree.
Commission policy requires a fifth-year interim report of all institutions on a decennial evaluation cycle. The purpose of the interim report in Spring, 2018 is to provide the Commission an opportunity to appraise the institution’s current status in keeping with the Policy on Periodic Review.

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.

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, Camille Colatosti, Dean, Institutional Assessment and Graduate Studies, and Richard Miller, team chair, 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. Jeff Shames. The institution is free to release information about the evaluation and the Commission’s action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

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 in New England.

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

Sincerely,

Dean A. Wyld

JAW/sjp

Enclosure

Cc: Jeff Shames
    Visiting team
Policy on Substantive Change

The nature and scope of an educational institution are defined in its legal charter and in formal statements of mission and objectives prepared by the institution.

The accreditation of an institution is in part an affirmation that the institution has established conditions and procedures under which its purposes can be realized and appears in fact to be accomplishing those purposes. The accreditation of an institution applies to those units and activities reviewed at the time of evaluation and included in the institutional report which is a part of each accreditation process required by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

Educational institutions are, of course, constantly changing. Most changes, such as developing new majors or concentrations, changing personnel, and adding and dropping courses, fall within the nature and scope of the institution and do not affect its accredited status. They are, however, one reason for the periodic reexamination required of all accredited institutions.

Other changes, however, affect significantly the nature of the institution, its mission and objectives, its educational program, and the allocation of its resources. Such substantive changes initiated subsequent to the most recent evaluation are not automatically included in the institution's accreditation. While the decision to modify an institution is an institutional prerogative and responsibility, accreditation is that of the Commission. The Commission supports and encourages innovation and experimentation; it also has the obligation to determine the effect of substantive changes on the validity of an institution's accreditation.

A. Types of Substantive Change

Substantive changes include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. changes in legal status or in form of control of the institution, including merging with another institution and changes in ownership;
(a) the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program; or

(b) the length of a program;

16. significantly departing from the stated mission, population served, objectives or educational programs operative at the time of the most recent evaluation.

17. changing the overall financial position of the institution through actions such as assumption of debt or significant leases, disposition or acquisition of assets, or other significant financial restructuring that reduces the ability of the institution to independently meet the Standards for Accreditation.

The decision as to whether a change is substantive is a judgment specific to an individual institution, since the change must be considered in the context of the whole institution. The Director of the Commission is authorized to decide whether a change is substantive or not; an affected institution may appeal the Director's decision to the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

The Commission recognizes that some changes, while affecting the mission and objectives, scope, or form of control of an institution, are of such limited extent that they may be approved by the Director without the necessity of the full evaluation procedure outlined below in “Accreditation Procedures for Substantive Changes.” Nonetheless, the Commission wishes to be informed of such limited changes; changes approved as limited changes will be examined as part of the next evaluation of the institution by the Commission.

In approving a limited change, the Director may impose reasonable conditions on the institution, such as prescribing the form of disclosure of the trial nature of a change or the relationship of new courses or programs to other offerings of the institution. While a full evaluation is not required for a limited change, it may be necessary to provide for an on-site visit by a member of the Commission’s staff, or by a small team of evaluators. Institutions will be required to pay the evaluation fee covering the direct cost if such visits are required. The time for the next institutional evaluation may be rescheduled as a consequence of initiating a limited change.

B. Accreditation Procedures for Substantive Changes

1. Notice to the Commission

a. Prior to Change. An institution considering or planning a substantive change must notify the Commission early in the institution's planning. Implicit in this notice will be a request for a visit by a member of the Commission’s staff for discussion of plans and procedures. Such notification will provide an opportunity for an institution to seek from the Commission consulting services that may lead to an advisory opinion on its plans, and counsel about the effect of the change on the accreditation status and the procedures to be followed.
(3) The fiscal and administrative capacity of the institution to oversee and assure the quality of the proposed change;

(4) Projection of Future Developments. A brief look at the future, indicating any general developments anticipated in terms of the institution and/or the substantive change.

The report should go beyond description to include analysis and evaluation. Assessment of institutional strengths, concerns, suggested responses to concerns identified, and long-range plans should be included. For some types of change - including moving to the higher or lower degree, online programming, and off-campus locations - the Commission has specified a particular report format that institutions should follow.

2. Evaluation by the Commission

Upon receipt of the report, the Commission will schedule its review of the change, the scope of its evaluation to be determined by the magnitude of the change and the need to measure its impact on the total institution. The Commission may act to:

a. approve the change without conditions;

b. approve the change with conditions specified;

c. defer consideration, pending receipt of additional information;

d. disapprove the proposed change;

In taking its action, the Commission may also:

e. require a focused visit or other measures to assess implementation of the change (In cases where the substantive change is a change in ownership, a site visit will be taken as soon as practicable, but no later than six months after the change in ownership.);

f. require a comprehensive evaluation of the entire institution. The Commission may act to accelerate the date for an institution's next comprehensive evaluation when the institution proposes extensive changes. Examples include extensive numbers of new or revised academic programs; extensive numbers of new campuses, additional locations, or delivery formats; significant new populations of students; frequent significant modifications to corporate or governance structures; involvement of the institution in one or more joint ventures, limited partnerships, or other arrangements that affect its academic programs, services, students, finances, or governance structure. In cases where the substantive change is a change in ownership or control, a comprehensive evaluation will be scheduled no later than three years after the change in ownership or control.
Procedures for the Substantive Change Evaluation Visit

Commission policy and federal guidelines stipulate that certain types of substantive change require a visit to assess implementation. These include, but are not limited to: moving to the higher degree, establishing a branch campus or additional instructional location, establishing an overseas location, moving to a new location, and undergoing a change in control. The substantive change evaluation provides a means of monitoring the institution's capacity to implement the change at an acceptable level of quality. When the Commission requires a substantive change evaluation, the institution prepares an update on its implementation of the change, and a small team visits the institution to validate the information provided in the update, evaluate the institution's success in implementing the substantive change, and report its findings and recommendations to the Commission. The Commission considers the institutional update, the team report and confidential recommendation, and the institution's response to the team report and takes action.

Notification to the Institution
Several months before the visit, the Commission Director sends a reminder to the institution about the upcoming evaluation and works with the chief executive officer on the selection of dates for the visit. Typically, visits to assess a move to the higher degree are two days in length, while visits to assess new U.S. locations may be accomplished in a single day. Depending on the circumstances, such visits may run from morning to night or from noon to noon, in cases where an off-campus location offers evening programming. Visits overseas are typically two days in length, excluding travel time.

The Commission staff selects a prospective team to conduct the evaluation and requests the chief executive officer's comments on the proposed team before appointing its members. The size of the team, typically one to three persons, reflects the complexity of the change, based on Commission experience. When the team is complete, the institution and team members are informed, and appropriate evaluator materials are sent to the team from the Commission office.

Arrangements for the Team Visit
Upon receipt of the team list, the institution contacts the team chairperson/evaluator to discuss the schedule for the visit, accommodations (if needed), and other arrangements. The institution notifies each team member directly about accommodations and communicates with the team chairperson about all other matters related to the visit. The institution arranges to have all hotel accommodations and meals, if possible, billed directly to the institution. After the visit, the Commission bills the institution for the team members' out-of-pocket expenses, primarily travel costs. Reimbursement should be made directly and promptly to the team. In keeping with Association policy, the Commission office bills the institution for the substantive change evaluation fee.
1. The team’s recommendation on whether the substantive change should be included in the institution’s accreditation.

2. The team’s recommendation on the timing and content of any follow-up reporting on the implementation of the substantive change. A recommendation for subsequent progress reports related to the substantive change is advisable if the team concludes that further monitoring of the specific situation is necessary.

3. The rationale for the recommendations. Reasons should be given in narrative form for both components of the recommendation.

**Commission Action**

The team report and confidential recommendation, along with the institutional materials and response, are considered by the Commission at its earliest possible meeting. Typically, the institutional chief executive officer and team chairperson/evaluator are not requested to attend the meeting when the substantive change evaluation is reviewed. The institution and team member(s) are informed of the Commission’s action shortly after the meeting.

*July 2009*