



5/16/13

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COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND  
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Dear President Dooley:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on April 19, 2013, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education considered the report submitted by University of Rhode Island regarding its plans to offer distance education programming and took the following action:

that the report on distance education submitted by University of Rhode Island be accepted, and the proposed distance education programming be included within the institution's accreditation, with an effective date of April 19, 2013;

that the University's approval for distance education be limited to the graduate certificate programs in Digital Forensics and Cyber Security and the University be reminded that plans to offer additional programs through distance education need to be submitted to the Commission for approval prior to implementation.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its action.

The report submitted by University of Rhode Island (URI) was accepted and the proposed distance education programming encompassed within the institution's accreditation because the Commission finds the activity to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation* and relevant Commission policies.

The Commission commends URI for a comprehensive and thoughtful report outlining its plans to offer its first fully online programming. As evidenced in the proposal, thorough market research informed URI's decision to focus on post-baccalaureate online certificates. We are pleased that the Digital Forensics and Cyber Security programs, each comprising four courses, will provide URI an opportunity to test its policies, procedures and resources prior to expanding its online offerings. Under leadership of the Provost, a Joint Committee on Online and Distance Learning was established and to advance online development plans, the Office of Learning, Assessment and

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Online Education was created, and a full-time director was hired to oversee the quality and integrity of online courses. University faculty worked closely with law enforcement and security experts using the guidelines of the National Security Agency's Information Assurance Courseware Evaluation program to develop the certificate courses, which we note with favor. Finally, the proposal assures that financial resources are sufficient and student support services and technological resources are appropriate to sustain the two online certificate programs.

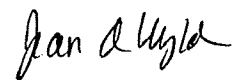
University of Rhode Island's approval for distance education is limited to the online graduate certificates in Digital Forensics and Cyber Security because the University lacks extensive experience offering programs for which 50% or more of the credits can be earned online. It is typically the case that before granting general approval for distance education, the Commission expects to see developed capacity for this learning modality and success with the initial programs. We remind you that any plans to offer additional online programs will need to be reviewed by the Commission, consistent with our Policy on Substantive Change.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the report submitted by University of Rhode Island and hopes that its preparation has contributed to institutional improvement. We appreciate your cooperation with 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 Ms. Eva-Marie Mancuso. The institution is free to release information about the evaluation and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with Commission policy.

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

Sincerely,



Jean A. Wyld

JAW/jm

Enclosure

cc: Ms. Eva-Marie Mancuso