



Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-2680

In This Issue...

- **Commission Seeks Input on Revisions of Standards**
- **Implementation of New PRR Process is Delayed**
- **Next Series of Town Halls Slated for February, March 2014**
- **Annual Conference is a Success**
- **Materials Available from Self-Study Institute**
- **Expanded Substantive Change Information on Web**
- **MSCHE Elects New Officers, Welcomes New Commissioners**
- **New Team Visits and Verification of Compliance Handbooks**
- **Reminder About Transfer Credit**
- **New Workshop on Follow-up**
- **Other Upcoming Events**
- **Recent Commission Actions**

Commission Seeks Input on Revisions of Standards

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education continues to seek comment on revisions to the Commission's accreditation standards. A Steering Committee has been working since Spring 2013 on revisions to the current accreditation standards, in use by the Commission since 2002. The Steering Committee includes Commissioners, experienced peer evaluators, institutional representatives, and senior members of the Commission staff. The draft of the proposed revisions was shared with attendees at the Commission's December 8-10 Annual Conference in Philadelphia, and many of the attendees asked questions or shared comments about the revisions. The Commission has recently added a special page to its website, www.msche.org, containing details about the proposed revisions and providing a link to a document through which readers can comment about the standards. This web page can be accessed by clicking on

<https://www.msche.org/?Nav1=NEWS&Nav2=NEWSROOM&Nav3=STANDARDS&strPageName=> . The comment page will be available through January 31, 2014, but comments will continue to be welcome after that date. For example, throughout February and March the Commission will hold Town Hall meetings during which member institutions can make further comments about the proposed revisions. See below for details.

Implementation of New PRR Process is Delayed

During Spring 2013, MSCHE member institutions voted to approve proposed changes to the Periodic Review Report process. These changes were developed by the Commission's Periodic Review Report Working Group and were intended to make the process as straight forward, user-friendly, and useful as possible. The changes included the development of new templates, standardization of financial information, inclusion of retention and graduation data consistent with federal regulations, enhanced communication between PRR reviewers and institutions, and a change in due date for submission of the PRR from June 1 to November 1.

Over the past several months, as the Commission's Steering Committee for the Review of *Characteristics of Excellence* has worked tirelessly to revise the accreditation standards, it became evident that the Commission will need to initiate a review of the ways in which all accreditation processes will be affected by the changes in the standards.

Therefore, the Commission voted on November 21, 2013 to suspend implementation of the approved 2013 changes to the PRR process and to refer the PRR changes to the Task Force that will be formed to review the various MSCHE accreditation processes.

Next Series of Town Halls Slated for February, March 2014

The Commission's next series of Town Hall meetings will commence on February 20. The primary purpose of these Town Halls will be to provide member institutions with additional opportunities to provide feedback on the draft of proposed revisions to the Commission's accreditation standards. The schedule for these Town Halls is as follows:

February 20, 2014- San Juan, PR

Sheraton Puerto Rico Convention Center Hotel, 200 Convention Boulevard, San Juan, PR

For this Town Hall only, to register, go to rsvp@msche.org and indicate the name, title, institution, and e-mail address of the attendee.

February 26, 2014- Baltimore, MD Area

BWI Airport Marriott Hotel, 1743 Nursery Road, Lithicum, MD

To register, visit <https://www.cvent.com/events/msche-town-hall-meeting-washington-dc/registration-b5168b8626474d7cba63ea515364e612.aspx>

March 13, 2014- Albany, NY

Albany Marriott, 100 Wolff Road, Albany, NY

To register, visit <https://www.cvent.com/events/msche-town-hall-meeting-albany-ny/registration-c460cffee8534e68830b13a6d1bf8ac1.aspx>

March 21, 2014- Pittsburgh, PA

Renaissance Hotel, 107 6th Street, Pittsburgh, PA

To register, visit <https://www.cvent.com/events/msche-town-hall-meeting-pittsburgh-pa/registration-374913903a4241449aa5d85e0410bb98.aspx>

March 27, 2014- Philadelphia, PA

36th and Chestnut Streets, Philadelphia, PA

To register, visit <https://www.cvent.com/events/msche-town-hall-meeting-philadelphia-pa/registration-4ddcd868cfa4408fb6e66f639aab3f45.aspx>

Annual Conference is a Success

Nearly 1300 people attended this year's MSCHE Annual Conference in Philadelphia, December 8-10. On Sunday, December 8, attendees heard opening plenary speaker Holiday Hart McKiernan, General Counsel and Chief of Staff of The Lumina Foundation, address the topic, *Positioning Higher Education to Ensure it Meets Increasing Demands*. On Tuesday, December 10, closing plenary speaker Dr. Paul LeBlanc, President of Southern New Hampshire University, addressed the topic, *Rethinking Accreditation for Competency-Based Education*. Throughout the conference attendees benefitted from nearly 30 concurrent sessions on a wide range of topics covering assessment, strategic planning, governance, crisis management and keeping your accreditors informed, follow-up reports, and much more. A highlight of the conference was Monday's plenary session regarding proposed revisions to the Commission's accreditation standards.



Holiday Hart McKiernan



Exhibit Hall



Paul LeBlanc

The Power Point presentations of the various presenters are now available at <http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=EVENTS&Nav2=2013.01.01&Nav3=PresentationMaterial>.

Materials Available from Self-Study Institute

MSCHE held its annual Self-Study Institute, November 13 and 14, in Philadelphia. More than 100 representatives of institutions that will submit their Self-Studies to the Commission during 2015-2016 learned the basics of the self-study process. Co-presenters Dr. John Di Nardo, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Professor of Physics at Drexel University, and Dr. Brad Hollingshead, former Associate Dean for Foundational Learning and Assessment at Medaille College, spoke about the details involved in Planning and Organizing for Self-Study. Dr. Patricia Hulsebosch, Executive Director for Academic Quality at Gallaudet University, spoke on Understanding Middle States Expectations for Assessment. Dr. David Rehm, Provost of Mount St. Mary's University, provided guidance on Aligning Planning and Budgeting. Dr. Lisa Marie McCauley, the Commission's Senior Director for Accreditation Operations, described MSCHE's Federal Regulations Compliance Review and Self-Study Mechanics.

The final speaker was Dr. Robert K. Clark, Professor in the STEM and Health Division at Cumberland County College, and a member of the MSCHE Executive Committee. He provided a Commissioner's Perspective on Self-Study. Throughout the Self-Study Institute, attendees also participated in small group sessions led by the various MSCHE vice presidents.

The Power Point materials used by the various presenters are available on the Commission website at <http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=EVENTS&Nav2=2013.04.01&Nav3=PresentationMaterial>.

Expanded Substantive Change Information on Web

If your institution is currently undergoing or planning to undergo changes that are substantive in nature, you are reminded that such changes are not automatically covered by the institution's accreditation or candidate status. Per federal regulation and Commission policy, an institution must receive Commission approval prior to implementing any of the following changes: (1) any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution; (2) any change in the legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution; (3) the addition of courses or programs, including Title IV-eligible certificate programs, that represent a significant departure from the existing offerings of educational programs, or method of delivery, from those previously included in the institution's accreditation; (4) the addition of programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that which is included in the institution's current accreditation; (5) a change from clock hours to credit hours in one or more institutional programs; (6) a substantial increase or decrease in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program; (7) the initiation or expansion of distance education or correspondence education wherein 50 percent or more of the courses or credits in one or more academic programs are provided through the alternative delivery; (8) the establishment of a branch campus, including a branch campus acquired from another institution, or established or assumed to provide a teach-out of students from another institution; (9) the establishment of domestic and international additional locations, including an additional location acquired from another institution, or established or assumed to provide a teach-out of students from another institution; (10) the planned closure or relocation of an additional location or branch campus, or a change in category among branch campus, additional location, or other instructional sites by the institution; (11) the institutional closure or institutional status requiring a teach-out plan for approval; and (12) the initiation of a contractual arrangement wherein 25 percent of one or more of the institution's educational programs is provided by an unaccredited institution, corporation, or other entity, or an institution that is not accredited by an accreditor recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

In order to guide institutions through substantive change, the Commission has a variety of online resources that are available. These include:

- Substantive Change Policy Statement <http://www.msche.org/documents/P6A-2-SubChangePolicyRev042613Mod11014.pdf> ;

- Substantive Change Processes www.msche.org/documents/SubstantiveChangeProcessesRevJuly2013.pdf;
- Substantive Change Request for New Additional Location or Branch Campus, Reclassification of an Existing Site, or Relocation of an Existing Additional Location or Branch Campus www.msche.org/documents/SubstantiveChangeApplicationFormAdditionalLocationorBranchCampus.doc;
- Substantive Change Request for Closing an Additional Location or Branch Campus www.msche.org/documents/ClosingAddLocationorBranchCampus.doc
- Substantive Change Request Form for Alternative Delivery Method (Distance Education, Correspondence Education) www.msche.org/documents/SubstantiveChangeAlternativeDeliver.docx
- Substantive Change Request Form for New Degree/Credential Level www.msche.org/documents/SubstantiveChangeNewDegreeCredentialLevel.docx

MSCHE Elects New Officers, Welcomes New Commissioners

During its November 21, 2013 meeting, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education elected new officers for 2014. Dr. George A. Pruitt, President of Thomas Edison State College of New Jersey since 1982, was elected the new Chair of the Commission. He succeeds Dr. R. Barbara Gitenstein, President of The College of New Jersey, who served as Commission Chair for the past two years. Dr. Gitenstein has completed her maximum number of consecutive terms as a Commissioner. Prior to coming to Thomas Edison State College, Dr. Pruitt served in executive leadership positions at Illinois State University, Towson University, Morgan State University, Tennessee State University, and the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL).



Dr. George Pruitt

Dr. Pruitt also served CAEL as Chair of its Board of Directors. He served as a member of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI), the body that advises the U.S. Secretary of Education on the recognition of accrediting organizations. In addition, Dr. Pruitt has served on the Boards of the American Council on Education, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, and various banks, charitable foundations, and higher education institutions.

Continuing on the Commission's Executive Committee are Dr. Gary Wirt, Vice President of Goldey-Beacom College, who serves as Vice Chair of the Commission; Dr. Robert K. Clark, Professor in the STEM and Health Division at Cumberland County College (NJ); Dr. Karen Kershenstein, Public Member; Mr. David Rhodes, President of The School of Visual Arts (NY); and Dr. Karen Stout, President of Montgomery County Community College (PA).

Also during the November meeting, it was announced that three new Commissioners had been elected by member institutions and eight incumbent Commissioners had been elected to new terms. The new Commissioners are Dr. F. Javier Cevallos, President of Kutztown University of Pennsylvania; Dr. Margaret McMenamin, President of Union County College (NJ); and Mr. Javier Miyares, President of University of Maryland University College. Elected to new terms on the Commission were Dr. Pruitt; Dr. Denise V. Rodgers, M.D., Vice Chancellor for Interprofessional Programs, Biomedical and Health Sciences Division, Rutgers University; Dr. Gary Wirt; Dr. Robert K. Clark;

Dr. Francis J. Felser, Executive Vice President for Administration, Bryant & Stratton College; Mr. David Rhodes; Dr. Jose Jaime Rivera, President of University of the Sacred Heart (PR); and Dr. Karen Stout.

New Team Visits and Verification of Compliance Handbooks

The Commission has published its second edition of the handbook, *Team Visits: Conducting and Hosting an Evaluation Visit*. The new edition has been re-written for additional clarity and is now considerably shorter than the earlier version, which had last been updated in 2009. Free downloads are available at www.msche.org/Publications/TeamVisitsSecondEdition2013.pdf. Printed copies can be purchased using the Commission's online order form.

Also new is the revised edition of *Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations*. This publication contains updated information on Student Identity Verification in Distance and Correspondence Education, Transfer of Credit Policies and Articulation Agreements, Title IV Program Responsibilities, and Assignment of Credit Hours. It also contains three new appendices: Appendix 1: Process for Electronic Submission of Materials for Reports (for institutions, peer reviewers, self-study chairs, and PRR readers); Appendix 2: the Institutional Report Template for Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations; and Appendix 3: the Reviewer's Report Template for the Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations. Free downloads are available at www.msche.org/Publications/ComplianceBook2014FINAL.pdf.

Reminder About Transfer of Credit

Based on several recent complaints to MSCHE about institutions not accepting transfer credits from non-accredited institutions, the Commission wants to remind member institutions about one of the Fundamental Elements of Standard 11: Educational Offerings (page 44 of *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*). This Fundamental Element states that an accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate "published and implemented policies regarding transfer credit that describe the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credits earned at another institution. The consideration of transfer credit or recognition of degrees will not be determined exclusively on the basis of the accreditation of the sending institution or the mode of delivery but, rather, will consider course equivalencies, including expected learning outcomes, with those of the receiving institution's curricula and standards. Such criteria will be fair, consistently applied, and publicly communicated."

New Workshop on Follow-up

In response to feedback from MSCHE institutions seeking more guidance on required follow-up activities, the Commission will present a new workshop on March 28. *Institutional Follow-up Reports and Visits* will be presented by members of the Commission staff at the Sheraton Philadelphia University City Hotel. This workshop was designed for institutions that have required follow-up reports or visits stemming from their most recent MSCHE Self-Study or Periodic Review Report. Institutional representatives will have the opportunity to hear sessions on best practices, Middle States expectations, and other topics, including organizing and sustaining the assessment process; linking assessment with budgeting, planning, and allocation of resources; linking mission and goals to outcomes; enrollment management and program planning; strategies to measure and assess institutional resources; assessment of general education; and writing the follow-up report. This workshop is ideal for presidents and other institutional representatives and administrators who are charged with completing the required follow-up report. For registration information or other details, visit <http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=EVENTS&Nav2=2014.05.02>.

Other Upcoming Events

MSCHE has scheduled a series of professional development workshops for the upcoming months.

On March 4, the Commission will present *Understanding and Using Student Learning Assessment Results* at the New York Marriott Marquis in Times Square. In this workshop, participants will learn the many ways to set standards for interpreting assessment results, including the pros and cons of “value added” and “comparable” benchmarks; explore ways to share assessment results in clear and useful ways with their assessment’s audience; focus on using assessment results to improve teaching and learning; and review MSCHE’s expectations regarding student learning assessment and how to share assessment results with the Commission. Presentations on each of these topics will be interspersed with small group, hands-on exercises that will enable participants to practice what they learn. The facilitator for the workshop will be Dr. Jodi Levine Laufgraben, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Assessment at Temple University. For registration information or other details, visit <http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=EVENTS&Nav2=2014.05.01>.

On April 11, the Commission will present *Encouraging and Supporting Campus Wide Involvement in Improving Institutional Effectiveness* at the Courtyard by Marriott Philadelphia Downtown. Participants will learn to improve their ability to articulate why institutional effectiveness is everyone’s responsibility; develop strategies to highlight and strengthen the interdependence of individual, unit, and institutional effectiveness goals and intended outcomes; and emphasize the value and importance of cross-divisional collaboration to improve institutional effectiveness. Nearly one-third of MSCHE’s recent follow-up actions involved Standard 7: Institutional Effectiveness. This workshop will focus on a community approach to improving institutional effectiveness, placing particular emphasis on encouraging and facilitating the involvement of institutional support units. The facilitator for this workshop will be Dr. Andrea Lex, MSCHE Vice President. For registration information or other details, visit <http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=EVENTS&Nav2=2014.05.03>.

The Commission will present *Starting a Campus Compliance Program, May 2* at the Courtyard by Marriott Philadelphia Downtown. This interactive workshop, led by Dr. Ellie Fogarty, MSCHE Vice President, will take a comprehensive look at compliance in higher education, from accreditation to student affairs, finance, institutional research, and faculty issues. Participants will learn how to ensure that their college or university is complying with federal and state laws and regulations, as well as their own institutional policies, while keeping up with ongoing reporting and disclosure requirements. They will also learn what components of a compliance program are relevant for their institution’s size, resources, complexity, and risk factors, and will gain a better understanding of the roles of administrators and trustees in a campus compliance program. For registration information or other details, visit <http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=EVENTS&Nav2=2014.05.04>.

The final professional development workshop of the Spring will be *Creating and Selecting Assessment Tools*, May 9, at the Sheraton University City Hotel in Philadelphia. This workshop, designed using feedback from participants in other MSCHE training activities, will focus on assessment tools. It complements previous MSCHE workshops on *Becoming an Assessment Facilitator* and *Understanding and Using Assessment Results* by specifically focusing on how to select an assessment approach that is aligned with learning goals and opportunities. Participants will consider how to align assessment tools with learning goals, discuss direct and indirect measures of student learning, focus on rubrics as direct measures of student learning, and review the importance of evaluating and revising assessment tools as part of the continuous improvement process. Facilitating the May 9 workshop will be Dr. Jodi Levine Laufgraben, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Assessment, Temple University. For registration information or other details, visit <http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=EVENTS&Nav2=2014.05.05>.

For details on all future MSCHE professional development activities, visit http://www.msche.org/events_calendar.asp.

Recent Commission Actions

The Commission acted at its November 21, 2013 meeting to grant initial accreditation to two institutions: Irish American University and SANS Technology Institute. Two other institutions were granted Candidate for Accreditation status. They are Universidad Ana G. Mendez Campus Virtual in Puerto Rico, and the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Sciences. Another institution, New York Academy of Art, had its Accreditation Readiness Report accepted by the Commission and the institution was invited to initiate self-study. New York Academy of Art had been granted Candidate for Accreditation status last June.

In other actions during the November 21 meeting, the Commission reaffirmed the accreditation of 55 institutions, postponed reaffirmation for one institution, placed three institutions on probation, placed two institutions on warning, and continued warnings for three others. In addition, the Commission removed warning and reaffirmed accreditation for four institutions, and took miscellaneous actions affecting 69 other institutions. Complex substantive changes were approved for two institutions.

A complete listing of the November 21 actions can be viewed at

http://www.msche.org/institutions_recentactions_view.asp?dteStart=10/29/2013&dteEnd=11/21/2013&idCommitteeType=0&txtMeeting=Commission.