



Middle States Commission on Higher Education

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Frequently Asked Questions About Cheyney University's Accreditation

June 2017

On June 22, 2017, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education acted to require Cheyney University to Show Cause, by September 1, 2017, as to why its accreditation should not be withdrawn. The University is required to present its case for continued accreditation by means of a Show Cause report documenting evidence that the institution has achieved and can sustain ongoing compliance with Requirement of Affiliation 8 (Documented Financial Resources), Standard 2 (Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal), Standard 3 (Institutional Resources), and Standard 5 (Administration). The full text of the Commission's June 22, 2017 action can be viewed at

<http://www.msche.org/Documents/SAS/125/Public%20Disclosure%20Statement.htm>

What is the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)?

The Commission is a non-governmental, voluntary membership association that promotes educational excellence across institutions with diverse missions, student populations, and resources. It examines each institution as a whole, rather than focusing only on specific programs of study offered by an institution.

What is the role of the Commission?

The Commission is authorized by the United States Secretary of Education to accredit post-secondary degree-granting institutions in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Commission also accredits several international institutions that meet specific criteria. Middle States currently accredits 525 colleges and universities, including large public and private universities, numerous community colleges, private liberal arts colleges, church-related seminaries, several federally sponsored institutions, and a number of private, for-profit institutions.

Why would an institution become a member?

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education was founded in 1919 by a group of institutions seeking to create a formal means to work together to ensure the quality of post-secondary instruction and curriculum, and to share best practices. With the advent of Federal financial aid, the Federal Government delegated to the seven regional accreditors the responsibility to act as the gatekeeper for Federal Title IV financial aid eligibility. Thus, for an institution's students to be eligible for Federal financial aid it must be accredited by an agency recognized by the Federal Government as one of its "gatekeepers." MSCHE is federally recognized to fulfill this role.

What is required of an institution to join and remain a member in good standing?

Prior to being considered for accreditation and later to maintain their accreditation, all Middle States institutions must comply with the Commission's Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation. These requirements and standards set criteria pertaining to curriculum, planning, finance, governance, administration, and other institutional and academic support areas.

What does it mean when the Commission issues a Show Cause action?

Show Cause is a non-compliance action requiring an institution to demonstrate why its accreditation should not be withdrawn. The Commission issues a show cause action when it determines that an institution no longer meets one or more of the accreditation standards and requirements of affiliation and cannot do so within the federally mandated time period.

A show cause action requires an institution to present its case to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education as to why its accreditation should be continued by means of a substantive report, and an on-site visit/evaluation, which will occur shortly after the receipt of the report. If an institution fails to provide compelling evidence that it meets the Commission's requirements and standards the Commission acts to withdraw accreditation. Cheyney University is required to submit its report on or before September 1, 2017.

What does the Show Cause action mean for current students?

The show cause action also requires Cheyney University to complete and submit for approval, no later than September 1, 2017, a written plan describing how, if the Commission withdraws accreditation, students will be accommodated to complete their education. In accordance with Commission policy and federal regulations, the plan must provide for the equitable treatment of students to ensure that they can get the courses they need to graduate, and include any agreements that the institution has entered into or intends to enter into with another institution. Approvals from any licensing, regulatory, or other legal entities, as may be necessary, must also be provided to the Commission.

What does the Show Cause action mean for alumni and their degrees?

The show cause action will not affect degrees already earned from Cheyney University. If the University's accreditation is withdrawn, under federal regulations any credits and degrees earned up until the last effective date of accreditation will be considered as having been earned at an accredited institution. Further, under Middle States standards, another Middle States institution may not base decisions on the acceptance of transfer credit exclusively on the accreditation status of a student's previous institution.

What are the Requirements of Affiliation and Accreditation Standards?

The Requirements of Affiliation define conditions that must be met in order for institutions of higher education to be eligible for Middle States accreditation. The 14 Accreditation Standards are divided into two areas—Institutional Context, which addresses mission, planning, financial and organizational resources, governance, integrity, etc., and Educational Effectiveness, which covers all aspects of the educational offerings. The Requirements and Standards can be viewed at www.msche.org/publications/CHX-2011-WEB.pdf.

Who developed the Requirements and Standards?

The 10 Requirements of Affiliation and 14 Accreditation Standards were developed and approved by the accredited institutions that comprise the Middle States membership. The current Accreditation Standards became effective in 2004 and underwent minor revisions in 2006.

What led the Commission to issue a Show Cause action to Cheyney University?

The Commission placed Cheyney University on probation in November 2015. It cited insufficient evidence that the University was in compliance with Standard 3 (Institutional Resources) and expressed concerns about Standard 4 (Leadership and Governance) and Standard 7 (Institutional Assessment). In November 2016, the Commission's areas of concern grew to include Standard 2 (Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal), Standard 5 (Administration), and

Requirement of Affiliation 8 (documented financial resources). The Standards and Requirement cited in November 2016 appear below:

- **Accreditation Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal** requires an institution to conduct ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and goals, develop objectives to achieve them, and utilize the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation should support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality.
- **Accreditation Standard 3: Institutional Resources** requires an institution to have the human, financial, technical, facilities, and other resources necessary to achieve an institution's mission and goals. In the context of the institution's mission, the effective and efficient uses of the institution's resources should be analyzed as part of ongoing outcomes assessment.
- **Accreditation Standard 5: Administration** requires that the institution's administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution's organization and governance.
- **Requirement of Affiliation 8** requires the institution to have documented financial resources, funding base, and plans for financial development adequate to support its educational purposes and programs and to assure financial stability. The institution should devote a sufficient portion of its income to the support of its educational purposes and programs.

What are the next steps involving Cheyney University's accreditation?

The University will submit to the Commission all of the documentation that has been requested no later than September 1, 2017. These materials, along with the results of an evaluation team visit to the Cheyney campus, will be reviewed in Fall 2017 by the Commission's Committee on Follow-up Reports. The Committee will issue its recommendations to the full Commission on November 16, 2017.

How can I see the specific wording of the Middle States Show Cause action regarding Cheyney University?

Click on <http://www.msche.org/Documents/SAS/125/Public%20Disclosure%20Statement.htm>

How can I learn more about the Middle States Commission on Higher Education?

Visit www.msche.org. This website contains Commission policies, publications, accreditation resources, contact information, and much more. On the main screen there is a link to Frequently Asked Questions about Middle States and Accreditation.

How can I learn more about accreditation in general?

The website of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (www.chea.org) contains resources on accreditation; descriptions of how accreditation works; lists of regional, national, and specialized accreditors; and information about degree mills and accreditation mills.

How can I learn more about federal regulations pertaining to accreditation?

Visit the website of the United States Department of Education: <https://www.ed.gov/>