



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

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Annual Conference a Huge Success

Implementing an Effective Accreditation Process, the 2010 MSCHE annual conference, attracted a record 1,225 participants to the Philadelphia Marriott-Downtown from December 8 through 10. The attendees heard keynote addresses by Dr. William E. Kirwan, Chancellor of the University System of Maryland and Dr. Judith Eaton, President of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. They also listened to a panel presentation by members of the Commission's Executive Committee with attorney Jean Hemphill of the law firm, Ballard Spahr. This panel discussion focused on the then-pending resolution of the governance dispute between the Commission on Higher Education and the Middle States Association.

In addition to the three plenary sessions, the attendees focused their attention on the more than 30 concurrent sessions dealing with a variety of accreditation issues. There was also considerable activity in the sold-out exhibit hall, where conference attendees networked with each other and met with the various exhibitors to discuss the latest offerings of software, consulting services, academic credential evaluation services, and more.

The Power Point presentations of the concurrent session speakers can be found on the MSCHE website at <http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=EVENTS&Nav2=PRESENTATIONMATERIAL&Nav3=2010ANNUALCONFERENCE>

The 2011 annual conference has been scheduled for Sunday, December 11 through Tuesday, December 13 at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, DC. The call for presentations will open in late February and will be available on the Commission website at www.msche.org. Click on Events and then scroll to *2011 Annual Conference* for complete details. Proposals will be due in the Commission office no later than April 29, 2011.

New Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education

During its November 2010 meeting, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education adopted new Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education (Online Learning). These guidelines were developed by the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) to assist institutions in planning distance education and to provide an assessment framework for

institutions already involved in distance education. The guidelines are also intended for use by evaluation teams. They are based on two documents: a 2006 report prepared by the United States General Accounting Office, *Evidence of Quality in Distance Education Drawn from Interviews with the Accreditation Community*, and *Best Practice Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity in Online Education*, prepared by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET). These guidelines replace the 2001 C-RAC *Statement of Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs*, and are intended to be used in conjunction with the relevant standards and policies of each accreditor.

The new guidelines have now been adopted and endorsed by all seven regional higher education accrediting organizations in the U.S. To view the new Guidelines, [click here](#) or log onto www.msche.org. Links to the *Guidelines* can be found in the Publications section under the heading *Guidelines for Institutional Improvement* and also in the News/Other News section of the website.

Substantive Change Policy is Revised

The Commission recently modified its Substantive Change policy in response to the accreditation provisions of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. The new version clarifies Commission requirements regarding Substantive Change to reflect federal regulations concerning institutional changes that are “substantive.” To better assist member institutions, the revised policy also has a chart of relevant federal regulations pertaining to Substantive Change.

Please note that the Commission has not yet modified the process for submission or approval of Substantive Change proposals. However, the processes for Substantive Change submission have been removed from the policy and placed in a separate companion document.

The following list includes a sampling of the types of substantive changes that require Commission approval prior to institutional implementation:

- The addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure from existing offerings;
- The addition of programs of study at a degree or credential level different from those included within the current scope of accreditation;
- 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 method;
- The closure of an institution, branch campus, or additional location requiring a teach-out plan and/or teach-out agreement;
- The initiation of a contractual agreement wherein 25 percent of one (or more) educational program is provided by an unaccredited institution, corporation, or other entity.

The Commission expects to separately review its processes for submission and approval of Substantive Change proposals. Watch for further details.

To view the modified Substantive Change policy, [click here](#). To view the Substantive Change Processes document, [click here](#). To view either the policy or the processes you can also log onto www.msche.org and click on the Policies button to access the web section on policies and guidelines.

Federal Guidelines on Misrepresentation

The U.S. Department of Education has issued updated regulations on “misrepresentation.” These regulations function as a set of guidelines for department officials should they need to investigate complaints against higher education institutions or as they conduct audits of institutions. The department defines “misrepresentation” as any false, erroneous, or misleading statement made by the institution directly or indirectly to a student or prospective student, a member of the public, or an accrediting agency, state agency, or the department itself. These statements could emanate from the institution, one of the institution’s representatives, those involved under a contract to the institution for providing educational programs or services related to marketing, advertising, public relations, recruiting, or admissions activities. USED officials recently explained that they are most concerned with “substantial misrepresentation;” that is, any misrepresentation on which the person to whom it was made could reasonably be expected to rely, or has reasonably relied to that person’s detriment.

In cases where USED investigators find significant misrepresentation, the Department could take a variety of actions, including the revocation of a program participation agreement, the imposition of limitations on institutional participation in federal Title IV programs, denial of participation applications, or initiation of a fine, limitation, suspension, or termination proceeding against the institution.

For additional information on USED provisions on misrepresentation, contact Carney McCullough at Carney.McCullough@ed.gov or Vanessa Freeman at Vanessa.Freeman@ed.gov.

Annual Institutional Profile (IP) Process Begins

The Commission's annual Institutional Profile (IP) process will begin on February 14. The person who completed the IP last year and the person designated as the accreditation liaison officer at each MSCHE-accredited institution will receive an email message with a login ID and password. If either of these two individuals is no longer at your institution, please inform Mr. Tze Joe (tjoe@msche.org).

There are some significant changes to this year's IP process. Even if you have submitted past Institutional Profiles, please pay careful attention to this year's instructions.

This year, the IP will require institutions to report to the Commission the number of programs offered by each degree type. A new degree type, Certificate Programs, has been added to last year’s list of degree types. For reporting purposes, the Commission will use the same format for Certificate Programs that IPEDS uses, and institutions should report the same data to the Commission that they report to IPEDS.

A new section titled "Correspondence Courses" has been added to the Distance Education page. This section contains the same questions contained in the "Distance Education" section.

A new Key Contact (Coordinator for Distance Education) has been added to the list of Key Contacts. Any institution that offers distance education courses is **required** to complete this field. A new, **optional** Key Contact ("Person to Whom Invoices Should be cc'ed") has been added to the list of Key Contacts.

The Commission is requesting additional financial data from member institutions in the Financial section. Some of the data will be the same data the institution submits to IPEDS (and is so noted on the IP), and the balance can be found in the institution's audited financial statement or in other institutional financial documents (and is so noted).

Finally, institutions are required to submit all attachments (audited financial statements, the finance section of the IPEDS report, etc.) electronically.

Series of Town Hall Meetings Announced

The Commission will once again hold a series of town hall meetings with institutional presidents, chief academic officers, and accreditation liaison officers this winter and spring.

Whereas the 2010 town hall meetings focused on two issues---the governance dispute between MSCHE and the Middle States Association as well as the accreditation provisions in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008---the 2011 town hall meetings are expected to focus primarily on the Commission's strategic planning process. With the governance dispute recently resolved, the Commission wants to now re-visit its strategic plan, seek input from member institutions, and update the plan.

The current schedule includes town hall meetings in Baltimore, Maryland; Albany, New York; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; and Lincroft, New Jersey. The schedule is as follows:

Thursday, March 17- Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel

Monday, March 28- Albany Marriott Hotel

Thursday, April 21- Harrisburg Area Community College C. Ted Lick Conference Center

Tuesday, May 3- Brookdale Community College

On each of the above dates, continental breakfast will be available between 9:00 and 10:00 am, and the town hall meeting will begin promptly at 10:00 am. The sessions will end at approximately 12:00 Noon. To reserve a seat at any of these sessions, contact Abigail Mosebrook at (267) 284-5025 or via email at amosebrook@msche.org. Registration deadlines are as follows: for Baltimore, March 3; for Albany, March 14; for Harrisburg, April 7; and for Brookdale, April 19.

MSCHE Expectations of ALOs

The Commission and its candidate and member institutions share a mutual responsibility for understanding and operating in accordance with current accreditation standards and requirements. Close communication and active engagement in accreditation-related issues are hallmarks of maintaining a successful relationship between MSCHE and its member institutions. Although the Commission considers the president (or chief executive officer) to be each institution's official representative, the Commission also asks that each institution appoint an accreditation liaison officer (ALO) to serve as the primary contact with the MSCHE staff and as a resource to the institution on accreditation issues. Official correspondence between MSCHE and the institution's president is typically copied to the ALO. Other types of communication may occur directly between the Commission staff and the ALO.

If you are a recently appointed ALO, or you have been the institutional ALO for a while and want to refresh your knowledge of ALO duties, review the ALO Orientation e-Packet, containing valuable information about ALO responsibilities, links to relevant MSCHE publications and policies, and other useful materials. This packet is available online by [clicking here](#) or by visiting the Publications section of www.msche.org.

Upcoming Professional Development Opportunities

MSCHE has scheduled three Spring professional development opportunities for representatives of member institutions.

Fostering a Campus Culture of Assessment: A Retreat for Campus Leaders, is scheduled for Tuesday, April 5, at the University of Delaware's John M. Clayton Hall Conference Center in Newark, Delaware. Participants will learn how to create a thriving culture of assessment; how to get faculty, administrators, and staff "on board" with assessment; and how to foster a climate in which assessment is an ongoing part of campus life. Research and experience show that assessment happens only with the active commitment, involvement, and tangible support of institutional leaders. For this reason, registration for *Fostering a Campus Culture of Assessment* is open only to campus teams that include the chief academic officer (provost or vice president for academic affairs) or chief executive officer; a teaching faculty governance leader; and an assessment coordinator. All three team members must register and participate in the workshop. Registrations will be reviewed, and teams that do not have the required three members will not be approved for attendance. Small institutions (those with fewer than 1,000 students and who do not have three separate individuals in these three roles) will be allowed to register two people. The registration fee includes a continental breakfast, refreshment breaks, lunch, workshop materials, and a copy of the book, *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide* (2nd edition) by Linda A. Suskie. Early registration (received on or before March 11) is \$295 per person. Regular registration (received March 12-25) is \$375 per person.

The following day, Wednesday, April 6, also at the University of Delaware's John M. Clayton Hall Conference Center, MSCHE will present *Understanding and Using Student Learning Assessment Results*. In this fast-paced workshop, participants will review 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 audiences; 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. Registration is open to chief academic officers, assessment coordinators, institutional research coordinators, faculty, and anyone else at your institution with a keen interest in student learning assessment. The registration fee includes a continental breakfast, refreshment breaks, lunch, workshop materials, and a copy of the book, *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide* (2nd edition) by Linda A. Suskie. Early registration (received on or before March 11) is \$295 per person. Regular registration (received March 12-25) is \$375 per person.

On May 16 and 17 at the University of Delaware, MSCHE will offer a two-day program, *Integrating Higher Education Planning and Assessment: Real Strategies for Real Institutions*. Led by Dr. Michael F. Middaugh, Chair of the Commission and Vice Provost for Institutional Effectiveness at the University of Delaware; and Sandra Starke, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management at Binghamton University, this comprehensive workshop will provide participants with solid grounding on the MSCHE standards related to planning and assessment, in respect to both conceptual content and strategies for demonstrating compliance. The central focus will be on how to best inform the institutional planning process with outcomes measures. While the presenters will provide a brief overview of assessment of student learning and its relationship to institutional improvement, the primary emphasis will be on assessment of the effectiveness of the strategic plan. Institutions are encouraged to send teams, including planning and institutional research directors and staff, assessment directors/coordinators, self-study chairs and steering committee members, academic affairs personnel, and other interested faculty and administrators. The registration fee includes two continental breakfasts, two lunches, refreshment breaks each day, workshop materials, and a copy of the book, *Planning and Assessment in Higher Education: Demonstrating Institutional Effectiveness*, by Dr. Middaugh. Early registration (received on or before April 18) is \$495 per person. Regular registration (received April 19-May 6) is \$555 per person.

To register for any of the MSCHE workshops or for further information, visit www.msche.org and click on the Events button.

The Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in Terre Haute, Indiana, will present its annual RosEvaluation Conference, April 18 and 19, on the Institute's campus. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Terrel L. Rhodes, Vice President, Office of Quality, Curriculum and Assessment, the Association of American Colleges and Universities. His presentation is titled, "The Proof is in the Portfolio: Assessing for Learning as if it Mattered." Other conference topics include Developing Assessment Rubrics; Developing Student Learning Outcomes for Program and Institute Assessment; Using Electronic Assessment Tools- electronic portfolios, web surveys, and LMS; Integating Assessment into Academic and Professional Practices; Involving Practitioners in Classroom Assessment; and Using and Developing Evidence-Based Systems for Learning Assessment. For registration information contact Julia Williams, Conference Chair, at (812) 877-8186 or via e-mail at williams@rose-hulman.edu.

Introducing ANNY: The Assessment Network of New York

The Assessment Network of New York (ANNY) is a new member-driven, inclusive organization that welcomes two-year and four-year, public and private higher education institutions in the Middle States accrediting region. ANNY encourages participation by faculty from across disciplines, academic and student affairs administrators, institutional research, assessment and planning professionals, and all others involved with assessment in higher education.

ANNY invites assessment veterans and novices to visit the organization's website at www.oneonta.edu/anny/ to join ANNY as a charter member at no cost before April 1, 2011. According to Dr. Mimi Harris Steadman, director of institutional assessment at Daemen College, and President of ANNY, "We are eager to exchange ideas, challenges, and solutions within this newly established ground-level professional network. ANNY will feature realistic best practices of institutions in our region, with a focus on assessment work taking place in the context of considerable constraints on budgets and staff time." For additional information, contact Dr. Steadman at (716)-839-8567 or via e-mail at mimi.steadman@daemen.edu.

MSCHE Welcomes New Staff

The Commission has welcomed two new members to the staff. Dr. Tito Guerrero, III, is the newest vice president/institutional liaison, while Jeffrey F. Ewing has been named to a newly created position, director of volunteer and accreditation services.

Dr. Guerrero brings to the Commission an extensive background in higher education administration. He served as president of Cambridge College, Stephen F. Austin State University, and the University of Southern Colorado. He has also served as vice president and associate provost for diversity at Texas A & M University, and as a board member of the American Council on Education (ACE), the Association of State Colleges and Universities, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, American Humanics, Inc., and the Society for the Advancement of Management. He earned his doctorate in Administration, Planning, and Social Policy from Harvard University, his Master's of Education from the University of Northern Texas, and his B.S. from Texas A & M. As a vice president for MSCHE, one of Dr. Guerrero's most important responsibilities will be continuing consultation with representatives from multiple institutions throughout all accreditation-related processes.

As MSCHE's new director of volunteer and accreditation services, Jeffrey F. Ewing will be responsible for designing and implementing a volunteer management program and supervising the accreditation services staff. Among his responsibilities will be the recruitment, retention, and

recognition of volunteers who serve as peer evaluators for the Commission. He previously served as dean of students and executive assistant to the president at Arcadia University and as a counselor and grant administrator at Piedmont Virginia Community College. In addition, he has served on several MSCHE visiting accreditation teams and was involved in two self-studies while employed at Arcadia. Ewing is the former president of the Springfield Township (PA) School Board.

Dr. Guerro can be reached via e-mail at tguerro@msche.org, while Mr. Ewing can be reached at jfewing@msche.org.

Recent Commission Actions

The Commission on Higher Education held its Fall 2010 meeting on November 18. A Summary of Commission Actions is available on the MSCHE website by [clicking here](#). This same section of the website summarizes Commission actions from meetings dating back five years.