



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

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Approval of substantive changes involved new degree levels 33% of the time, followed by additional domestic locations, alternative delivery, and new international locations.

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Member comments are welcome regarding: Revised MSCHE publications in January 2006; The appropriate accreditation treatment of 1st professional degrees and “complex” institutions such as proprietary, multi-campus, multi-layered, and closely-affiliated institutions; and Senior staffs of regional accreditors meet to discuss common issues.

Assessment Conference and Workshops Scheduled in Baltimore

The Commission has scheduled an assessment conference at the Baltimore Marriott Inner Harbor at Camden Yards on September 29-30, 2005. It will be followed by a series of pre-conference workshops on December 4, prior to the annual conference on December 5-6, which also will feature a number of panel sessions on assessment.

All events feature nationally and internationally known experts on assessment. The two-day September conference will emphasize concurrent sessions by Virginia Anderson (Towson University), Douglas Eder (Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville), Jeffrey Seybert (Johnson County Community College), Randy Swing, Brevard, SC), and Wendy Troxel (Illinois State University).

The early-bird registration deadline is September 15. For more program information and to register, go to: <http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=EVENTS&Nav2=2005.05.03>.

Three pre-conference assessment workshops will be held on December 4, immediately prior to the annual conference. They are: “Creating Effective, Viable Plans to Assess General Education,” led by Linda Suskie, MSCHE Executive Associate Director; “Sustaining Assessment: How to Move from Innovation to Institutionalization,” with Dr.

Peter Gray, Director of Academic Assessment, United States Naval Academy; and “Effective Grading and Assessment: Strategies to Enhance Student Learning and Institutional Success,” led by Dr. Virginia Johnson Anderson, Professor of Biology, Towson University. These are ticketed events, \$50.00 each in addition to the conference registration, and seating is limited to 50 people each workshop.

The annual conference will feature five panels on assessment, including: “Benchmarking Faculty Productivity in Assessing Institutional Effectiveness”; “Strategic Flexibility in Assessment During Changing Times”; “Assessment in Liberal Arts Colleges”; “Closing the Assessment Feedback Loop to Improve Student Learning”; and “Encouraging Faculty Engagement in Assessment.”

The early-bird registration deadline is November 11, 2005. The program for the annual conference program will be on-line in early September. To register, go to: <http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=EVENTS&Nav2=2005.01.01>.

Other workshops on assessment were held in Brooklyn, June 28; Newark, June 29; and Pittsburgh, September 7 and 8. More workshops are scheduled in academic year 2005-06 in Philadelphia, New York City, and Albany, as well as during the summer of 2006 in Puerto Rico.

Delivery Systems, Enrollment, and Faculty Profiles Change At Middle States Institutions

Data that the Commission collects annually from its 522 member and candidate institutions show that between academic years 2002-03 and 2004-05, the use of distance learning increased at some types of institutions, and there were sharp increases at public institutions in both total enrollment and the number of part-time faculty members.

Major changes occurred in distance learning over this period. Doctoral/research institutions increased their enrollments in distance learning courses from 30,118 to 209,115 students, a 594% increase that affects 25% of the total enrollment in those institutions.

The other sectors were considerably lower: Specialized institutions (such as seminaries, law, and health sciences) increased distance learning enrollments by 90%. Colleges where the highest degree is an associate’s and associate’s colleges that offered a few baccalaureate degrees increased by 68%, and master’s colleges and universities increased 41%.

Distance learning enrollments at baccalaureate-liberal arts and baccalaureate-general colleges declined by 25%.

Over 90 percent of the associate's and master's colleges indicated that they offered any courses via distance learning, compared to one-third of the baccalaureate colleges. On the other hand, the greatest increases at institutions where it is possible to earn more than 50% of an entire degree program occurred at specialized (39%), associate's (29%), and research/doctoral (17%). The number of baccalaureate colleges that offered more than 50% of a program via distance learning did not increase at all, and the number of master's colleges actually decreased by 4%.

Approximately 18% of the 3,103,128 students in the Middle States region are enrolled in distance learning courses. Although public institutions constitute 39% of the colleges and universities in the Middle States region, they enroll 85% of the students who take distance learning courses.

The number of public and non-profit colleges and universities in the Middle States region remained stable over this period, showing increases of 1 to 2%. The number of for-profit institutions in candidacy declined by 16%.

Enrollment in public institutions increased by 17%, while enrollment in non-profits increased 5%. Doctoral/research institutions experienced the greatest increase in enrollment (27%). Institutions at which the highest award is at the master's level and specialized institutions increased only 7 percent.

Public institutions increased their part-time faculty members by 23%, but non-profit institutions increased part-time faculty by 2%. The greatest increase in part-time faculty (11%) occurred at doctoral/research institutions, and the smallest increase was at baccalaureate institutions (2%).

For more detailed information, download the five-page summary, "2004-05 Profile of Institutions in the Middle States Region," at:
<http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=INSTITUTIONS&Nav2=IP&Nav3=SUMMARYDATA>.

Recent Substantive Change Policy Revisions

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education has revised its Substantive Change Policy and process in order to respond to the increasing volume and pace of change within accredited institutions. Some of the policy revisions include:

Rapid Growth. Institutions that plan to offer programs at branch campus at a new degree level, or otherwise anticipate rapid growth, should contact the Middle States staff liaison. Advance approval may be needed, even if the main campus already offers the degree. Rapid change also may require review, and new provisions in the policy clarify what information is needed to approve these types of changes. In addition, the page limit for substantive change applications has been eliminated.

Federal regulations exclude from an institution's accreditation those programs, locations, and other specified changes that are not approved in advance by the Commission.

Other Changes. The policy covers various other types of changes in certain circumstances, such as distance learning, mission change, new degree levels, new sites, and change of control.

The full text of the policy can be found in *Policies, Guidelines, Procedures, and Best Practices*, pages I-9 to I-17, listed under Publications at www.msche.org (or click here: http://www.msche.org/publications_view.asp?idPublicationType=6&txtPublicationType=Policies,%20Guidelines%20%26%20Procedures).

The size of the Substantive Change Committee has been expanded in order to speed response time to substantive change applications. However, it is important that application materials be submitted by the **first day of September, November, January, March, May or July** in order to be reviewed at the meeting scheduled during the following month.

Student Learning Outcomes Leads as Follow-up Topic

Of all the follow-up requests the Commission made in academic year 2004-05, student learning outcomes headed the list with 72 requests (26% of all requests). Institutional effectiveness outcomes followed closely (19%), the need to clarify or improve planning processes (14%) and finances (11%).

The Commission frequently requires institutions to engage in some level of follow-up activities to ensure continued compliance with accreditation standards, to provide more information in order to make a decision regarding accreditation, or simply to keep the Commission informed of institutional progress.

Levels of follow-up may include letters, reports, and visits. For additional information about follow-up policies, see "Follow-up Reports and Visits" in the publication [*Policies, Guidelines, Procedures & Best Practices*](#).

For a complete summary of the topics for which the Commission requested follow-up actions, go to: <http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=NEWS&Nav2=RECENTACTIONS>.

Commission Responds to Rapidly-changing Higher Education

One-third of the requests to approve substantive changes in academic year 2004-05 involved the introduction of new degree levels at colleges and universities in the region.

Other change requests include new additional locations (28%), alternative delivery methods such as distance learning (23%), and new international locations (11%). The Commission sent one or more evaluators to visit the institution in 40% of the cases.

Institutions are required to report, and to have Commission approval in advance, for plans to introduce substantive changes that significantly alter the operations or status of an institution so that the Commission can determine the effect that such changes may have on the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the total institution. Changes are not automatically included within the scope of an institution's accreditation.

For additional information about substantive change policies, see "Substantive Change" in the publication [*Policies, Guidelines, Procedures & Best Practices*](#).

For a complete summary of the substantive changes that institutions asked the Commission to approve, go to:

<http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=NEWS&Nav2=RECENTACTIONS>.

Annual Conference Focuses on Changing Environments

The Middle States annual conference will be held December 4–6, 2005 at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel. Its theme is “Efficiency and Effectiveness in a Changing Environment.”

Three distinguished guest speakers include:

Dr. John A. Sexton, President, New York University, will deliver the opening plenary remarks on “Turning Around an Urban Institution.”

Dr. Stanley N. Katz, Professor, Princeton University, will discuss “Re-Imagining Liberal Education.”

Dr. Paul E. Lingenfelter, Executive Director, State Higher Education Executive Officers, will explore the SHEEO report, “Accountability for Better Results.”

The concurrent sessions will include panels on non-traditional undergraduates; benchmarking faculty productivity; strategic flexibility in assessment; selected topics self-study; changing constituent needs; course goals, assignments, and assessment; higher education in an age of student mobility; assessment in liberal arts colleges; developing a strategic plan; closing the assessment feedback loop; approving substantive change requests; curricular change; academic planning; encouraging faculty engagement in assessment; orienting, valuing, and retaining adjunct faculty; and managing self-study and evaluation.

A complete program will be available in early September at <http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=EVENTS&Nav2=2005.01.01>.

New Commissioners Appointed to Fill Vacancies

The Commission appointed Dr. Gary Wirt, Vice President, Goldey-Beacom College, and Dr. Margaret Mary Fitzpatrick, SCC, President, St. Thomas Aquinas College, to fill unexpired terms on the Commission.

Dr. Wirt replaced Dr. Gerald Heeger who left his position as President of the University of Maryland University College to organize a new university network of higher educational institutions and institutional collaborations around the world. Dr. Wirt has served as chair on eight Middle States teams and is appointed to the term August 1 - December 31, 2005. He will be placed on the fall election ballot for election to complete the remainder of the term through December 31, 2007.

Dr. Margaret Mary Fitzpatrick was appointed to replace Ms. Carol Scheman, former Vice President for Government, Community, and Public Affairs at the University of Pennsylvania. She has served as an MSCHE evaluator, has chaired five teams, and has served as a presenter at Middle States chair and evaluator training workshops. Dr. Fitzpatrick was appointed to the term July 1, 2005 through December 31, 2006.

Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act Progresses

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education has continued to work on Reauthorization proposals with other regional accreditors through its national organization, the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) and with other higher education groups.

On July 22, 2005, the House Education & the Workforce Committee approved the College Access and Opportunity Act (H.R. 609). There is not yet a Senate bill, but there has been activity towards creating one. It is possible that both the House and Senate will pass bills in the fall, but difficult to predict. Even after legislation is passed, much will depend on regulations adopted to implement the legislation.

A new issue was raised in the current draft of H.R. 609: accreditors' standards and processes must consider "the stated missions of institutions of higher education, including but not limited to such missions as inculcation of religious values." Of course, regional accreditation is mission-based, but C-RAC is pursuing clarification of this provision.

Another issue that has received increased attention recently is "due process." H.R. 609 lists certain protections already included in Middle States processes, and it specifies that appellate decision-makers must be different from the original decision-makers. C-RAC is

working with other interested organizations and with legislators who anticipate further additional provisions in this area.

The other major issues relevant to accreditation addressed in H.R. 609 have been described to our members in prior correspondence - public information, transfer of credit, distance learning, and student achievement. During the spring, C-RAC worked on these issues and to the extent that H.R. 609 differs from past proposals, it has usually either improved or clarified earlier proposals.

Most of the requirements of H.R. 609 are consistent with current MSCHE standards and practices, although some adjustments might be necessary if final legislation were passed in this form. Briefly the current bill provides that: a summary of final adverse accreditation actions must be provided by accreditors to the public; institutions may not refuse to accept transfer credits solely on the basis of the accredited status of the transferring institution; distance learning will be reviewed under the same standards and substantive change processes as other learning; and accreditors will review student learning achievement within the context of the institution's own goals and mission.

Specific provisions are available at:

<http://edworkforce.house.gov/markups/109th/fc/hr609/720main.htm>. Please send comments or questions to the Jean Morse, Executive Director, Middle States Commission on Higher Education, at jmorse@msche.org

Watch for regular updates under News on the Commission's website at www.msche.org.

Middle States Continues International Outreach

Middle States institutions now have branches in 8 countries outside the U.S. and additional locations in 40 different countries. The rate of expansion by U.S. institutions abroad is increasing, and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education is pursuing several initiatives to support the international activities of its members.

First, the Commission participated actively in the creation of a new publication, "Principles of Good Practice for an External Quality Assurance Agency," developed by the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). This publication is available on the Commission's website at: http://www.msche.org/publications_view.asp?idPublicationType=10&txtPublicationType=Other%20Publications.

Middle States is one of the pioneers in applying the INQAAHE best practices to its own operations. The goal of these best practices is to facilitate the evaluation of foreign institutions by promoting standards for the agencies that accredit those institutions. This may eventually aid with the transfer of credit, degrees, standards, and faculty.

The Commission continues to test the international applicability of its standards and processes through its ongoing pilot project. It has granted accreditation to Athabasca University (Canada) and Open University (U.K.), and candidates for accreditation include Zayed University (United Arab Emirates) and London Metropolitan University (U.K.).

Middle States staff members meet with representatives of quality assurance agencies from abroad and respond to inquiries by explaining our standards and processes, in addition to working toward cooperative arrangements with various regions, such as the Americas, Europe, and the Pacific Rim. Staff also meet with representatives of individual countries in which member institutions have additional locations.

In Memoriam

Two accreditation leaders have passed away: Dr. Margaret Matson and Dr. John A. Stoops.

Dr. Matson served on the Commission from 1975 to 1978. She was a professor of sociology emerita at Penn State University and had a significant role in developing the Commission's early approach to study abroad. She died on March 15th at her home in Baltimore, MD.

Dr. Stoops, the founding executive director of the Middle States Commission on Elementary Schools and executive director of its predecessor, the Assembly of Elementary schools, served from 1978 to 1997. He also was the executive director of the Council for International and Transregional Accreditation (CITA) from 1993 to 2000. He died on June 16.

CES Welcomes New ED

Dr. Henry (Hank) G. Cram has assumed responsibilities as the new executive director of the Middle States Commission on Elementary Schools. Involved in education for over 30 years, he previously was the Director of Staff Development at the New Jersey Association of School Administrators. He also has had a long affiliation with Middle States as a member of the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee, chair of both domestic and overseas evaluation teams, and representative for the Association at various conferences.

Tidbits/Member Comments

Member comments are welcome on the following items. Send your feedback to info@msche.org.

* In January 2006, look for revised and updated versions of *Characteristics of Excellence*, the standards for accreditation; *Team Visits: Conducting and Hosting an Evaluation Visit*; and *Self Study: Creating a Useful Process and Report* (formerly *Designs for Excellence*). The revisions clarify the standards and procedures, in light of practical experiences of the first cohorts of institutions that conducted self-study and completed peer review under the 2002 edition of the standards. Additional comments from members are welcome.

* Executive Director Jean Avnet Morse will serve on a task force to consider appropriate accreditation treatment of 1st professional degrees. Member suggestions are welcome.

* The Commission has hired a consultant to gather information about, and to make recommendations concerning, the appropriate accreditation treatment of “complex” institutions, such as proprietary, multi-campus, multi-layered, and closely affiliated institutions.

* The senior staff members of the six regional accrediting organizations for higher education institutions meet on August 22-24, 2005, to discuss issues of common interest to regional accreditation. Middle States hosted this meeting of the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) at the Four Seasons Hotel, Philadelphia.

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