

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

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ALO Pages Planned for MSCHE Website



MSCHE's Jeff Ewing, Director for Volunteer and Accreditation Services, addresses the attendees at the 2011 ALO Breakfast.

The staff of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education has been working on the prototype of an ALO-focused page for the Commission's website, www.msche.org. This page would provide Accreditation Liaison Officers with access to information the Commission has about their institutions, so the ALOs can more easily review information and send updates to the Commission as needed.

It has been suggested that ALOs could have the ability to update information on key institutional contacts. They might also have the ability to see, but not change, information on past Commission actions, financial data (originally submitted to the Commission via the annual Institutional Profile), and future Commission/Committee meeting agendas that may include actions pertaining to the institution (Committee on Substantive Change, Committee on Evaluations, Committee on Periodic Review Reporting, Committee on Follow-up Activities, etc.). Additional suggestions are welcome.

Jeff Ewing, the Commission's Director for Volunteer and Accreditation Services, made a presentation on how the proposed web screen might look, during the ALO breakfast at MSCHE's December Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. The Power Point slides containing these prototype screens are now available on the Commission website at <http://www.msche.org/documents/Welcome%20to%20the%20ALO%20Breakfast.ppt>. If you have any suggestions or comments regarding these prototype screens, contact Jeff Ewing at jfewing@msche.org.

Gitenstein to Lead MSCHE in 2012



*Outgoing Chair Michael Middaugh (left),
MSCHE President Elizabeth Sibolski (center),
and Incoming Chair R. Barbara Gitenstein during the
“transfer of the gavel” ceremony at the Presidents/Provosts
Breakfast during the 2011 MSCHE Annual Conference.*

The Commission has elected new officers for 2012. All began their duties on January 1.

Dr. R. Barbara Gitenstein, President of The College of New Jersey, is the new Chair of the Commission. Previously the Vice Chair of the Commission, Dr. Gitenstein succeeds Dr. Michael F. Middaugh, who served as Chair from November 2009 through December 2011. Dr. Middaugh retired in July 2011 from his post as Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness at the University of Delaware, and retired from his role as a Commissioner on December 31, 2011. He served the Commission with honor and distinction since 2003.

Dr. Gary Wirt, Vice President of Goldey-Beacom College, is the new Vice Chair of the Commission. Elected to the Commission’s Executive Committee were Dr. Robert Clark, Professor of Allied Health/Science, Cumberland County College; Dr. Karen Kershenstein, Public Member; David J. Rhodes, President, School of Visual Arts; and Dr. Stephen J. Sweeny, Retired President, College of New Rochelle.

Dr. Francis J. Felser, Executive Vice President of Administration, Bryant & Stratton College, was elected as a Commission on Higher Education representative to the Board of Directors of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

New Commissioners

Six new Commissioners have been elected by the MSCHE membership. Their three-year terms began January 1 and will end December 31, 2014.

Elected were Dr. Ileana Rodriguez-Garcia, President of Carlos Albizu University in San Juan, Puerto Rico; Dr. Davie Jane Gilmour, President of the Pennsylvania College of Technology; Dr. Bronte Jones, Treasurer of St. John’s College of Maryland; Colonel Gerald Kobylski, Associate Professor of Mathematics at the United States Military Academy at West Point; Dr. Warren Olin-Ammentorp, Professor of English at Cazenovia College in Cazenovia, New York; and Dr. Debbie Sydow, President of Onondaga Community College in Syracuse, New York.



B. Jones D. Gilmour D. Sydow G. Kobylski W. Olin-Ammentorp



E. Rodriguez-Garcia

The new Commissioners succeed six Commissioners who served with distinction, but whose terms expired on December 31. They are Mr. Robert J. Albrecht, SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor, SUNY College of Technology at Alfred, a Commissioner since 2006; Dr. John Convey, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Professor of Education, The Catholic University of America, a Commissioner since 2006; Dr. Jonathan Gibraltar, President, Frostburg State University, a Commissioner since 2006; Father Kevin Mackin, President, Mount Saint Mary College, a Commissioner since 2006; Dr. Edgar Roulhac, Vice Provost for Academic Services, Johns Hopkins University, a Commissioner since 2009; and Ms. Lisa Marsh Ryerson, President of Wells College, a Commissioner since 2004. Albrecht and Ryerson both served on the Commission’s Executive Committee. All of the outgoing Commissioners were honored following the Commission’s November 17 meeting in Philadelphia.

New Staff Join MSCHE

The Commission is pleased to welcome five new members of the staff.



C. Faison S. McKittrick A. Shew D. Bonner C. D’Argenio

In early December, Ms. Amy Shew came on board as the Commission’s Senior Policy Analyst/Researcher. She previously served as Director of Institutional Research and Planning at Salem Community College in Carney’s Point, New Jersey. In this newly created position, Ms. Shew will work with members of the MSCHE staff on a variety of projects, including the annual Institutional Profile.

Also joining the staff in early December was Ms. Christina D’Argenio, who is the new Executive Assistant to the President. Most recently, she served as the Assistant to the Provost/Vice President in the Office of Academic Affairs at Cabrini College. Ms. D’Argenio succeeds Abigail Mosebrook, who left the Commission staff to pursue a Master’s degree in Education and a career as a high school teacher.

On January 17, two new Vice Presidents joined the MSCHE team. Dr. Sean McKittrick came to Middle States from his previous role as Assistant Provost and Director of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment for the State University of New York at Binghamton. Dr. Christy Faison came to MSCHE from Rowan University in New Jersey, where she had served as Professor of Education and Special Assistant to the President.

In September, Ms. Diana Bonner joined the staff in the newly created role of Executive Assistant to the Vice Presidents. She previously served as Administrative Assistant for Student Affairs at Arcadia University.

While welcoming new staff, the Middle States family also said good-bye to a friend and colleague. Ms. Linda Suskie, a Vice President since 2005, retired at the end of December. The author of the popular Jossey-Bass book, *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*, and the facilitator of numerous workshops on assessment topics on behalf of the Commission and its member institutions, Ms. Suskie plans to work as a higher education consultant.

Update on State Authorization

The U.S. Department of Education recently reminded the higher education community of rules that require all higher education institutions participating in Title IV programs to be able to document their compliance with state laws in all states where the institutions offer distance education or correspondence education programs. Federal compliance with existing state laws has always been a condition of Title IV eligibility, and the regulation simply calls attention to the need for institutions to assure that they have the legal authority to operate in each state where they are providing instruction.

To address this need, the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), the national association of state higher education executive officers, has developed a directory of agencies and individuals responsible for the implementation of state quality assurance laws as well as a compendium of state laws and regulations. SHEEO developed this directory in cooperation with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). The *Compendium of State Laws and Regulatory Practices* was last updated on January 27, 2012. The *Summary of Distance Education and State Regulation*, including fees, was last updated on October 6, 2011. To access these documents, visit <http://www.sheeo.org/stateauth/stateauth-home.htm>. A link to these documents is also available in the News section of www.msche.org.

New Substantive Change Form for Domestic Additional Locations

In order to clarify expectations and facilitate peer review, the Commission has begun to re-design its format for the submission of Substantive Change requests. As noted in the Commission's [Substantive Change policy](#), institutions planning a Substantive Change have the responsibility to inform the Commission in advance, following the Commission's [procedural guidelines](#).

Effective January 1, 2012, the Commission requires that all Substantive Change requests for Domestic Additional Locations use the Commission's new template: <http://www.msche.org/publications/Substantive-Change-Application-Form-Jan-2012.doc>.

Similar templates for other types of Substantive Change requests will be developed within the coming year. Watch www.msche.org for updates on Substantive Change policy and procedures as well as additional templates.

Annual Conference a Huge Success



The Commission's 2011 Annual Conference, *Quality Assurance Through Accreditation*, was attended by nearly 1,300 representatives of MSCHE institutions. The record number of attendees participated in outstanding plenary sessions and concurrent sessions, networked with a record number of nearly 40 exhibitors throughout the conference, and were able to bring back to their campuses a wealth of information about accreditation and new federal regulations. The conference was held December 11-13 at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel. Power Point materials from most of the presenters are now available on the MSCHE website by [clicking here](#) or visiting www.msche.org, clicking on Events, then clicking on Presentation Materials, and finally, clicking on 2011 Annual Conference.

Mark your calendar now for the 2012 Annual Conference, scheduled for December 5-7, 2012 at the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown Hotel. The conference Call for Proposals will be available in the coming months.

Chairs and Evaluators Workshop Focuses on New Regulations

Nearly 140 representatives of MSCHE member institutions who will serve for the first time as a chair or evaluator in Spring 2012 attended the October 3-4 Chairs and Evaluators workshop in Philadelphia. Individuals who have not served for at least three years were also invited to attend. This year's workshop was completely re-designed based on feedback from prior years. Participants learned about new accreditation regulations that resulted from recently enacted portions of the Higher Education Opportunity Act, as well as other important aspects of the peer review process.

The program began with an evening session for team chairs. The next morning, Dr. Jose Jaime Rivera, MSCHE Commissioner and President of University of the Sacred Heart in San Juan, Puerto Rico, led a plenary session that provided an overview of what the Commission expects during the peer review process. He briefly discussed what factors guided the development of the Commission's accreditation standards, and then went into detail about the role of evaluation teams. Dr. Rivera noted that federal law now requires institutional emphasis on and evaluator review of student retention, graduation, and placement rates.

Dr. Rivera emphasized that the Commission expects evaluation teams to respect the mission and uniqueness of host institutions and to conduct a collegial analysis of the institution. He reminded the attendees that peer review is not the equivalent of a government audit and that evaluation teams should analyze institutions primarily on the basis of compliance with the Commission's accreditation standards. He said all findings should be supported by evidence and that teams must avoid prescriptive pronouncements.

Team reports are read carefully and help the Commission in its decision-making processes, Dr. Rivera said. "In a way, the team report makes us reflect. The Commission reviews the team report, institutional response, and recommendation from the Committee on Evaluation Reports. This is a big responsibility, but also a great learning experience for all," he commented.

MSCHE Vice Presidents Ellie Fogarty and Debra Klinman followed Dr. Rivera with a presentation on the *2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act: Implications for the Self-Study and Evaluation Team Responsibilities*. In their presentation, Drs. Fogarty and Klinman noted that MSCHE joined other accrediting organizations and the American Council on Education to oppose some of the new federal regulations, but now that most of those rules are in effect, the Commission and its peer reviewers must verify institutional compliance. The four areas of the new regulations that are of primary concern to the Commission are Distance Education, Transfer of Credit, Credit Hours, and Student Achievement.

The new regulations require that each institution that offers distance education have in place a student identity verification system. This system can take the form of secure passwords and log-in, proctored exams, or technology such as iris scans, fingerprint scans, etc. In addition, institutions must make available to students information on any additional fees that are required for identity verification. Each evaluation team that will visit an institution that has been approved to offer distance education must have a team member who is experienced in distance education.

The Transfer of Credit regulation requires that each institution disclose to the public its transfer of credit policy and the criteria the institution follows in evaluating and accepting transfer credits. Institutions must also make available a list of all formal articulation agreements with other institutions. Transfer of Credit policies are also addressed in MSCHE Standards 8 (Student Admissions and Retention) and 11 (Educational Offerings).

The new Credit Hour regulation requires that institutional policies for the awarding of credit hours conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education, and that an institution's credit hours "reasonably approximate" a Carnegie unit.

The Student Achievement regulation requires institutions to compile data on students' job placement, including data to support job placement claims institutions make in their recruitment materials. Student Achievement is also covered in multiple MSCHE accreditation standards dealing with student outcomes assessment.

The participants in the Chairs and Evaluators workshop were reminded that all MSCHE institutions that are seeking initial accreditation, reaffirmation of accreditation through self-study, or reaffirmation of accreditation through periodic review, must submit a certification statement, affirming that the institution meets or continues to meet established MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation and federal requirements relating to Title IV program participation, including the relevant requirements under the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 pertaining to distance education (student identity verification), transfer of credit, assignment of credit hours, and Title IV cohort default rate. The signed certification statement must be attached to the executive summary of the institution's self-study or periodic review report. Certificate statement forms are available by [clicking here](#) or by visiting www.msche.org, clicking on Publications, and then clicking on Forms Online.

Also during the workshop, brief comments were made regarding new federal regulations pertaining to State Authorization, Incentive Compensation, and Gainful Employment (*for the latest on State Authorization, see the article on page 4 of this newsletter*).

Following breakout sessions led by each of the MSCHE Vice Presidents, Dr. Karen Stout, MSCHE Commissioner and President of Montgomery County Community College, presented on *How to Interpret and Apply the Characteristics of Excellence: A Framework for Determining Compliance*. The afternoon was spent in hands-on simulations and discussions regarding the role of evaluation teams.

A modified version of the October 3-4 workshop was offered as an invitation-only pre-conference workshop prior to the December MSCHE Annual Conference.

Power Point materials used by the October presenters are now available in the Presentation Materials section of the Commission's website. These can be accessed by [clicking here](#), or by visiting www.msche.org, clicking on Events, then clicking on Presentation Materials, and finally, clicking on 2011 Chairs and Evaluators Workshop.

Self-Study Institute Summary and Online Resources

The Commission held its annual Self-Study Institute (SSI) on November 9 and 10 for representatives of institutions whose self-study evaluation visits are scheduled for the 2013-14 academic year. The SSI began with opening remarks by MSCHE President Elizabeth Sibolski and Senior Vice President Robert Schneider. They were followed by the opening plenary session, *Preparing and Planning for the Self-Study*, presented by Dr. Bernadette B. Sandruck, Professor and Division Chair, Mathematics, at Howard Community College, and Dr. Alan Mathios, the Rebecca Q. and James C. Morgan Dean of the College of Human Ecology at Cornell University. Morning breakout sessions, focusing on *Planning and Organizing for Self-Study*, were organized by institution type, including Associate, Baccalaureate, Master's, Master's and Doctoral, and Doctoral and Research.

Following lunch, MSCHE Vice President Linda Suskie presented a plenary session on *Understanding Middle States Expectations for Assessment*. Two afternoon breakout sessions, also organized by institutional type, focused on *Assessment* and *Creating Meaningful Analytical Research Questions to Guide Self-Study*.

The second day of the SSI began with a plenary session on *Understanding Expectations for the Self-Study from the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008*, presented by MSCHE Vice Presidents Ellie Fogarty and Debra Klinman. They were followed by a presentation by MSCHE Commissioner Gary L. Wirt, who provided *A Commissioner's Perspective on Self-Study*. Dr. Wirt reminded the attendees that they will be preparing the self-study for multiple audiences, and that it should be used as a map for where the institution is going. "Your self-study is the Commission's eyes into your institution's world," he said. "The self-study must incorporate what is going on at your campus, show how you match up against the Commission's accreditation standards, and address national demands for accountability." He also reminded the attendees that their self-study should be data-driven and provide evidence to support recommendations. The SSI concluded with several breakout sessions in which attendees had time to meet and talk directly with their MSCHE liaison.

Power Point materials used by the presenters and a Word document containing the text of Dr. Wirt's remarks are available on the Commission website by [clicking here](#) or by visiting www.msche.org, clicking on Events, then clicking on Presentation Materials, and finally, clicking on 2011 Self-Study Institute. The 2012 Self-Study Institute, for institutions scheduled for evaluation team visits during 2014-15, will be held during November 2012. Participation is by invitation only. Watch for details.

Upcoming Events

The Commission will offer several professional development opportunities in the coming months.

Following its successful offering as a 2011 pre-conference workshop immediately prior to the MSCHE Annual Conference, *Becoming An Assessment Facilitator* will be repeated as an all-day workshop on February 27 at the Courtyard by Marriott-Philadelphia Downtown. Dr. Jodi Levine Laufgraben, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Assessment at Temple University, will address characteristics of good facilitation, strategies for organizing assessment workshop activities for faculty, examples of workshop techniques, and strategies for evaluating your institution's assessment needs. The program will include presentations, interspersed with discussions and brief group and individual exercises that will give participants the opportunity to engage in and practice applying key facilitation concepts. The workshop is designed for those who are familiar with assessment and who want to learn how to guide others in developing plans and pools for assessing student learning. This workshop is ideal for assessment directors and assessment committee members, institutional research directors, faculty developers, and academic affairs and student affairs administrators. The registration fee includes a continental breakfast, refreshment breaks, lunch, and workshop materials. Lodging is not included. Early registration (received on or before February 6) is \$275 per person. Regular registration (received February 7-21) is \$355 per person.

Another sold-out pre-conference workshop will be repeated as an all-day workshop in San Juan, Puerto Rico. *Evidence of Compliance: What is the Commission Really Looking For?*, will be offered March 7 at the Sheraton Puerto Rico Convention Center Hotel and Casino in San Juan. Dr. Michael F. Middaugh, Past Chair of MSCHE (2009-2011), will focus on multiple examples of evidence that demonstrate compliance with each of the 14 accreditation standards in MSCHE's *Characteristics of Excellence*. Special emphasis will be given to compliance evidence for Standards 2 (Planning), 7 (Institutional Effectiveness), 12 (General Education), and 14 (Student Learning Outcomes). These standards are commonly cited in follow-up actions by the Commission. This workshop is ideal for Accreditation Liaison Officers, Chief Academic Officers, directors of institutional research, assessment coordinators, and others who are involved in campus matters pertaining to any aspect of accreditation. The registration fee includes a continental breakfast, refreshment breaks, lunch, workshop materials, and a copy of the book, *Planning and Assessment in Higher Education: Demonstrating Institutional Effectiveness*, by Michael F. Middaugh. Lodging is not included. Early registration (received on or before February 17) is \$295 per person. Regular registration (received February 18-29) is \$375 per person.

Registration is now open for two other workshops.

Integrating Higher Education Planning and Assessment: Real Strategies for Real Institutions will be offered April 18 and 19 at the Rochester Marriott Airport Hotel in Rochester, New York. This comprehensive two-day 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. Topics will include fundamental elements of best practices in institutional planning, examples of institutions engaged in best practices, and extensive discussion on preparing the planning process, practical approaches to collecting relevant and reliable assessment information, and best ways to use such information. Dr. Michael F. Middaugh will be the workshop facilitator/presenter. The early registration fee (received on or before March 18) is \$495 per person. Regular registration (received March 19-April 8) is \$555 per person.

On May 3 the Commission will present *Understanding and Using Student Learning Assessment Results*. The workshop that will focus on the many ways to set standards for interpreting assessment results, explore how to share assessment results in clear and useful ways with your assessment audiences, show how to use assessment results to improve teaching and learning, and review MSCHE's expectations regarding student learning assessment and how to share an institution's assessment results with the Commission. The workshop facilitator will be Dr. Jodi Levine Laufgraben. The early registration fee (received on or before April 1) is \$260 per person. Regular registration (received April 2-22) is \$340 per person.

To register, or for additional information on any of these workshops, visit www.msche.org and click on Events.

Recent Commission Actions

During its most recent meeting on November 17, the Commission took a variety of actions, affecting 122 institutions. Actions included placement of one institution on Warning, continuation of Warning or Probation for 12 others, removal of Warning or Probation and reaffirmation of accreditation for seven institutions, and reaffirmation of accreditation for many. In addition, Relay Graduate School of Education was granted Candidate status. For detailed information on recent commission actions, [click here](#).