



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

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Process and Cycle Changes Approved by the Membership

The extensive and intensively collaborative process of proposing and approving changes to the MSCHE accreditation cycle and processes has culminated in affirmation of the changes by the member institutions. A substantial number of institutions participated in the voting that opened in December and closed in January, and the vast majority of those voted to endorse the proposed changes.

The Commission thanks the voting institutions for their participation in the approval process, and appreciates the widespread support for the proposal.

The goals of the changes are to facilitate the consistent interpretation and application of the *Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation* adopted in 2014, and to enable the Commission to make judgments about quality at an institution in an efficient, effective, and meaningful manner that is respectful of the resources and efforts expended by member institutions and that directly supports continuous institutional improvement.

The cycle and process changes were proposed in August 2015 and approved provisionally by the members in January 2016. The Commission sought and received valuable input and helpful feedback from the institutions throughout the review and revision period. Institutional representatives participated in work groups in Spring 2016 to refine the plans for the revised processes, and town hall meetings on the changes were held across the region in Fall 2015 and Fall 2016. A final presentation was made at the Commission's Annual Conference in December 2016. The Power Point slides from that presentation can be viewed at www.msche.org/documents/AnnConfProcessChange2016.pdf.

With the adoption of the new *Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation* in 2014 and now these cycle and process changes, MSCHE has successfully and collaboratively updated, refocused, and renewed the Standards and the accreditation processes that enable it to fulfill its mission as an accreditation agency committed to assuring quality and supporting improvement in higher education.

Institutions will now begin a phased-in transition to an eight-year accreditation cycle from the current 10-year cycle. The last Periodic Review Reports will be submitted in June 2017. The current Annual Institutional Profile will be replaced by the Annual Institutional Update in Spring 2018, and the first Mid-Point Peer Reviews will be conducted later that year. A timeline for the implementation of the changes is available on the Commission website at

<http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=NEWS&Nav2=NEWSROOM&Nav3=PROCESSREVIEW>

Institutional Profile Now Open; Deadline is April 28

The Institutional Profile (IP) is MSCHE's annual data collection instrument. The IP opened March 1 and will run until April 28. There were only a few changes made to the IP this year. Most were (1) required by federal regulations; or (2) made to make data entry easier. On February 22, a letter was sent to all institutions identifying the exact changes that were made this year. Also, a full list of the changes is available on the Commission website by [clicking here](#). On March 1, 2017, the IP Key User at each MSCHE institution was sent an e-mail message containing IP log-in credentials and instructions.

For more information about the Institutional Profile, [click here](#).

2017 Annual Conference Call for Proposals



The Commission is now accepting session proposals for the 2017 Annual Conference, scheduled for December 6-8 at the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown Hotel in Philadelphia, PA. Proposals should focus on one of the following areas: (1) mission and goals; (2) ethics/integrity; (3) design/delivery of student learning; (4) student support; (5) student learning assessment; (6) institutional planning and resource allocation; or (7) governance. These seven areas closely align with the Commission's new accreditation standards.

Perspectives on the seven general areas mentioned above are welcome from various institutional types (community colleges; public, private, non-profit, and for-profit institutions; research universities, etc.). Presenters are expected to share research results, best practices, or conceptual analyses. Further, it is expected that presenters will make their presentation materials available to the Commission for posting to the MSCHE website prior to the conference.

If you are interested in submitting a proposal for a session that addresses one of the areas described above, your application and abstract must be received no later than April 21, 2017. **Applications from non-member institutions or commercial entities will not be considered.**

To download the presentation application, visit www.msche.org/documents/2017ACCallforPapers.pdf.

Nominations Sought for Commission Vacancies

MSCHE's Committee on Membership invites nominations for new Commissioners for the term January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2020. As a representative of your institution, you may nominate yourself, anyone from your own campus, or someone from another institution.

It is important that the composition of the Commission represent the members' points of view and that there is an appropriate balance of academic and senior administrative representatives. Accreditation is vital to the future of higher education as it is the means of self-regulation and peer review that has been adopted by the higher education community to strengthen and sustain the quality and integrity of higher education, making it worthy of the public's confidence. The actions that the members of the Commission on Higher Education take are the culmination of peer review accreditation activities in the Middle States region.

The coming several years will be an important time for the Commission on Higher Education. The Commission seeks individuals who can provide leadership and contribute to the many important conversations that will take place and actions that will be taken with respect to implementation of the revised accreditation standards and process, national platforms affecting regional accreditation, and possible changes in accreditation under the forthcoming reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

This year, nominations are invited for several positions on the Commission. Institutional nominees should be at the chief executive or chief academic officer level within a member institution.

Commissioners are expected to serve at least 12 days a year, including a minimum of three official meetings that includes the Commission and Committee meetings.

If you would like to submit a nomination for one or more of the vacancies, **please complete the nomination form by Friday, April 7, 2017**. Please note that the Committee on Membership cannot consider a nominee unless it has a copy of the individual's current resume, which should be provided with the nomination. It is not necessary to provide a full *curriculum vitae*.

The following are instructions for logging in to the My MSCHE web application and navigating to the MSCHE Commission Nomination page:

1. Navigate to the My MSCHE login page, <https://www.msche.org/myche/login.aspx>
2. Click on the "Institutions" menu option to navigate to the Institutions home page
3. Click on the "Commission" menu and select the "Commission Nomination Form" menu option to navigate to the Commission Nomination page.
4. Click on the "Help" menu option for instructions on completing and submitting the nomination form.

Please contact support@msche.org for any questions regarding the My MSCHE login process. Contact Ms. Christina D'Argenio, Executive Assistant to the President, at cdargenio@msche.org or Mr. Richard Pokrass, Director for Communications and Public Relations, at rpokrass@msche.org for any questions related to the nomination.

Recent Policy Updates

During its March 2 meeting the Commission conducted a second review and approved several revised policies. An approval ballot is being sent to the CEO of each MSCHE member institution. The deadline for voting is April 17, 2017. The policies on the ballot include *Accreditation Review Cycle and Monitoring; Conflict of Interest—Commission Representatives; and Review of Commission Standards, Requirements of Affiliation, and Policies.*

Accreditation Review Cycle and Monitoring

Following member institutions' approval of the revised eight-year accreditation cycle, the Commission approved a revised policy on the accreditation cycle that reflects this new approach.

Conflict of Interest – Commission Representatives

All representatives of the Commission participating in an institution's accreditation review must adhere to the *Conflict of Interest* policy. This policy has been revised to clarify conflicts based on family relationships. Previously, different definitions for both "immediate family member" and "family member" were applied to different types of conflicts. The version approved by the Commission at the March 2 Commission meeting uses only "immediate family member." The Commission defines an "immediate family member" as a spouse, partner, child, or other dependent. The latter includes any other family member living in the individual's house.

This policy also was revised to remove any references to Commissioner corporate responsibilities, such as fiduciary duties, since those are already addressed in the Mid-Atlantic Region Commission on Higher Education (MARCHE) policy for corporate actions. The Mid-Atlantic Region Commission on Higher Education is MSCHE's corporate name, but does business as the Middle States Commission on Higher Education under an agreement with the Middle States Association.

This policy also features a revision in language regarding Commissioners who serve on evaluation teams. The revised language states:

Any Commissioner who served as a member of an on-site evaluation team must formally abstain in the voting process while the Commission is taking formal action regarding the institution; however, the Commissioner may answer questions at the request of the Commission.

Review of Standards, Requirements of Affiliation and Policies

When the Commission incorporated as the Mid-Atlantic Region Commission on Higher Education, it established new bylaws that define member rights and duties, including voting on accreditation requirements. This policy was first reviewed by the Commission in November 2016, comments were later solicited from member institutions, and the Commission approved the final version at the March 2 meeting.

Policies Under Review

The following policy drafts were reviewed by the Commission on March 2, 2017. The Commission now seeks input from member institutions regarding the proposed changes. If you would like to submit a comment, please click on the following link and submit your comments no later than April 17, 2017: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CommentsMar27-Apr172017>

Communication in the Accreditation Process

[www.msche.org/documents/P4.1-Communication032317\(PublicComment\).pdf](http://www.msche.org/documents/P4.1-Communication032317(PublicComment).pdf)

In order to eliminate duplication and confusion, several MSCHE policies were reviewed and merged. Formerly titled *Public Communication in the Accreditation Process*, this single document combines the relevant content of *Public Communication in the Accreditation Process*; *Notification of Accreditation Decisions*; and *Commission Reporting to the U.S. Department of Education*. Once the new policy is approved, these three existing policies will be withdrawn.

In keeping with the new format for all MSCHE policies, this revision provides a clear and more narrow statement of policy. The policy is strengthened by references to Requirements of Affiliation which notes that clear and honest communication between the Commission and the institution is necessary and obligates the institution to share information with the Commission.

Published Information and Student Recruitment

[www.msche.org/documents/P4.2-PublishedInfoRecruitment032317\(PublicComment\).pdf](http://www.msche.org/documents/P4.2-PublishedInfoRecruitment032317(PublicComment).pdf)

Formerly titled *Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status*, this document focuses more specifically on the institution's provision of published information to its constituents.

Over the past several years, institutions have sought clarity on the Commission's position on inducements in student recruitment. This section has been rewritten to clarify the Commission's position that the restriction applies to the recruitment of all students.

Revision to Substantive Change Process for Institutions Not in Compliance

In December 2016, the MSCHE Executive Committee approved a new Substantive Change process for institutions that are not in compliance with the Commission's accreditation Standards. The Commission now reserves the right to decline to consider or act on a Substantive Change request submitted by any institution that is not in compliance with the MSCHE accreditation Standards and Requirements of Affiliation (including institutions that are subject to warning, probation, show cause, or withdrawal of accreditation), or the Commission's policies, guidelines, or procedures.

Institutions with questions about the MSCHE Substantive Change process should contact their designated MSCHE Vice President/liaison.

MSCHE Bids Farewell to Long-serving Vice President

MSCHE will soon say goodbye to long-time Vice President Debra Klinman, who will retire in late March.



Dr. Klinman addresses a plenary session during the 2015 MSCHE Annual Conference

Dr. Klinman has been a Vice President and institutional liaison for the Commission since 2008. Before joining the MSCHE team she held a number of progressively responsible appointments in higher education. She served as an institutional researcher at Mercer County Community College in New Jersey, and as a research program director at Bank Street College of Education in New York. Dr. Klinman held a long-term appointment as a tenured faculty member in Psychology at Rosemont College in Pennsylvania, where she also served as Dean of Graduate Studies and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

In retirement she plans to spend additional time with her husband and grandchildren.

Professional Development Workshops Are Scheduled

The Commission's Winter/Spring series of professional development workshops will conclude with workshops on April 24 and 28. They are *Using the Interregional Guidelines for Evaluation of Distance Education for Program and Accreditation Review* (April 24); and *Integrating Periodic Assessment Everywhere* (April 28). Both workshops will be offered at the Courtyard by Marriott – Philadelphia Downtown.

For details on either of the above workshops, visit http://www.msche.org/events_calendar.asp.

Webinars on Federal Compliance

In addition to ensuring that the Self-Study addresses the MSCHE Standards, the institution should address appropriately the requirements imposed by federal and state regulatory agencies. Middle States requires that institutions report on accreditation-relevant federal regulations at the time of the Self-Study. In a series of upcoming webinars, Commission staff will highlight the information found in the updated 2017 MSCHE booklet, *Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations*. Also covered will be the template for institutions and different kinds of supporting evidence that can be used for this report. Each webinar is 90 minutes, and registration is free. Dates and times include the following:

April 3 – 1:00 pm
April 13 – 10:00 am
April 18 – 1:00 pm
April 28 – 10:00 am

Registration is open to institutional representatives from all MSCHE-accredited institutions. To register, click on <https://attendeegotowebinar.com/rt/4826123052401861889>

Recent Commission Actions

The Commission held its most recent meeting March 2 in Philadelphia. The Commission took actions involving 25 institutions. The Commission approved a merger of Thomas Jefferson University and Philadelphia University. The combined institution will operate under the Thomas Jefferson University name. The Commission also approved the merger of the Lutheran Theological Seminary of Philadelphia and Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, PA. The new institution will operate as United Lutheran Seminary. In addition, Complex Substantive Change requests were approved for Thomas Edison State University and Wilmington University, paving the way for their participation in the U.S. Department of Education's Educational Quality through Innovative Partnerships (EQUIP) initiative.

To view all of the Commission's March 2 actions, visit
http://www.msche.org/institutions_recentactions_view.asp?dteStart=2/28/2017&dteEnd=3/2/2017&idCommitteeType=0&txtMeeting=Commission