



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

In This Issue:

- **Standards Review Process Continues**
- **Annual Conference Call for Presentations**
- **MSCHE Welcomes New Chair, New Commissioners**
- **Regional Accreditors Announce Efforts to Improve Public Understanding of Commission Actions**
- **PRR Workshop Materials Now Available Online**
- **Workshop on Institutional Follow-up Reports and Visits is a Success**
- **MSCHE President Serves as Alternate on Negotiated Rulemaking Panel**
- **Professional Development Workshops Slated for May 2 and 9**
- **Commission Introduces Webinars for Volunteer Training**
- **Recent Commission Actions**

Standards Review Process Continues

The effort continues to revise the Commission's accreditation standards. For the past year, the Steering Committee for the Review of Characteristics of Excellence has worked tirelessly to review and revise the standards. The process has included 10 Town Hall meetings throughout the region, listening sessions with friends and critics of regional accreditation, a plenary session at the Commission's Annual Conference, and numerous opportunities for member institutions, higher education associations, and state regulators to provide written comments about revisions to the standards.

Growing out of these activities were several themes— institutions sought greater simplicity and more clarity in the standards; the student learning experience should be the centerpiece of the standards; and the Commission should allow institutions ample flexibility to innovate and to demonstrate compliance with the standards.

The draft of proposed revisions to the standards was publicly unveiled during the December 2013 Annual Conference.

To date the Commission has received more than 500 written and oral comments, and the Steering Committee is working on further revisions to address concerns expressed by member institutions during the comment period. The Steering Committee expects to have a revised draft ready for review by the Commission at its June 26 meeting. If the Commission agrees with the changes and endorses the document, the final draft will be sent with a ballot to the chief executive officer of every MSCHE member institution for approval during late Summer or early Fall.

Upon approval of the revised standards, the Commission will then appoint a task force to review MSCHE accreditation processes, and the Commission and its staff will develop an implementation schedule for the new standards.

Annual Conference Call for Presentations

The Commission is now accepting presentation applications for the 2014 Annual Conference, scheduled for December 3-5 at the new Washington Marriott Marquis in Washington, DC. The hotel is adjacent to the Walter Washington Convention Center.

Applications are being accepted in the following general areas: (1) meeting accreditation standards (presentations should be framed in terms of the content area of the standard, such as assessment of student learning); (2) the

accreditation reporting process (self-study, PRR, monitoring reports, and progress reports); and (3) perspectives on the above topics from specific institution types. Presenters are expected to share research results, best practices, or conceptual analyses.

If you are interested in submitting a proposal for a session or panel that addresses one of the areas described above, please submit your application and abstract no later than April 30, 2014. Presentation applications will only be accepted from MSCHE member institutions. Applications from non-member institutions or commercial entities will not be considered.

For additional information or the application form, visit [www.msche.org/documents/2014 Call for Papers.pdf](http://www.msche.org/documents/2014%20Call%20for%20Papers.pdf).

MSCHE Welcomes New Chair, New Commissioners

Dr. George Pruitt, President of New Jersey's Thomas Edison State College, began his term as Chair of the Commission this past January. Dr. Pruitt brings a wealth of experience to the Commission. Prior to coming to Thomas Edison State College, he served in executive leadership positions at Illinois State University, Towson University, Morgan State University, Tennessee State University, and the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). Dr. Pruitt also served CAEL as Chair of its Board of Directors. Significantly, he served for 20 years as a member of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) and its predecessor, under three U.S. Presidents and four U.S. Secretaries of Education. NACIQI is the body that advises the Secretary of Education on the recognition of accrediting organizations. In addition, Dr. Pruitt has served on the Boards of the American Council on Education, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, and various banks and charitable organizations.

Assuming their duties as newly elected Commissioners in January were Dr. F. Javier Cevallos, President of Kutztown University of Pennsylvania; Dr. Margaret McMenamin, President of Union County College in New Jersey; and Mr. Javier Miyares, President of University of Maryland University College.

Recently appointed to an unexpired term on the Commission is Mr. David Hollowell, Executive Vice President and Treasurer Emeritus from the University of Delaware. He attended his first meeting as a Commissioner on March 6.

Later this year the Commission will conduct balloting for Commissioner terms that begin on January 1, 2015. The Commission will be in the unusual situation of not soliciting nominations for new Commissioners, as there are no expected vacancies. Several current Commissioners will be eligible for election to second terms, and their names will appear on the ballot. MSCHE voters (institutional chief executive officers) will also have the opportunity to write-in candidates. Ballots will be distributed electronically during late Summer or early Fall.

Regional Accreditors Announce Efforts to Improve Public Understanding of Commission Actions

The Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) has announced plans to implement a common framework and understanding of terms for key actions regarding accredited institutions. Beginning this year, the terms Warning, Probation, Show Cause, Withdrawal of Accreditation, Denial of Accreditation, and Appeal will be consistent across the seven accreditation regions. The changes will become effective on July 1, 2014.

The common framework requires each of the regional accrediting agencies to provide an opportunity for institutions that are on Show Cause to have a hearing before the Commission at the time a decision is made either to reaffirm or withdraw accreditation. This policy has been given preliminary approval by the MSCHE Executive Committee and will soon be distributed to member institutions for comment.

"As regional accreditation evolved over the years, unique descriptions were developed to identify varying levels of concern regarding the accreditation status of individual colleges and universities. At a time when more institutions are operating on a national scale, these terms have, at times, resulted in confusion among students and the general public in cases when actions have been taken," said Dr. Elizabeth H. Sibolski, Chair of C-RAC and President of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Notably, the seven regional accreditors voluntarily came together to address the issue of common terminology, rather than relying on legislative or regulatory actions.

For more details on this announcement, [please click here](#).

The seven regional accrediting organizations that comprise C-RAC are the Middle States Commission on Higher Education; New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education; Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools; Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges; Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges; and WASC Senior College and University Commission.

PRR Workshop Materials Now Available Online

The Commission held its annual Periodic Review Report Workshop on March 18 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Center City Philadelphia. The workshop was designed for institutions whose PRRs are due to the Commission in 2016.

Following opening remarks by Dr. Elizabeth Sibolski, President of the Commission, and Erika Swain, MSCHE's Director for Training and Volunteer Services, participants listened to several plenary speakers and participated in small group discussions led by the Commission's vice presidents/institutional liaisons.

The opening plenary speaker was MSCHE Commissioner Dr. Denise Rodgers, Vice Chancellor for Inter-Professional Programs, Biomedical and Health Sciences Division, at Rutgers University. Dr. Rodgers addressed *The Commission's Expectations for the Periodic Review Report*. In her remarks, Dr. Rodgers described how the PRR process works, including the many steps that are followed before recommendations reach the full Commission.

Dr. Ellie Fogarty, MSCHE Vice President, briefly discussed the federal compliance component to Middle States accreditation. "You will receive complete information in advance of submitting your PRR," she said. "These requirements may be different from what is currently in place because of regularly changing federal regulations."

Dr. Sibolski also commented on federal compliance. "Regulation by the federal government is becoming heavier," she said. "I urge you to watch the national higher education media to see what is happening in Washington pertaining to higher education regulation and accreditation."

Next, the PRR Workshop attendees participated in small group sessions on *Preparing for the PRR: Engaging the Campus, Addressing Recommendations, Challenges and Opportunities*.

Following a short break, the participants heard from the second plenary speaker, Dr. Jayne Swanson, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs at Alfred State, SUNY College of Technology. Dr. Swanson addressed the topic, *Linking Assessment, Planning, and Budgeting*. She suggested that attendees review what they have done regarding institutional and student outcomes assessment, planning, and budgeting since their last institutional self-study, and to summarize it in the PRR. Institutions must ask themselves, "Do you have evidence?" Dr. Swanson said. "You can't write about what you haven't done."

The remainder of the day was spent in small group sessions focused on *Writing and Submitting the PRR: Next Steps in the Review Process*.

PDF copies of the Power Point slides used by Dr. Rodgers and Dr. Swanson in their plenary sessions are available for free download on the Commission website, by clicking on <http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=EVENTS&Nav2=2014.02.01&Nav3=PresentationMaterial>.

Workshop on Institutional Follow-up Reports and Visits is a Success

MSCHE conducted its first-ever workshop on *Institutional Follow-up Reports and Visits*, March 28 at the Sheraton University City Hotel in Philadelphia. The workshop was intended for institutions that have required follow-up reports or visits stemming from their most recent MSCHE institutional self-study or PRR.

The nearly 80 participants in the workshop heard a variety of topics. These included *Aligning Planning, Assessing, and Budgeting*, presented by Dr. Claudine Keen, Dean of Education, The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey; *Building the Electronic Report*, presented by Ms. Erin Mattson, Assistant Director for Accreditation Services, MSCHE; *Documenting Evidence: How Much is Too Much?*, presented by Dr. Ellie Fogarty, MSCHE Vice President; and *Effectively Integrating Institutional Governance and Planning*, presented by Colonel Gerald Kobylski, Ph.D., P.E., Professor of Mathematical Sciences, United States Military Academy at West Point (and a Middle States Commissioner), and Dr. Robert A. Schneider, Senior Vice President, MSCHE.

Also on the program were *Enrollment Management: Beyond Standard 8*, presented by Mr. Robert Palmieri, Dean of Enrollment Management and Marketing, SUNY- Adirondack Community College; *Integrating Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal*, presented by Ms. Valarie Avalone, Director of Planning at Monroe Community College; *Lessons Learned: Insights from the Road to Redemption*, presented by Dr. Ann Damiano, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and Dr. Deanna Dodson, Director of Curriculum, Lebanon Valley College; *Moving Beyond Warning: Institutional Reflection and Renewal*, presented by Dr. Michael R. Green, Vice President of Academic Affairs/Dean of the Faculty, Lebanon Valley College; *Organizing and Sustaining Your Assessment Process: Creating the Culture*, presented by Dr. Matt Dane Baker, Executive Dean, School of Science, Health, and the Liberal Arts, and Dr. Patricia Thatcher, Associate Provost for Assessment, Philadelphia University; and *Institutions Taking Action to Improve Their Assessment Practices: A Self-Assessment and Planning Tool*, prepared and presented by Dr. Bonnie Kirkpatrick, Senior Director of Faculty Development and Support, Wilmington University.

PDFs of the materials used by the various presenters are now available on the MSCHE website by clicking on <http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=EVENTS&Nav2=2014.05.02&Nav3=PresentationMaterial>.

MSCHE President Serves as Alternate on Negotiated Rulemaking Panel

Dr. Elizabeth H. Sibolski, President of the Commission, is serving as an alternate on the U.S. Department of Education's latest Negotiated Rulemaking panel. The panel convened for the first time on February 19 and has held several meetings since that time. The group has been presented with the task of negotiating regulations pertaining to a wide range of issues, including PLUS loans, campus debit cards, various state authorization proposals, and other items. Although PLUS loans and campus debit cards are outside the realm of regional accreditation, the state authorization regulations proposed by the U.S. Department of Education pertain to state approval of distance education providers and likely would fall within the various compliance measures that Middle States and other accreditors must verify.

The 19 members of the panel represent the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Public Interest Research Group, the Mississippi Center for Justice, the Legal Services Center of Harvard Law School, Consumers Union, the New York Attorney General's Office, Columbia University, Youngstown State University, Benedict College, Santa Barbara City College, Clemson University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Capella University, Higher One, WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies, TouchNet, University of Wisconsin Credit Union, and the Distance Education and Training Council.

Joining Dr. Sibolski as alternates are representatives of the United States Student Association, Massachusetts Attorney General's Office, DePaul University, Iowa State University, Miles College, Montgomery College, George Mason University, Marist College, American Career College, Heartland Payment Systems, National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements, Pearson Embanet, and Wells Fargo Bank Law Department.

Professional Development Workshops Slated for May 2 and 9

The Commission has scheduled two new professional development workshops for May.

Starting a Campus Compliance Program is scheduled for May 2 at the Courtyard by Marriott hotel in Center City Philadelphia. This interactive workshop will take a comprehensive look at compliance in higher education, from accreditation to student affairs, finance, institutional research, and faculty issues. Participants will examine how to ensure their institution is complying with federal and state laws and regulations, as well as their own institutional policies, while keeping up with ongoing reporting and disclosure requirements. They'll also learn what components of a compliance program are relevant for their institution's size, resources, complexity, and risk factors, along with the roles of the administration and Board of Trustees in a campus compliance program. Finally, participants will learn about the eight best practices for compliance programs, including establishing standards and policies, identifying key personnel to serve as compliance liaisons, ensuring effective communication and training, and monitoring and responding in an appropriate manner.

Dr. Ellie Fogarty, MSCHE Vice President, is the facilitator for this workshop.

Registration is open to all campus personnel who have responsibility for compliance issues and who possess a beginning to intermediate level of understanding and experience with compliance. Registrations received and paid through April 25 are \$360 per person. The registration fee includes a continental breakfast, refreshment breaks, lunch, and workshop materials. Participants are responsible for their own hotel accommodations. MSCHE has not reserved a block of rooms at the Courtyard by Marriott Philadelphia Downtown.

For additional information or to register for *Starting a Campus Compliance Program*, visit <http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=EVENTS&Nav2=2014.05.04>.

On May 9 the Commission will offer *Creating and Selecting Assessment Tools* at the Sheraton University City Hotel in Philadelphia. This workshop, designed using feedback from participants in other MSCHE training activities, will focus on how to select an assessment approach that is aligned with learning goals and opportunities. Participants will discuss direct and indirect measures of student learning, consider how to align assessment tools with learning goals, focus on rubrics as direct measures of student learning, and review the importance of evaluating and revising assessment tools as part of the continuous improvement process. Presentations on each of these topics will be interspersed with small group hands-on exercises that will allow participants to think about and practice what they are learning.

The facilitator for the May 9 workshop is Dr. Jodi Levine Laufgraben, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Assessment at Temple University.

This workshop is appropriate for faculty, administrators, and senior leaders with a basic understanding of assessment principles and who are interested in expanding their understanding of assessment tools. The workshop will be oriented toward those with a beginning to intermediate level of understanding and experience in assessment.

Registration received and paid through May 2, is \$360 per person. Participants are responsible for their own accommodations. MSCHE has not reserved a block of rooms at the Sheraton University City Hotel.

For additional information or to register for *Creating and Selecting Assessment Tools*, visit <http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=EVENTS&Nav2=2014.05.05>.

Commission Introduces Webinars for Volunteer Training

The Commission recently introduced several series of webinars for current and prospective peer evaluators. Erika Swain, MSCHE Director for Training and Volunteer Services, is the facilitator for these webinars.

Training for Compliance Reviewers is a webinar that provides training for peer reviewers who have been selected or are interested in being selected to review institutional reports on compliance with accreditation-related federal

requirements. These webinars began in early April and will continue through early May. All are scheduled for 60 minutes. The schedule is as follows:

April 28 at 10:00 am and 2:00 pm
May 1 at 10:00 am and 1:00 pm

To register for one of the above dates and times, visit <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/1211589602167487745>.

PRR Reviewer Training is a series of webinars for those reviewers who have been selected to participate as PRR readers or those who are interested in being selected for such a role. These webinars also began in early April and will continue through mid - May. All are scheduled for 90 minutes. The schedule is as follows:

April 30 at 1:00 pm
May 5 at 1:00 pm
May 7 at 9:00 am, 11:00 am, and 1:00 pm
May 13 at 9:00 am, 11:00 am, and 1:00 pm
May 16 at 9:00 am, 11:00 am, and 1:00 pm

To register for one of the above dates and times, visit <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/8690746970253652225>

Recent Commission Actions

The Commission's most recent meeting was held March 6 in New York City. All of the Commission's actions from that meeting can be viewed by clicking on

http://www.msche.org/institutions_recentactions_view.asp?dteStart=3/4/2014&dteEnd=3/6/2014&idCommitteeType=0&txtMeeting=Commission.