



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

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## **Annual Conference Registration Opens**

Registration is now open for the annual conference and pre-conference workshops of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, which will be held at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront Hotel on December 7–9, 2008. For information, go to [www.msche.org](http://www.msche.org) under Events.

The opening night keynote speaker on Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup> will be Dr. Mark David Milliron, President and CEO of Catalyze Learning International. This award-winning leader, author, speaker, and consultant is best known for exploring leadership development, future trends, learning strategies, and the human side of technology change. He will speak on “A New Generation of Learning: Diverse Students, Emerging Technologies, and a Sustainability Challenge.”

At the luncheon on Monday, December 8<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Robert Zemsky will discuss “Making Sense of Higher Education Reform.” Dr. Zemsky is Professor and Chair, The Learning Alliance at The University of Pennsylvania. He also was a member of the Secretary of Education’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education.

The final keynote speaker on Tuesday, December 9<sup>th</sup> will be Dr. Randy L. Swing, Executive Director, Association for Institutional Research. Dr. Swing’s topic will be “Institutional Researchers and Assessment Officers as ‘Change Agents’.”

Commission Chair, Dr. Peter Burnham, also will report to the membership on Monday morning about “MSCHE at the Crossroads” as it faces the challenges ahead.

Two all-day pre-conference workshops and six half-day workshops will be offered on Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup>.

## **Rising to the Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: MSCHE at the Crossroads**

The future of voluntary regional accreditation has dominated the literature and debates of higher education during the past year, and it will continue to be the focus of attention in our profession. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education remains committed for the future to its long-standing dual mission: serving as a resource for services to our members while ensuring that they meet accreditation standards.

### **Self-Study and Strategic Plan**

The Commission's self-study will research and prioritize the many areas in which the organization should grow, and its strategic plan will be updated to implement such changes. At the regional outreach meetings, most participants recognized the need for more Commission staff, for internal re-organization of key functions, and for higher dues to support new services.

The Commission has launched several initiatives to plan for the future. Other articles in this newsletter describe the Commission's internal self-study and the simultaneous work on projects identified in its current strategic plan. Both the plan and the self study address the areas of public accountability, ensuring rigorous and appropriate standards and processes, providing training for institutions and volunteer peer evaluators, and the Commission's organizational structure and operations.

### **Outreach Meetings**

As part of our self-study, the Commission held eight open-dialogue meetings with member institutions at different locations throughout the region in the spring of 2008 to discuss demands by the public and the government for accountability and transparency, the Commission's own expectations, and the needs and other issues that members have raised.

A total of 375 participants attended the outreach meetings, representing 216 institutions (42% of the membership). Of these attendees 71% were provosts and deans, and 61% were from Associate, Baccalaureate-Associate, and Master's institutions. Commission Chair Peter Burnham, President Jean Morse, and Executive Vice President Elizabeth Sibolski attended all of the meetings.

Dr. Burnham described the Commission's intention to apply existing standards more carefully and consistently, particularly emphasizing the need for institutions to produce evidence of compliance rather than merely plans for future compliance. He also discussed the current regulatory environment and increased expectations for both accreditors and institutions.

Some of the suggestions that institutions offered included the need for the Commission to provide examples of good practices and benchmarks, offer on-campus training, develop guidelines for institutions and accreditors to use for public disclosure, and advise institutions on how they should respond to increasing federal demands. Some of the other suggestions were that the Commission should convene and facilitate discussion groups, improve the recruiting and training of evaluators, and consider local cultural issues in its approach to member institutions.

Of course, the Commission is already active in most of these areas, although not everyone who attended has had an opportunity to participate in what has been offered. For example, the Commission will offer 14 workshops, institutes, and an annual conference during 2008, estimated to reach over 2,400 institutional faculty, administrators, and staff, and it is developing some more advanced-level programs to offer during 2009.

The curriculum for evaluator training has been significantly improved, the length of training sessions has expanded, and the Annual Conference now includes sessions designed specifically for evaluators and for institutions in self-study. Finally, the Commission has been monitoring emerging legislation and regulations, meeting with legislators, administrators, and higher education organizations by working through the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC).

### **New Organizational Structure & Financing**

To accomplish these objectives more effectively, the Commission has approved a plan to further develop its organizational structure along functional lines. The Commission has been extremely sensitive to the cost of such an organization, and it realizes that expansion and dues increases must be phased in over a period of time that will be reasonable, fiscally responsible, and acceptable to our member institutions in a difficult economy.

In June, the Commission approved the first dues increases in three years, and it will consider possible additional increases in November. The commissioners, elected as peers by the membership, approved this step because they believe that it is in the best

interest of the members. In addition, as part of ongoing long-term financial planning, the Commission continuously reviews and reduces its expenses whenever possible.

The Middle States Association is reviewing its role as the umbrella corporate organization for its three commissions: the Commission on Higher Education, the Commission on Secondary Schools, and the Commission on Elementary Schools. The Association currently is exploring the possibilities for purchasing a condominium facility that will accommodate all of the Commissions in one Philadelphia location.

## **The Higher Education Opportunity Act: Summary of Key Provisions Impacting Institutions of Higher Education**

The reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) was completed on August 14, with the President's signing of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA).

In addition to authorizing funds for programs under HEA through 2014, the law includes numerous new policies and initiatives to address issues ranging from the cost of education to institutional quality.

Over the coming weeks and months, the U.S. Department of Education will begin the process of implementing the new Act. While many provisions under HEOA will be regulated through the usual notice and comment process, provisions under Title IV (related to student financial aid) and portions of Title II (related to accountability for schools of education) will be implemented through negotiated rulemaking. Under negotiated rulemaking, representatives from the higher education community and other stakeholders have the opportunity to negotiate the specific regulations used to implement those portions of the new law.

While this process may take over a year to complete, the current Administration took the first step in moving forward on negotiated rulemaking with the recent announcement in the Federal Register of a series of regional hearings in September and October. As part of these meetings, stakeholders will have the opportunity to raise issues they believe should be included as topics of discussion during the negotiated rulemaking process [[www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/proprule/2008-3/090808a.html](http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/proprule/2008-3/090808a.html)].

Upon completion of these meetings, the Department will develop an agenda of issues to be negotiated and form multiple committees focused on major topical areas comprised

of stakeholders selected through a nomination process. These meetings will eventually lead to the publication of proposed regulations and final regulations shortly thereafter.

However, as noted on the U.S. Department's website related to HEOA "**affected parties are responsible for taking the steps necessary to comply by the effective dates established by the HEOA. The provisions of the HEOA are effective upon enactment unless otherwise noted in the law. Potentially affected parties should review the legislation immediately to determine the proper measures they must take to comply.**"

As such, it is important for all institutions to be aware of the changes made by the HEOA and how these changes could impact their eligibility for federal funding. Below is an overview of some of the most significant changes – particularly related to new reporting requirements – which all institutions should be monitoring, and where applicable, implementing to ensure compliance with the new law.

## **Reporting Requirements**

### College Affordability and Transparency List

Beginning July 2011, the Secretary must make new information available on the "College Navigator" website including a list of the five percent of institutions (by category – public, private, etc) with the highest tuition and fees; the highest 'net price'; the largest increase in tuition and fees; largest increase in 'net price' and a list of the ten percent of institution in each category that have the lowest tuition and lowest net price.

Institutions identified for having the largest increases in tuition and net price will be required to submit additional information to the Secretary such as greater detail of their budget and reasons for their overall cost increases.

In implementing the above requirement, the Secretary is required to work with institutions of higher education and other experts to develop a "net price calculator" to help students estimate the individual net price of an institution. Beginning in August 2010, all institution receiving Title IV funding will be required to include the institution's net price calculator on their website.

### Consumer Information

Beginning August 2009, the Secretary must make specific information available to students on the Department's College Navigator website in "simple and understandable terms." This must include information such as the statement of the institution's

mission, number of undergraduate students who applied and who were admitted and enrolled in the institution; SAT/ACT scores; completion/graduation rates by program; cost information, etc. Much of this information is currently collected through IPEDS, but there are several new requirements. While the Secretary has until next year to report this data, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has already posted information on its website noting that in order for the Secretary to meet this deadline, institutions will be required to begin reporting this information this year [[www.nces.ed.gov/IPEDS/news\\_room/ana\\_Changes\\_to\\_8\\_22\\_2008\\_188.asp](http://www.nces.ed.gov/IPEDS/news_room/ana_Changes_to_8_22_2008_188.asp)].

#### Multi-Year Tuition Calculator

Not later than August 2009, the Secretary, in consultation with institutions of higher education and other stakeholders, must develop a calculator to help students estimate the amount of tuition and individual may pay to attend an institution of higher education in future years.

#### Textbook Information

In an effort to decrease the cost of text books for students, HEOA includes new reporting requirements upon both book publishers as well as institutions of higher education. With respect to IHEs, this information must “to the maximum extent practicable” disclose ISBN and retail prices information of all required and recommended textbooks and supplemental materials for each course. They must also provide information to campus bookstores on course schedules; text book information; number of students (and maximum number) enrolled in each course.

#### Lender and Institution Requirements

HEOA includes numerous new reporting requirements upon institutions and institution-affiliate organizations that participate in a preferred lender arrangement. These requirements (which relate to both federal and private loans) include an expanded code of conduct related to these arrangements and an assurance that students are aware that regardless of their institutions arrangements with particular lenders, they are obliged to process all federal loans.

#### Reporting and Accountability for Teacher Preparation Programs

HEOA builds upon prior law requirements with respect to reporting of data related to teacher preparation programs. Most notably, the law will require institutions to report the percentage of students who have completed all of their coursework and passed state

teacher licensure assessments. Currently, institutions report on only “graduates” of these programs. Information must also be provided by each institution on the average scaled score for all students who take the assessment as well as additional program information.

#### Institutional and Financial Assistance Information for Students

HEOA expands the list of information that each institution is required to provide students under Sec. 485. This includes new information related to policies of copyright infringement; student body diversity; retention rates; and fire safety information. Of particular note is the new requirement that all institutions provide information on “the placement in employment of, and types of employment obtained by, graduates of the institution’s degree or certificate programs, gathered from such sources as alumni surveys, student satisfaction surveys, the National Survey of Student Engagement, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, State data systems, or other relevant sources.”

Under the new law, Federal completion/graduation rates must be disaggregated and reported by gender, by each major racial and ethnic subgroup and whether the student received a Pell Grant, a subsidized loan but no Pell Grant, or no federal student aid. With However, this requirement will not become effective for two-year degree granting institutions until 2011–2012 during which time the Secretary must work with these institutions to determine ways to help them comply with the new requirements and/or develop alternative measures of student success.

In addition to the reporting above, institutions must also provide students with:

- A statement of current policies concerning campus law enforcement;
- Information related to transfer of credit policies;
- Information on an annual basis related to fire safety, such as the number of fires on campus and their cause;
- Institutional policies regarding vaccinations;
- Procedures related to missing persons;
- Information to all new enrolled students related to the penalties for drug violations; and
- Information to first-time borrowers on the terms and conditions of their loans and their responsibility with respect to such loans

#### Accreditation Issues

In addition to the many new reporting requirements noted above, the HEOA also included several changes with respect to accreditation. The following provisions are most relevant to Middle States and its member institutions. However, for the most part, these changes reflect procedures and policies already in place in the region.

*Student Achievement* – Thanks to intervention by Congress, supporting protests by the higher education community, the Secretary of Education will not be able to require accreditors to specify which standards institutions must apply to evaluate student achievement. Those decisions remain in the hands of member institutions.

*Transfer of Credit* – The legislation requires accreditors to review the policies that institutions represent to students and prospective students about the credits they can transfer, although the federal government cannot dictate specific policies that should be in place.

*Distance Learning* – Institutions that offer distance learning programs (including 64 percent of Middle States institutions) must have processes to verify that “the student who registers in a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the program and receives the academic credit.”

*Rapid Growth* – Accreditors must monitor significant growth in student enrollment.

*Religious Mission* – Accreditors must apply standards that respect the stated mission of institutions, including religious mission.

*Due Process* – When an institution is subject to an adverse action (one that leads to the removal of accreditation), it may provide “new” information during the appeal process of its financial condition.

*Diploma Mills* – There is now a federal definition of a “diploma mill” that is an unaccredited entity that offers degrees, diplomas, or certificates to individuals for a fee and that require the individual to complete little or no educational coursework.

## MSCHE's Own Self-Study Moves Forward

*Gary L. Wirt, Commissioner*

With design in place, due dates, draft documents, and an air of dogged determination, the self-study process of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) is well underway with a target date for completion of November 2009.

Under the capable leadership of Co-chairs Andrea Lex and Carmella Morrison, the Steering Committee has identified four thematic areas, and recruited study groups for each: (1) Being Accountable to the Public, (2) Educating Members on Standards, (3) Enforcing Requirements Already in Place, and (4) Promoting Excellence in Organizational Culture and Climate.

Co-Chair Andrea Lex stresses the many benefits of the self-study, citing the process as a tool for learning, internal reflection, and improvement for MSCHE. "Everyone is excited and working hard to make this an honest, candid picture of our organization – but one that gives us guide posts as we map the course ahead. We want to make sure we tackle this process with the same integrity and diligence we expect from our member institutions who engage in self-study."

Areas under review range from office accommodations to consistency of Commission actions, and from volunteer training to stakeholder expectations of MSCHE. Virtually every staff member is involved in the process as study groups begin their review of documents, analysis of inquiries or complaints, and surveys of volunteers and members.

Yet, like member institutions engaged in self-study, the process must not be limited to staff input alone. The participation of all stakeholders is critical to the success of good self-study. In the months ahead, staff will be contacting sample groups of many types—accredited and candidate institutions, team chairs, evaluators, Commissioners, and colleagues in other organizations. Some will be asked to take part in a focus group, others may be asked to provide survey feedback.

The unique perspective of every group is vital in preparing an honest and useful document. The Commission encourages your involvement, your candor, and your valuable feedback. When asked, take a moment to complete a survey or schedule an interview. Join in this valuable process. Your views and experiences are critical in understanding the possibilities ahead for MSCHE.

## **New Commissioner Appointed**

At the Commission meeting on June 26<sup>th</sup>, the Commission appointed a new Public Representative, Dr. Linda H. Scatton, to complete the term of Mr. Mark Smith through December 31, 2009.

Dr. Scatton is Director/Senior Program Administrator, Educational Testing Service, where she has been employed since 1998. She previously was the Assistant Provost for Academic Planning, Policy, and Evaluation in the System Office of the State University of New York. She has also served on several Middle States evaluation teams. She holds an M.A. and a Ph.D. from Harvard University in Slavic Languages and Literature.

## Three New Staff Appointments at MSCHE

Two new vice presidents and an institutional research analyst join the Middle States staff in the fall 2008, as part of a larger program to broaden and deepen the skills needed to meet the demand of member institutions for increased services from the Commission.



**Dr. Mary Ellen Petrisko** became Vice President in late August 2008. For the past six years, she has been the Academic Vice President at Tai Sophia Institute in Laurel, Maryland, where she has been responsible for academic budgeting and resource allocation, planning, outcomes assessment, library services and information literacy training, student services, faculty affairs, and the development of academic policies. In addition, she has been responsible for the development, delivery, evaluation, and revision of the Institute's master's degree programs in Acupuncture, Herbal Medicine, and Applied Healing Arts and its post-baccalaureate program in Chinese

Herbs.

Previously, she was Deputy Secretary of Higher Education at the Maryland Higher Education Commission, and Vice President Academic Affairs and Adjunct Professor Humanities at the University of Maryland University College.

She has served as a Periodic Review Report reviewer, an evaluation team member, a member of the Substantive Change Committee, an Accreditation Liaison Officer, and a member of the 2008 MSCHE Annual Conference Planning Committee.

Dr. Petrisko has authored over 14 papers and conference presentations, including translations from French, Dutch, and German. She earned her Ph.D. in Philosophy at Boston University.



**Dr. Debra G. Klinman** will become Vice President in late September 2008. Previously, she was Associate Professor of Psychology, Dean of Graduate Studies, and finally Vice President for Academic Affairs at Rosemont College, Pennsylvania. She also has held positions at Bank Street College of Education and Mercer County Community College.

In collaboration with colleagues throughout Rosemont College, she developed assessed, and improved an array of academic programs and policies. As a member of the president's Senior Cabinet, she has had responsibility for budgeting, strategic planning, and aligning academic operations with institutional mission and goals. She also has served as the College's liaison to Middle States and to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and she has participated on evaluation teams and as an MSCHE Periodic Review Report reviewer.

She has authored or co-authored over 30 papers, articles, and books. She earned a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology at Temple University.



**Mr. Matthew Yurdin** joined the Commission staff in early September as Institutional Research Analyst. He was formerly a Principal Research Analyst for student financial support and the Acting Coordinator for Undergraduate Affordability Policy & Planning in the Office of the President at the University of California. He held previous positions at Suffolk University in Boston and at the School of Visual Arts in New York.

This new full-time position was created to expand the Commission's institutional research capabilities that are currently filled on a part-time basis by a retiring staff member. In addition to working with the Institutional Profile and other Commission surveys, he will conduct independent research and support the Commission's strategic planning initiatives.

Mr. Yurdin holds a B.A., *Magna Cum Laude*, in History, Logic and Mathematics from Hunter College, City University of New York.

Other positions the Commission is seeking to fill in 2008 and 2009 include a Director for Communications and Public Relations, Director for Events and Training, Policy Analyst, and Executive Assistant to the President. Information about positions that remain unfilled may be found on the Commission's website at [www.msche.org](http://www.msche.org) under News/Other News.

## **New Profile of Middle States Institutions**

A new profile of colleges and universities in the Middle States region for academic year 2007-08 is now available on the Commission's website at [www.msche.org](http://www.msche.org) under Institutions/Institutional Profile.

The report includes data on the number and types of institutions, enrollment, faculty, distance learning, and branch campuses, additional locations, and other instructional sites. The data were drawn from the Institutional Profile survey data that institutions are required to submit annually as a condition of their accreditation.

The report indicates that the 530 accredited and candidate institutions in the region serve 3,272,007 students, up 3 percent overall from 2006-07, although private for-

profit institutions increased their enrollment by 18 percent. Non-credit enrollment of 1.9 million students increased 10 percent overall, with approximately 1 million of those enrolled at Associate's (two-year) institutions.

The 289,787 faculty members include 146,978 part-time faculty, a 3 percent increase overall from 2006-07, and 196,310 not on a tenure track.

Courses that can be completed 100 percent via distance learning are offered at 64 percent of the institutions in the region, serving 33 percent of the total enrollment at those institutions.

Middle States institutions (domestic and international) operate branches in 11 countries, additional locations in 52 countries, and other instructional sites in 40 countries.

## Reminders to Members

### ***Substantive Change***

Institutions are required to report, and to have Commission approval in advance for, plans to introduce substantive changes at the institution so that the Commission can determine the effect that such changes may have on the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of the total institution.

The Commission's policy on substantive change is available online at [www.msche.org/documents/P1.4-SubstantiveChange.doc](http://www.msche.org/documents/P1.4-SubstantiveChange.doc), and Frequently Asked Questions are available at [www.msche.org/?Nav1=ABOUT&Nav2=FAQ&Nav3=QUESTION11B](http://www.msche.org/?Nav1=ABOUT&Nav2=FAQ&Nav3=QUESTION11B). They outline the different types of changes that qualify under the substantive change policy, such as the establishment of a new additional location or branch campus, the first two degrees offered at a higher level, institutional closures, mergers, the first two online programs, changes in mission, and others.

The Annual Conference this December will feature a special session on Substantive Change Issues for Accreditation Liaison Officers, who are the individuals that each institution has appointed to serve as liaisons between Middle States and the campus community.

### ***Self-Study Reinforcement***

Two pre-conference workshops at the Annual Conference will provide additional refresher for institutional representatives who attended the 2006 or 2007 Self-Study Institutes and who are preparing for evaluations in spring or fall 2009 or spring 2010. The workshops also will benefit those who recently joined their institution's self-study team. The focus will be on negotiating the transition from researching to writing the self-study report and on preparing for the evaluation visit.

### ***Overview for Evaluators***

Two sessions at the Annual Conference are designed for individuals who are interested in becoming an evaluator (Evaluator 101) and for those who want to understand more about how the standards for accreditation are interpreted and applied during a decennial review (Evaluator 102).

### ***E-mails from the Commission***

In this age of junk e-mail, spoofed e-mail addresses of innocent users, and the increasing use of spam filters, the Commission still needs to communicate electronically

with individuals at member institutions. There are notices that need to go to presidents as official representatives of their institutions and to others who are involved in the evaluation process, announcements or reminders of workshops and conferences sent to targeted groups of people, and various types of surveys. Senior executives at each institution are asked to ensure that msche.org is included on your “accept” lists, even though both msche.org and the former msache.org have been occasionally maliciously spoofed, and institutions may have received e-mails that erroneously appeared to have originated with us.

### ***Inquiries in Spanish***

Ms. Yashira Tirado, an Administrative Assistant who joined the staff in 2007, now responds to telephone and e-mail inquiries from Spanish-speaking constituents and the public. E-mail should be sent to [espanolinfo@msche.org](mailto:espanolinfo@msche.org) and telephone calls may be directed to (267) 284-5015.

## Save the Dates in 2009

- February 2**                    **Fostering a Campus Culture of Assessment:  
*A Retreat for Leadership Teams***  
Courtyard by Marriott Philadelphia Downtown
- April 9**                        **Periodic Review Report Workshop**  
*(By Invitation Only for Institutions submitting PRRs in 2009 &  
2010)*  
DoubleTree Hotel, Philadelphia
- May 20**                        **A Basic Tool Box for Assessing Institutional Effectiveness**  
University of Delaware Conference Center
- September 10**                **Institutional Effectiveness Workshop**  
*A Regional Assessment Workshop (Serving Western Areas of  
Pennsylvania, New York, and Maryland) in collaboration with  
Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania*  
Regional Learning Alliance Center, Cranberry Township, PA
- September 11**                **Re-thinking Student Learning Assessment**  
*A Regional Assessment Workshop (Serving Western Areas of  
Pennsylvania,  
New York, and Maryland) in collaboration with Slippery Rock  
University of Pennsylvania*  
Regional Learning Alliance Center, Cranberry Township, PA
- September 21–23**            **Institute on Integrating Higher Education Planning & Assessment:  
Real Strategies for Real Institutions**  
University of Delaware Conference Center
- September 23–25**            **Taking the Next Step! A Student Learning Assessment Institute**  
University of Delaware Conference Center
- October 6–7**                    **Workshop for Chairs and Evaluators**  
*(By Invitation Only for evaluators assigned to teams in fall 2009  
and spring 2010)*  
DoubleTree Hotel, Philadelphia

- November 10–11**      **The Self–Study Institute**  
*(By Invitation Only for institutions being evaluated in fall 2011 and  
spring 2012)*  
DoubleTree Hotel, Philadelphia
- December 9–11**      **Annual Conference & Pre–conference Workshops**  
Philadelphia Marriott Hotel Downtown