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Large Turnout for Annual Conference

The 2008 Middle States Commission on Higher Education annual conference attracted 743 attendees to the Baltimore Waterfront Marriott Hotel, December 7-9. The attendees represented 292 unique educational institutions and came from a wide geographic area, including New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the British Virgin Islands, Canada, Chile, Egypt, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Taiwan, and the United Arab Emirates. In addition, nearly two dozen guests were present from parts of the U.S. outside the Middle States region.

A follow up survey of the attendees showed high ratings for the various plenary speakers and breakout sessions.

Kicking off the conference on Sunday evening, December 7, was Mark David Milliron, President and Chief Executive Officer of Catalyze Learning International. Milliron discussed approaches to blended learning and other new learning styles; gave specific examples of new, high-impact presentation strategies to keep students engaged in the classroom; and challenged the attendees to learn more about the new generation of students. He emphasized the extent to which younger students are committed to online social networking. To view the Power Point slides of Milliron’s MSCHE conference presentation, go to www.msche.org/documents/Handout---Milliron.pdf.

In a Tuesday morning plenary session, Randy Swing, Executive Director of the Association for Institutional Research, addressed the issue of “Institutional Researchers and Assessment Officers as Change Agents.” In his remarks, Swing discussed ongoing assaults on assessment efforts in higher education and then described how successful assessment creates action to continue effective practices or initiate change and improvement at higher education institutions. His Power Point presentation is available on the Middle States web site at www.msche.org/documents/Handout---Swing.pdf.

Planning is now underway for the 2009 MSCHE annual conference, scheduled for December 9-11 at the Philadelphia Marriott Hotel in Center City Philadelphia. Watch the Middle States web site and your mailbox for further details.
Members Approve New Procedures for Applicant, Candidate and Accredited Institutions

MSCHE member institutions have overwhelmingly approved new procedures for applicant and candidate institutions. The new procedures became effective on March 1, 2009 for institutions applying or undergoing review on or after that date. There is also a procedural change for currently accredited institutions.

Applicant institutions will be judged immediately on their ability to meet the actual accreditation standards, rather than using the former different “eligibility requirements.” Candidate institutions will no longer be required to work with consultants. The approach will be tailored for each candidate.

Currently accredited institutions will be required to certify compliance with a shorter list of “requirements of affiliation” instead of certifying compliance with the former long list of “eligibility requirements” every time the institution is reviewed. Institutions that are now completing their self studies and will be submitting those self studies this spring, or are hosting evaluation team visits this spring, should continue to follow the old eligibility requirements and may use the old or the new certification statement. Institutions submitting Periodic Review Reports this spring should plan to use the new certification statement.

You may view the new Becoming Accredited handbook in the Publications section of the Commission web site at www.msche.org/publications/Becoming_Accredited_090203.pdf. Also on the web site is the new Certification Statement form that became effective on March 1. To view it, click on www.msche.org/publications/Certification_090203.doc.

Should you have any questions, please contact the MSCHE vice president who is assigned to your institution.

A Reminder About MSCHE’s Political Intervention Policy

MSCHE members are reminded that the Commission’s policy on Political Intervention in Education covers a range of issues, from political interference in employment decisions and other aspects of operations, to attempted political influence on what is taught in the classroom.

Standards 4 (Leadership and Governance) and 6 (Integrity) of Characteristics of Excellence clearly define appropriate governance and ethical behavior in higher education institutions.

To view the entire MSCHE policy on Political Intervention in Education, go to www.msche.org/documents/P4.4-PoliticalIntervention.doc.

USED Plans New Regulations and Reviewers for Accreditors

Since passage of the new Higher Education Opportunity Act last summer (see Fall 2008 MSCHE newsletter), the U.S. Department of Education has named a committee to work with it as it drafts regulations to implement the new legislation, and as it considers additional regulations. The committee includes a representative from C-RAC (the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions), a former MSCHE Commissioner (Jose Jaime Rivera), and representatives from specialized and national accrediting agencies.
The Department has released “issue papers” to facilitate discussion at the group’s opening meeting on March 4, 2009. One very encouraging area identified is whether the broad regulatory definition of “substantive changes” that accreditors must review can be modified. Other issues include: How should “significant enrollment growth” be defined for purposes of determining what accreditors must monitor under the new law? How can institutions prove that an exam-taker for a distance learning course is the student receiving credit? How can an institution give credit based on “direct assessment” rather than clock hours?

It should be noted that while these are the topics listed, nothing prevents certain issues from being dropped or for others to be added.

Also related to HEOA, the Department recently issued a “Dear Colleague” letter that includes a summary of the accreditation provisions, and is also expected to soon release another “Dear Colleague” geared specifically to accreditors. This guidance will help accreditors ensure they understand how to be in compliance with the law between now and when the final regulations are published.

Finally, the HEOA created a new Committee to replace NACIQI, the Committee that “recognized” whether an agency’s accreditation allowed federal loans and grants to be given to the students of institutions accredited by that agency. New members were to be appointed "after January 31, 2009." Congress has the ability to appoint 12 of the 18 members (six House /six Senate divided equally among the minority and majority parties) and the Administration will have the ability to appoint six members.

### Substantive Change Requirements

The MSCHE staff receives frequent questions regarding the Substantive Change process.

Accreditation applies to conditions that existed at the time of the Commission’s decision. However, institutions can and do change, and such changes may affect the quality, integrity, or effectiveness of an institution. When “substantive” change occurs, the Commission is obligated to review the impact on the institution.

The most common changes include new branches/locations, distance learning, a new degree level or new professional degree, contractual agreements and changes in ownership that could impact the management of the institution, non-credit offerings that affect the institution’s mission, rapid growth, significant changes in governance or programs, site or institutional closures, clock/credit hour changes, and mergers or other changes in legal status.

In preparing a report on Substantive Change, an institution should provide a one-page executive summary, indicate the purpose of the change and how it relates to the institutional mission, describe the financial impact, furnish proof of legal authorization to conduct the program or activity, and include all relevant documents. It should not be assumed that readers of the Substantive Change application know anything about the institution. Submission deadlines are the first business day of January, March, May, July, September, and November. Committee action typically takes place on the third Wednesday of February, April, June, August, October, and December.

For the MSCHE policy on Substantive Change, go to [www.msche.org/documents/P1.4-SubstantiveChange.doc](http://www.msche.org/documents/P1.4-SubstantiveChange.doc). To view Power Point slides from a Substantive Change presentation at the 2008 MSCHE annual conference, go to [www.msche.org/documents/SubChangePresentation1208.ppt](http://www.msche.org/documents/SubChangePresentation1208.ppt).
Institutional Profile Open for Data Collection

The Institutional Profile (IP) for the 2008-09 academic year is now open for data collection at www.msche.org.

The person who completed the IP last year and the person designated as the “accreditation liaison officer” at each institution received an e-mail with a login ID and password. If either of those individuals is no longer at your institution this year, please inform Mr. Tze Joe by e-mail (tjoe@msche.org).

There are no significant changes to this year’s Institutional Profile. However, MSCHE asks you to pay special attention to the following items:

Branch Campuses and Additional Locations: Please review the Branch Campuses and Additional Locations uploaded from the Commission’s database to your Institutional Profile. If your institution has any active or inactive (but not closed) Branch Campuses and/or Additional Locations that are not listed in the Institutional Profile, please contact your institution’s MSCHE staff liaison. If your institution has any closed Branch Campuses and/or Additional Locations listed in the Institutional Profile, we also ask that you contact your MSCHE staff liaison.

Carnegie Classification. The Commission uses the 2006 Carnegie Classification System. Please verify that we have used the correct classification for your institution. If we have not, please send an explanation to Tze Joe by e-mail. For more information about the classification system, please visit the Carnegie Foundation website at: http://72.5.117.129/classifications/.

General Information. International institutions (not institutions in the Continental U.S., Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands) are asked to provide the address of the "Government Organization Responsible for Charter and Licensure." Middle States needs to be able to contact the ministry or other licensing office in the event of a visit to the institution and after any Commission action.

Key Contacts. There are several required fields, including the Chief Executive Officer, System/District CEO (if MSCHE has designated your institution as part of a system), Chief Academic Officer, Accreditation Liaison Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Coordinator of Outcomes Assessment, Person Completing the IP Financials, Person Completing the IP (Key User), and Person in the President's Office to Whom MSCHE Invoices Should be Sent.

Financial Information. Please note the screening questions at the top of the page. In addition, the fields for "Total Net Assets Prior Year," "Total Net Assets Current Year," and "Change in Total Net Assets" are accessible to the user.

Required Attachments. If you submit financial data to IPEDS, provide Middle States a copy of what you submitted.

Archiving Data. The final page of the IP encourages institutions to archive the Institutional Profile (the data and the corresponding Instructions) each year in a permanent folder as a Word or Adobe PDF document, because the Commission no longer stores paper copies, and institutions have access on-line to only the prior year IP.
**Transfer Credit Policy and Credits from Non-Accredited Institutions**

The Commission reminds member institutions that the acceptance or denial of transfer credit is **NOT** to be determined exclusively on the basis of the accreditation of the sending institution or the mode of delivery. Rather, course equivalencies, including expected learning outcomes, must be compared with those of the receiving institution’s curricula and standards.

The Commission’s requirements with respect to transfer and articulation are governed by Standards 8 (Student Admissions) and 11 (Educational Offerings) of *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*. Assessing experiential learning for credit is addressed in Standard 13 (Related Educational Activities). The Commission standards and guidelines apply to transfer to an institution granting the same or a higher degree level, within or outside a university system; transfer of credits earned at foreign institutions or earned in U.S.-sponsored programs abroad; transfer of students who have earned credits in non-traditional formats or have co-op or other extra-institutional learning; transfer of credits from virtual institutions or non-regionally accredited institutions; transfer of advanced placement credit, tech-prep credits, and credit based on exams; and credit for experiential and other forms of learning.

You can view MSCHE’s complete policy on *Transfer Credit, Prior Learning, and Articulation* at [www.msche.org/documents/P3.1-TransferCredit.doc](http://www.msche.org/documents/P3.1-TransferCredit.doc).

**Online Evaluator Data Form Functions Expanded**

New functionality has been added to the online Evaluator Data Form (EDF) that is part of the MyMSCHE web application. Evaluators who have previously submitted an EDF can revise the information that was submitted, view their history of service as an evaluator or team chair, and view their participation in MSCHE’s professional development programs.

**Updating the EDF**

Evaluators can update the MSCHE database with changes in their contact information, education and experience, areas of expertise, and accreditation experience. Commission staff can then use this information as a basis for selecting evaluators to participate on visiting teams.

To revise the information that was previously submitted via the EDF:

- To get to the Evaluators home page, click on the *Evaluators* button.
- To go to the EDF Instructions page, click on the *Evaluator Data Form* button.
- To review the information you previously submitted, click on the *View Submitted EDF* link.
- To print the EDF, click on the *Print* button.
- To load the current information that MSCHE has on file for you and to update it, click on the *Revise* button, then submit the revised EDF to MSCHE.

Please remember to read and follow the instructions for completing the EDF, and do not hesitate to contact us at [support@msche.org](mailto:support@msche.org) if you have any questions or problems completing the EDF.
**Other New Features**

There are two new features that have been added to the Evaluators home page. As noted earlier, evaluators can view their history of service as an evaluator or team chair. To do so, click on the Service History link. Evaluators can also view their participation in MSCHE’s professional development programs by clicking on the Training Attended link.

**An Invitation to Prospective Evaluators**

Individuals who would like to serve as an evaluator should read, How to Become an Evaluator in the Evaluators section on the Commission web site, www.msche.org. Click on the link to request long-in credentials.

If you know of additional functionality you would like added to the MyMSCHE application, write to support@msche.org.

**New Staff at MSCHE**

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education continues to enhance its staff in order to better serve its members. In our last issue we profiled the two newest vice presidents and the new research analyst. In November, Kevin “KJ” Fitzpatrick joined the MSCHE team as the new director of events and training. In January, Richard J. Pokrass came on board as the new director of communications and public relations.

Fitzpatrick is responsible for the development, management, and implementation of MSCHE’s events and training, including the annual conference, regional workshops on a variety of accreditation-related topics, and more. He will organize and lead discussions on the expansion of MSCHE training initiatives, consistent with the Commission’s mission and strategic plan. Fitzpatrick has worked with the nonprofit sector for nearly 20 years in roles that included organizational management, conference and training management, and publications management. Before joining the MSCHE staff, he was associate executive director for meetings and continuing education at The American College of Prosthodontists in Chicago. He has also worked with other professional organizations in the fields of education, medicine, and engineering. He holds a Bachelor’s degree in Geography from Brigham Young University.

Pokrass brings to MSCHE extensive experience in the marketing, communications, and public relations fields. He has held various higher education administrative positions, including director of college relations and publications, dean of institutional advancement, and executive director of both a college foundation and alumni association. He is a former national president of the 1500-member National Council for Marketing and Public Relations, and is a contributing author to nearly one dozen books and magazines, with chapters or articles about such diverse topics as higher education marketing; recruiting, training, and motivating volunteers; customer relations; and more. He is also a former radio station news director and a former newspaper reporter. Pokrass earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Radio, Television, and Film from Temple University, and a Master of Arts degree in Corporate Communications from Glassboro State College (now Rowan University). He has earned nearly three dozen regional and national awards for excellence in public relations, marketing, writing, and video production.
Save the Dates

Mark your calendar for the following professional development/training activities conducted by members of the MSCHE staff and other experienced professionals:

Fostering a Campus Culture of Assessment- April 27, Pace University, New York City

Institute on Integrating Higher Education Planning and Assessment: Real Strategies for Real Institutions- August 12-14, Intercontinental Hotel, San Juan, Puerto Rico; and September 21-23, University of Delaware Conference Center, Newark, Delaware.

Thinking About Assessing Institutional Effectiveness- September 10, Regional Learning Alliance Center, Cranberry Township, Pennsylvania.

Achieving Excellence in Student Learning Assessment (formerly Taking the Next Step)- September 23-25, University of Delaware Conference Center, Newark, Delaware.

For registration information on any of these events, visit www.msche.org/events_calendar.asp.

In addition to the above Middle States-sponsored events, there will be five workshops this spring sponsored by MSCHE member institutions and conducted by MSCHE Vice President Linda Suskie. Representatives from other institutions are invited to attend. These workshops are as follows:

Assessing Institutional Effectiveness- Half-day workshop, March 11 at Gannon University, Erie, Pennsylvania. For details contact Julie Sines, Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, 814-871-7202 or sines002@gannon.edu.


Assessment Summit- Full-day workshop at Montgomery County Community College, Blue Bell, Pennsylvania. Seating is limited. For details contact Claire Kratz, Center for Teaching and Learning, 215-641-6658 or ckratz@mc3.edu.

Rethinking Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Strategies- Full-day workshop, April 23-24, Finger Lakes Community College, Canandaigua, New York. For details contact Ann Robinson, Coordinator of Academic Assessment, 585-394-3500, ext. 7351, or robinsap@flcc.edu.

Association for Institutional Research Assessment Institute- March 24-28, Annapolis, MD. For details visit www.airweb.org/page.asp?=995