

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ACCREDITATION (And Why You Should Care)

## What is accreditation?

- Accreditation ensures the College’s academic, financial, and operational quality, and demonstrates that we foster student success.
- Accreditation proves the College offers students a high-quality education, and certifies the value of our courses, degrees, and certificates.
- Accreditation relies on peer review: professionals from similar colleges assess the evidence that we effectively support our community -- and each individual student.
- Accreditation has two major components: A Self-Study Report, an extensive document detailing evidence that we meet all requirements; and a Site Visit, when our accreditor sends representatives to campus to interview students, faculty, staff, Board members, and administrators to assure that we are in complete compliance. The Self-Study and Site Visit are scheduled for the Spring of 2021.

## Who is our accreditor?

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), a private, independent, non-governmental organization, located in Philadelphia, PA.

## Why is accreditation important?

- Accreditation undergirds public confidence in the College as an institution of higher education.
- Accreditation proves that the College maintains the academic rigor of our courses and programs.
- Accreditation confirms the legitimacy of our educational offerings to employers and the community as a whole.
- Accreditation demonstrates the integrity of our courses to other colleges and universities, and assures they may be considered for awarding transfer credit.
- Accreditation allows the College to offer federal financial aid – if we don’t maintain our accreditation, students will be ineligible to receive financial aid.

## What will the accreditor be looking for?

- MSCHE has seven standards of accreditation:
- Standard 1: Mission and goals.
- Standard 2: Ethics and Integrity.
- Standard 3: Design and delivery of student learning experience.
- Standard 4: Support of the student experience.
- Standard 5: Educational effectiveness assessment.
- Standard 6: Planning, resources and institutional improvement.
- Standard 7: Governance, leadership and administration.

## What happens when?

- Fall 2018: College plans the Self Study – appoints Steering Committee, attends the official MSCHE Self-Study Institute, and drafts the Self-Study Design.
- Spring 2019: The MSCHE Staff Liaison reviews the Self-Study Design and its accompanying Evidence Inventory, visits campus, provides feedback, and approves the Design; working groups assemble materials and draft preliminary reports for Steering Committee review.
- Fall 2019: Steering Committee & Working Groups involve campus community, offering workshops and listening tours; Working Groups submit complete draft reports; Steering Committee develops Self-Study draft.
- Spring-Summer 2020: MSCHE selects Evaluation Team Chair – Team Chair & college select dates for preliminary visit & team visit; Chair provided SS Design; Steering Committee & Working groups complete final draft, present to-date findings to campus constituencies.
- Fall 2020: Campus community, shared governance, and Board of Trustees review draft Self-Study; Team Chair receives draft Self-Study; Team Chair makes preliminary visit; final version of Self-Study developed.
- Spring-Summer 2021: Team reviews Self-Study, conducts Site Visit, issues Report, college responds, MSCHE takes Action to affirm, deny accreditation or affirm with request for follow up report(s).

## What are we doing now?

- Seven Working Groups are at work on each standard.
- The Working Groups review the criteria for each standard, gathering evidence to determine whether or not we meet it. They identify what we need to work on before the Site Visit, and write a summary report for the Self-Study based on findings pertaining to each of the criteria assessed.
- A Steering Committee is in place to oversee the Self-Study and Site Visit processes.
- A three-member team attended the Middle States Self-Study Institute in November, 2018, and has started working on the Self-Study Design – the first official, required stage of the accreditation process – for Middle States review and approval. The Self-Study Design will be completed by March, 2019.

## What is your role in the process?

Students, faculty, staff and administrators each have roles to play. Anyone may:

- Serve on a working group.
- If asked, provide the Working Groups with any needed evidence, promptly and fully.
- Review and comment on any information or draft report provided for campus input.
- Attend and provide input at the Middle States workshops, listening tours, and townhalls to be held in coming semesters.

Faculty, please!

- Make sure student learning outcome assessment reports tied to program learning outcomes are completed each academic year.
- Make sure program review reports are completed when due.
- Make sure all courses and programs have learning outcomes listed online and in the course catalog.
- Make sure all academic programs have goals listed online and in the course catalog.

Staff, please!

- Ensure all unit outcome assessment reports are completed each academic year in the Improve assessment software.
- Ensure each unit has its mission statements and goals posted on its webpage.

## What is in it for you?

- The accreditation process helps you assess your unit and or program learning outcomes to ensure continuous improvement.
- It makes you aware of what is going on at the College as a whole, and gives you a unique way to ensure the College remains a great place to learn, teach, innovate, and excel. Your perspective matters!
- You contribute to helping the College retain our accreditation – so that we can keep our doors open, and help students achieve their professional and academic goals.