

TO: All MSICHE Member Institutions
FROM: Elizabeth H. Sibolski, President
Heather F. Perfetti, President-Elect
RE: MSICHE Operational Updates in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic
DATE: March 27, 2020

The coronavirus (COVID-19) remains a global concern and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) understands that this continues to be a difficult time for your students, faculty, staff, and administration, for your institution, and for your communities. Please find below important updates regarding MSICHE operations as the Commission is committed to working with you during this challenging time.

Annual Institutional Update (AIU): The Annual Institutional Update (AIU) has been postponed until further notice in recognition of the challenges associated with completing the AIU for our institutions right now. We intend to be mindful of these challenges as we move through the weeks ahead. For IPEDS institutions, most of the information is pre-populated, so Commission staff intend to begin the AIU process on our end; however, you will not see that transfer of data or have access to it until the AIU opens at some point in the future. Also, this postponement includes any required *Recommendation Responses* that institutions would have submitted with the AIU. The Commission will continue to update institutions about the timing of this year's AIU through email to key contacts as well as by posting information at www.msche.org/covid-19. Please email research@msche.org with questions.

MSICHE Operations

- **Commission Offices:** The Commission's physical offices remain closed, but all staff continue to work remotely. See the list at the end of this communication for important MSICHE contact information.
- **Travel Reimbursement:** The Commission must suspend reimbursements for reasonable and necessary travel expenses that may have been incurred during accreditation activities. This suspension is in effect at least until May 1, 2020. Please email finance@msche.org with questions.
- **Payments to the Commission:** Payments to the Commission must be made through ACH payments or wire transfer and should no longer be done through the mailing of checks. Please email finance@msche.org with questions and for instructions on making payments.

Call for Commissioner Nominations: MSICHE is still accepting nominations for two open positions beginning January 2021 on the Commission. The Commission intends to extend the deadline for nominations. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Canceled Events: In addition to the already canceled Town Halls and Workshops in San Juan (March 17) and Pittsburgh (April 7), the Commission has also canceled the workshop *Kickstart Your Self-Study: Incorporating Institutional Priorities and Opening the Conversation About Self-Study* that was scheduled in Philadelphia on May 4. MSCHE is evaluating the possibility of a webinar format for the June 11, 2020, workshop on federal regulations and changes to MSCHE policies and procedures. More information will follow soon.

MSCHE 2020 Annual Conference - A Revised Call for Proposals:

The coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis is impacting higher education institutions in unprecedented ways. Rapid adjustments are being made in real time throughout the nation and the world to deal with the effect of sudden campus closures, the shift to online learning, and continued operational changes. And like its institutions, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) is changing too and finding new ways to support its members at all levels.

Given the current circumstances, MSCHE is reminding institutions of the *Call for Proposals for the MSCHE 2020 Annual Conference: Learning from Change and Bringing the Future into Focus* to encourage presentations that deal with the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis, emergency management, business continuity, and other important topics that can serve others in the region well when we come together on December 2-4, in Philadelphia, PA.

- Institutions should think about sharing their lessons learned from this pandemic and highlight the ways that they were flexible and adaptable, equitable and fair, and amenable to significant changes that impacted all aspects of the institution (governance, student services, student learning outcomes, etc.). With institutions testing their emergency management planning as well as their business continuity protocols, the Commission encourages topics for presentation that address these areas as well.
- A planning group for the MSCHE 2020 Annual Conference intends to extend the deadline for the *Call for Proposals* and continues to examine all aspects of the conference and potential longer-term impacts that may reach into December.
- The planning group has also made the decision to postpone a planned *Call for Poster Sessions* from undergraduate and graduate students in recognition that their academic lives have been significantly disrupted. A special student rate will be offered to support student attendance at the 2020 Annual Conference, and the Commission hopes to host poster sessions for students at its 2021 Annual Conference instead.
- Learn more about the MSCHE 2020 Annual Conference at: <https://go.msche.org/Annual-Conference>.

ACE Engage®: On March 13, 2020, in the spirit of releasing preliminary information and advice as broadly as possible, the Commission participated in an event hosted by the American Council on Education (ACE), which was recorded for their ACE Engage® online learning platform created for higher education leaders. *How Will COVID-19 Impact Accreditation?* is described as follows: One of the issues that has come up in conversations with campus leaders about their COVID-19 response is concerns about the impact on accreditation. Terry Hartle speaks with Jamie Studley from WASC and Heather Perfetti, incoming president of MSCHE, on this issue. More information is available at ACE's website: <https://www.acenet.edu/Pages/Engage/home.aspx>.

Commission's COVID-19 Website: The Commission continues to post information at its COVID-19 website: www.msche.org/covid-19. Continue to check that site regularly for updates. As a reminder, two recorded webcasts have been posted there along with all communications to constituents.

Questions: For questions, please outreach to the staff through the appropriate email as indicated below.

- MSCHE Institutions: President or Accreditation Liaison Officer should contact assigned MSCHE Vice President
- Peer Evaluators: emattson@msche.org.
- Substantive Change: csmith@msche.org
- State and System Representatives: dbonner@msche.org
- Finance: finance@msche.org
- Media/Communications: bkirschner@msche.org
- Additional Questions: communications@msche.org

COVID-19 Resources

MSCHE: <https://www.msche.org/covid-19/>

U.S. Department of Education: <http://www.ed.gov/coronavirus>