

U.S. Department of Education Staff Report

to the

Senior Department Official on Recognition Compliance Issues

Recommendation Page

1. **Agency:** Middle States Commission on Higher Education (1952 / 2013)
(The dates provided are the date of initial listing as a recognized agency and the date of the agency's last grant of recognition.)
2. **Action Item:** Petition for Continued Recognition
3. **Current Scope of Recognition:** The accreditation and preaccreditation ("Candidacy status") of institutions of higher education in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, including distance and correspondence education programs offered at those institutions.
4. **Requested Scope of Recognition:** The accreditation and preaccreditation ("Candidacy status") of institutions of higher education in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, including distance and correspondence education programs offered at those institutions. Recognition extends to the Executive Committee to act on behalf of the Commission as necessary on cases of initial, reaffirmed, and continued candidacy or initial, reaffirmed and continued accreditation.
5. **Date of Advisory Committee Meeting:** 02/07/2018
6. **Staff Recommendation:** Renew the agency's recognition for five years.

7. **Issues or Problems:** None.

Executive Summary

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE AGENCY

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) is a regional accreditor that currently accredits 528 institutions of higher education located in five states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands.

The agency's recognition enables its institutions to establish eligibility to receive Federal student assistance funding under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (Title IV). The agency serves as the Title IV gatekeeper for all but a handful of the institutions it accredits. Consequently, the agency must meet the Secretary's separate and independent requirements.

Recognition History

MSCHE appeared on the first list of recognized accrediting agencies in 1952 and has received periodic renewal of recognition since that time. The agency was last reviewed for continued recognition at the December 2012 meeting of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI). After that review, the Department extended the agency's previous grant of recognition and required a compliance report on the issues cited in the staff analysis.

As part of its evaluation of the agency's current compliance report, Department staff reviewed the agency's narrative and supporting documentation. There was one 3rd Party Comment received in connection with the agency's compliance report.

PART II: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The agency meets the requirements of the Secretary's Criteria for Recognition.

PART III: THIRD PARTY COMMENTS

Staff Analysis of 3rd Party Written Comments

The Department received one written third-party comment against the agency. The commenter's concern is that the agency has a lack of key data indicators for student achievement. The commenter states that the agency does not have a consistent way to measure outcomes across institutions which makes it difficult to establish baselines for comparative purposes.

While the Department encourages agencies to define appropriate benchmarks and measures for student achievement, it does not

have the regulatory authority to place any requirements on agencies in this regard. The Department thanks the commenters for taking the time to share their concerns with the staff, but has no way of incorporating them into the current analysis.