



**MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-2680. Tel: 267-284-5000. Fax: 215-662-5501  
[www.msche.org](http://www.msche.org)

August 8, 2012

Dr. Rodney A. Erickson  
President  
The Pennsylvania State University  
201 Old Main Building  
University Park  
University Park, PA 16802

Dear Dr. Erickson:

At its session on August 6, 2012, the Executive Committee of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education acted:

To warn the institution that its accreditation is in jeopardy based on information contained in the institutionally commissioned Report of the Special Investigative Counsel (Freeh, Sporkin & Sullivan, LLP, July 12, 2012) and the Binding Consent Decree Imposed by the National Collegiate Athletic Association and Accepted by the Pennsylvania State University (July 23, 2013) and insufficient evidence that the institution is currently in compliance with the Requirements of Affiliation 5 (compliance with all applicable government policies, regulations, and requirements) and 9 (institution's governing body responsibility for the quality and integrity of the institution, for ensuring that the institution's mission is being carried out, and for making freely available to the Commission accurate, fair, and complete information on all aspects of the institution and its operations) and with Standard 4 (Leadership and Governance) and Standard 6 (Integrity). To note that the institution remains accredited while on warning. To request a monitoring report due by September 30, 2012 documenting steps that have been taken and are planned to ensure the institution's full compliance with Requirements of Affiliation 5 and 9 as well as Accreditation Standards 4 and 6. In addition, to request that the monitoring report also address Accreditation Standard 3 (Institutional Resources) with regard to the institution's capacity and plans for addressing financial obligations that will or may result from the investigation and related settlements, etc. A small team visit will follow submission of the monitoring report. To remind the institution that the Commission must continue to be informed of any further significant related developments, including the provision of copies of any and all relevant external reports. The due date for the next evaluation visit will be established when accreditation is reaffirmed.

Dr. Rodney A. Erickson

Page 2


Enclosed for your information is a copy of the Statement of Accreditation Status for your institution. The Statement of Accreditation Status (SAS) provides important basic information about the institution and its affiliation with the Commission, and it is made available to the public in the Directory of Members and Candidates on the Commission's website at [www.msche.org](http://www.msche.org). Accreditation applies to the institution as detailed in the SAS; institutional information is derived from data provided by the institution through annual reporting and from Commission actions. If any of the institutional information is incorrect, please contact the Commission as soon as possible.

A Public Disclosure Statement will also be developed, consistent with the Commission's policy on *Public Communication in the Accrediting Process*. The statement provides an explanation of the nature of the institutional accreditation action that has been taken by the Commission. The Public Disclosure Statement will accompany the institution's Statement of Accreditation Status and will be made available on the Middle States Commission on Higher Education web site. It is expected that the Public Disclosure Statement will be complete and posted 7 days from the date of the action. If the PDS contains any errors of fact, please contact your liaison.

Please check to ensure that references to your institution's accredited status published by the institution (catalog, other publications, web page) include the full name, address, and telephone number of the accrediting agency. Further guidance is provided in the Commission's policy statement *Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status*. For guidance on the preparation of the monitoring report, please see the Commission's policy statement *Follow-up Reports and Visits*. Both policies can be obtained from our website.

Please be assured of the continuing interest of the Commission on Higher Education in the well-being of The Pennsylvania State University. If any further clarification is needed regarding the SAS or other items in this letter, please feel free to contact Dr. Tito Guerrero, Vice President.

Sincerely,



R. Barbara Gitenstein, Ph.D.  
Chair



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## **STATEMENT OF ACCREDITATION STATUS**

**THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**201 Old Main Building**  
**University Park**  
**University Park, PA 16802**  
**Phone: (814) 865-4700; Fax: (814) 865-1100**  
**[www.psu.edu](http://www.psu.edu)**

**Chief Executive Officer:** Dr. Rodney A. Erickson, President

### **INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION**

**Enrollment**

**(Headcount):** 69863 Undergraduate; 9745 Graduate

**Control:** Public

**Affiliation:** State

**Carnegie Classification:** Research - Very High Research Activity

**Degrees Offered:** Postsecondary Certificate (< 1 year), Postsecondary Certificate (>=1 year, < 2 years), Associate's, Bachelor's, Postbaccalaureate Certificate, Master's, Doctor's - Professional Practice, Doctor's - Research/Scholarship;

**Distance Education** Yes

**Programs:**

**Accreditors Approved by U.S. Secretary of Education:** American Bar Association, Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar; American Dietetic Association, American Commission on Education in Nutrition and Dietetics; American Physical Therapy Association, Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education; American Psychological Association, Commission on Accreditation; American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology; Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education; Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education; Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology; Liaison Committee on Medical Education; National Association of Schools of Art and Design, Commission on Accreditation; National Association of Schools of Music, Commission on Accreditation; National Association of Schools of Theatre, Commission on Accreditation; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education; National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission

**Other Accreditors:** American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business; American Assoc of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians; American Chemical Society; American Psychological Assoc; Assoc for Assessment and Accred of Laboratory Animal Care International; Assoc for the Advancement of Collegiate Schools of Business-International; Assoc to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB); Commission on Accred of Athletic Trg Ed; Council for the Accred of Counseling and Related Ed Prog; Council on Rehab Ed; Institute of Food Technologists; Landscape Architecture Accred Board (LAAB); National Accred Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences; National Architectural Accred Board (NAAB); National Assoc for Sport and Phys Ed (NASPE); National Assoc of Schools of Public Affairs & Administration (NASPAA); North America Wildlife Techn Assoc; PA State Board of Nursing – Licensing; PA Depart of Ed; Professional Golfer's Assoc (PGA) of America; Soc of American Foresters; Society of Wood Science and Technology

### **Instructional Locations**

**Branch Campuses:** Dickinson School of Law, Carlisle, PA; Penn State College of Medicine, Hershey, PA

**Additional Locations:** Great Valley School of Graduate Professional Studies, Malvern, PA; Penn State Abington, Abington, PA; Penn State Altoona, Altoona, PA; Penn State Beaver, Monaca, PA; Penn State Berks, Reading, PA; Penn State Brandywine, Media, PA; Penn State Dubois, DuBois, PA; Penn State Erie, The Behrend College, Erie, PA; Penn State Fayette, The Eberly Campus, Uniontown, PA; Penn State Greater Allegheny, McKeesport, PA; Penn State Harrisburg, Middletown, PA; Penn State Hazleton, Hazleton, PA; Penn State Lehigh Valley, Center Valley, PA; Penn State Mont Alto, Mont Alto, PA; Penn State New Kensington, Upper Burrell, PA; Penn State Schuylkill, Schuylkill Haven, PA; Penn State Shenango, Sharon, PA; Penn State Wilkes-Barre, Lehman, PA; Penn State Worthington Scranton, Dunmore, PA; Penn State York, York, PA

**Other Instructional Sites:** Aria Health, Philadelphia, PA; Bloomsburg Health, Bloomsburg, PA; Clearfield Area High School, Clearfield, PA; Community Education Council of Elk and Cameron Counties, St. Marys, PA; Corporate Learning Center, Bethlem, PA; Downtown Conference Center, Altoona, PA; Eastern Center for Arts and Technology, Willow Grove, PA; Hanover Hospital, Hanover, PA; Hershey Medical Center, Hershey, PA; Kraft, Wilkes-Barre, PA; Lancaster Center, Lancaster, PA; Manitowoc Crane Group, Shady Grove, PA; Middle Bucks Institute of Technology, Jamison, PA; Mount Nittany Medical Center/Clinics in Centre County, State College, PA; Northern Tier Center, Towanda, PA; Penn State Continuing Education at Williamsport, Williamsport, PA; Pittsburgh Mills Mall, Tarentum, PA; Proctor & Gamble, Mehoopany, PA; Regional Learning Alliance, Cranberry Twp., PA; Sallie Mae, Hanover Twp., PA; Schuylkill Health School of Nursing, Pottsville, PA; Shaver's Creek, Petersburg, PA; The Penn State Learning Center (Lewistown), Lewistown, PA; Tobyhanna Army Depot, Tobyhanna, PA; UPMC McKeesport Hospital, McKeesport, PA; Westmoreland County Community College, Youngwood, PA

### **ACCREDITATION INFORMATION**

**Status:** Member since 1921

**Last Reaffirmed:** November 18, 2010

### **Most Recent Commission Action:**

August 6, 2012: To warn the institution that its accreditation is in jeopardy based on information contained in the institutionally commissioned Report of the Special Investigative Counsel (Freeh, Sporkin & Sullivan, LLP, July 12, 2012) and the Binding Consent Decree Imposed by the National Collegiate Athletic Association and Accepted by the Pennsylvania State University (July 23, 2013) and insufficient evidence that the institution is currently in compliance with the Requirements of Affiliation 5 (compliance with all applicable government policies, regulations, and requirements) and 9 (institution's governing body responsibility for the quality and integrity of the institution, for ensuring that the institution's mission is being carried out, and for making freely available to the Commission accurate, fair, and complete information on all aspects of the institution and its operations) and with Standard 4 (Leadership and Governance) and Standard 6 (Integrity). To note that the institution remains accredited while on warning. To request a monitoring report due by September 30, 2012 documenting steps that have been taken and are planned to ensure the institution's full compliance with Requirements of Affiliation 5 and 9 as well as Accreditation Standards 4 and 6. In addition, to request that the monitoring report also address Accreditation Standard 3 (Institutional Resources) with regard to the institution's capacity and plans for addressing financial obligations that will or may result from the investigation and related settlements, etc. A small team visit will follow submission of the monitoring report. To remind the institution that the Commission must continue to be informed of any further significant related developments, including the provision of copies of any and all relevant external reports. The due date for the next evaluation visit will be established when accreditation is reaffirmed.

### **Brief History Since Last Comprehensive Evaluation:**

November 18, 2010: To accept the Periodic Review Report and to reaffirm accreditation. To request a progress report due by April 1, 2012 documenting evidence of further progress in: (1) the establishment of learning goals at the program level in all programs; and (2) the use of appropriate assessment of the attainment of learning goals at the program level, including use of direct measures of the assessment of student learning and evidence that assessment results are used to improve teaching and learning (Standard 14). The next evaluation visit is scheduled for 2014-2015.

March 1, 2012: To accept the Commission-requested information report, to remind the institution that the Commission must continue to be informed of any further developments that may result in changes in mission, programs, personnel and/or budget arising from the institution's investigation or that may result in a change of status with external oversight bodies, such

as the NCAA, and to request that the institution provide to the Commission copies of all relevant reports from its investigation or to its external oversight bodies. To further remind the institution of the progress report due by April 1, 2012 documenting evidence of further progress in: (1) the establishment of learning goals at the program level in all programs; and (2) the use of appropriate assessment of the attainment of learning goals at the program level, including use of direct measures of the assessment of student learning and evidence that assessment results are used to improve teaching and learning (Standard 14). The next evaluation visit is scheduled for 2014-2015.

June 28, 2012:

To accept the progress report. To remind the institution that the Commission must continue to be informed of any further developments that may result in changes in mission, programs, personnel, and/or budget arising from the institution's investigation or that may result in a change of status with external oversight bodies, such as the NCAA, and to request that the institution provide to the Commission copies of all relevant reports from its investigation or to its external oversight bodies. The next evaluation visit is scheduled for 2014-2015.

**Next Self-Study Evaluation:** 2014 - 2015

**Next Periodic Review Report:** 2020

**Date Printed:** August 8, 2012

## DEFINITIONS

**Branch Campus** - A location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. The location is independent if the location: offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential; has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

**Additional Location** - A location, other than a branch campus, that is geographically apart from the main campus and at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program. **ANYA** ("Approved but Not Yet Active") indicates that the location is included within the scope of accreditation but has not yet begun to offer courses. This designation is removed after the Commission receives notification that courses have begun at this location.

**Other Instructional Sites** - A location, other than a branch campus or additional location, at which the institution offers one or more courses for credit.

**Distance Education Programs** - Yes or No indicates whether or not the institution has been approved to offer one or more degree or certificate/diploma programs for which students could meet 50% or more of their requirements by taking distance education courses.

## EXPLANATION OF COMMISSION ACTIONS

An institution's accreditation continues unless it is explicitly suspended or removed. In addition to reviewing the institution's accreditation status at least every 5 years, actions are taken for substantive changes (such as a new

degree or geographic site, or a change of ownership) or when other events occur that require review for continued compliance. Any type of report or visit required by the Commission is reviewed and voted on by the Commission after it is completed.

In increasing order of seriousness, a report by an institution to the Commission may be accepted, acknowledged, or rejected.

#### **Levels of Actions:**

Grant or Re-Affirm Accreditation without follow-up

Defer a decision on initial accreditation: The institution shows promise but the evaluation team has identified issues of concern and recommends that the institution be given a specified time period to address those concerns.

Postpone a decision on (reaffirmation of) accreditation: The Commission has determined that there is insufficient information to substantiate institutional compliance with one or more standards.

Continue accreditation: A delay of up to one year may be granted to ensure a current and accurate representation of the institution or in the event of circumstances beyond the institution's control (natural disaster, U.S. State Department travel warnings, etc.)

Recommendations to be addressed in the next Periodic Review Report: Suggestions for improvement are given, but no follow-up is needed for compliance.

Supplemental Information Report: This is required when a decision is postponed and are intended only to allow the institution to provide further information, not to give the institution time to formulate plans or initiate remedial action.

Progress report: The Commission needs assurance that the institution is carrying out activities that were planned or were being implemented at the time of a report or on-site visit.

Monitoring report: There is a potential for the institution to become non-compliant with MSCHE standards; issues are more complex or more numerous; or issues require a substantive, detailed report. A visit may or may not be required.

Warning: The Commission acts to Warn an institution that its accreditation may be in jeopardy when the institution is not in compliance with one or more Commission standards and a follow-up report, called a monitoring report, is required to demonstrate that the institution has made appropriate improvements to bring itself into compliance. Warning indicates that the Commission believes that, although the institution is out of compliance, the institution has the capacity to make appropriate improvements within a reasonable period of time and the institution has the capacity to sustain itself in the long term.

Probation: The Commission places an institution on Probation when, in the Commission's judgment, the institution is not in compliance with one or more Commission standards and that the non-compliance is sufficiently serious, extensive, or acute that it raises concern about one or more of the following:

1. the adequacy of the education provided by the institution;
2. the institution's capacity to make appropriate improvements in a timely fashion; or
3. the institution's capacity to sustain itself in the long term.

Probation is often, but need not always be, preceded by an action of Warning or Postponement. If the Commission had previously postponed a decision or placed the institution on Warning, the Commission may place the institution on Probation if it determines that the institution has failed to address satisfactorily the Commission's concerns in the

prior action of postponement or warning regarding compliance with Commission standards. This action is accompanied by a request for a monitoring report, and a special visit follows. Probation may, but need not always, precede an action of Show Cause.

Suspend accreditation: Accreditation has been Continued for one year and an appropriate evaluation is not possible. This is a procedural action that would result in Removal of Accreditation if accreditation cannot be reaffirmed within the period of suspension.

Show cause why the institution's accreditation should not be removed: The institution is required to present its case for accreditation by means of a substantive report and/or an on-site evaluation. A "Public Disclosure Statement" is issued by the Commission.

Remove accreditation. If the institution appeals this action, its accreditation remains in effect until the appeal is completed.

Other actions are described in the Commission policy, "Range of Commission Actions on Accreditation."





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## **Public Disclosure Statement**

The Pennsylvania State University

August 8, 2012

By the Middle States Commission on Higher Education

This statement has been developed for use in responding to public inquiries, consistent with the Commission's policies on [Public Communication in the Accrediting Process](#), [Range of Commission Actions on Accreditation](#), and [Standardized Language for Commission Actions on Accreditation](#). It should be read in conjunction with the *Statement of Accreditation Status* for The Pennsylvania State University, a copy of which is attached. The policies listed above explain what information the Commission makes public regarding its member institutions and what information remains confidential, describe the various accreditation actions the Commission can take, and define the terms used in the Commission's actions.

The Pennsylvania State University, located in University Park, Pennsylvania, is a public, non-profit research university. It has been accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education since 1921. The Pennsylvania State University offers programs leading to Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, Doctor's-Professional Practice, and Doctor's-Research/Scholarship degrees, as well as Post-Baccalaureate certificates. A full listing of the institution's branch campuses, additional locations, and other instructional sites is noted in the *Statement of Accreditation Status*. A summary of the most recent Commission actions relative to the institution's accreditation follows.

### **Current Accreditation Status**

On August 6, 2012, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education acted to Warn the institution that its accreditation is in jeopardy based on information contained in the institutionally commissioned Report of the Special Investigative Counsel (Freeh, Sporkin & Sullivan, LLP, July 12, 2012) and the Binding Consent Decree Imposed by the National Collegiate Athletic Association and Accepted by the Pennsylvania State University (July 23, 2013) and insufficient evidence that the institution is currently in compliance with the Requirements of Affiliation 5 (compliance with all applicable government policies, regulations, and requirements) and 9 (institution's governing body responsibility for the quality and integrity of the institution, for ensuring that the institution's mission is being carried out, and for making freely available to the Commission accurate, fair, and complete information on all aspects of the institution and its operations) and with Standard 4 (Leadership and Governance) and Standard 6 (Integrity). The full text of the Commission's action is provided below. The Commission's accreditation standards are available online at <http://www.msche.org/publications/CHX-2011-WEB.pdf>.

***The Pennsylvania State University remains accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education while on Warning.***

The Commission places an institution on Warning when, in the Commission's judgment, the institution is not in compliance with one or more Commission accreditation standards. When the Commission warns an institution, it believes that, although the institution is out of compliance, the institution has the capacity both to make appropriate improvements within a reasonable period and to sustain itself in the long term. A follow-up report, called a monitoring report, is required to demonstrate that the institution has made appropriate improvements to bring itself into compliance. A small team visit also is conducted to verify institutional status and progress.

**Summary of Recent Commission Actions**

The Commission takes accreditation action after a review of information regarding the institution's compliance with the Commission's standards. Typically, these actions follow an on-site evaluation, a periodic review report (PRR), a follow-up report, or substantive change request, or occur at any other time that an institution's accreditation is reviewed. The Commission may conduct an accreditation review at any time if it has evidence that the institution may no longer meet the Commission's requirements of affiliation or accreditation standards.

On November 11, 2011, the Commission wrote to The Pennsylvania State University in response to recent coverage in the media concerning the criminal allegations brought forward by the Pennsylvania Attorney General and the related investigations launched by the United States Department of Education. The Commission asked the University to submit an information report no later than January 2, 2012, addressing the recent developments and/or plans to ensure the University's ongoing compliance with the Commission's Requirements of Affiliation and with Standard 6, Integrity.

On March 1, 2012, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education acted as follows:

To accept the Commission-requested information report, to remind the institution that the Commission must continue to be informed of any further developments that may result in changes in mission, programs, personnel, and/or budget arising from the institution's investigation or that may result in a change of status with external oversight bodies, such as the NCAA, and to request that the institution provide to the Commission copies of all relevant reports from its investigation or to its external oversight bodies. To further remind the institution of the progress report due by April 1, 2012, documenting evidence of further progress in: (1) the establishment of learning goals at the program level in all programs; and (2) the use of appropriate assessment of the attainment of learning goals at the program level, including use of direct measures of the assessment of student learning and evidence that assessment results are used to improve teaching and learning (Standard 14). The next evaluation visit is scheduled for 2014-2015.

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## **Current Status and Expected Activities**

***The Pennsylvania State University remains accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education while on Warning.***

Following submission of a monitoring report on September 30, 2012, the Commission will conduct a small team visit to assess the institution's compliance with the Commission's requirements of affiliation and accreditation standards. Following the on-site visit, a report by the visiting team will be completed. The monitoring report, the small team report and the institutional response to the small team report will be considered by the Committee on Follow-Up Activities. The Commission will take action following the review by the Committee on Follow-up Activities.

When the Commission takes action, it will do so in accordance with the Commission's policy, *Range of Commission Actions on Accreditation* (available at [http://www.msche.org/documents/P7A-2\\_RangeofActions091611.pdf](http://www.msche.org/documents/P7A-2_RangeofActions091611.pdf)). If the Commission determines that progress sufficient to demonstrate compliance with its accreditation standards has not been made, the Commission may take further action as allowed under the *Range of Commission Actions on Accreditation*.

## **For More Information**

The following resources provide additional information that may be helpful in understanding the Commission's actions and The Pennsylvania State University's accreditation status:

*Statement of Accreditation Status* for The Pennsylvania State University ([http://www.msche.org/institutions\\_directory.asp](http://www.msche.org/institutions_directory.asp)) provides factual information about The Pennsylvania State University and the full text of the Commission's recent actions regarding the institution.

*Media Backgrounder* (<http://www.msche.org/documents/Media%20Backgrounder%202012.doc>) answers questions about accreditation, such as "What is accreditation?" and "What is the Middle States Commission on Higher Education?"

*Informing the Public about Accreditation* ([www.chea.org/public\\_info/index.asp](http://www.chea.org/public_info/index.asp)), published by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, provides additional information on the nature and value of accreditation.