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TO: All MSCHE Member Institutions
FROM: Elizabeth H. Sibolski, President
Heather F. Perfetti, President-Elect
RE: Updates Relating to the Coronavirus (COVID-19)
DATE: March 9, 2020

The coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to be a global concern, and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) has received a number of inquiries about its operations. MSCHE understands that this is a difficult time for your students, faculty, staff, and administration, for your institution, and for your communities. We are committed to working with you during this challenging time.

On March 5, 2020, the United States Department of Education (USDE), Office of Postsecondary Education, released [*Guidance for interruptions of study related to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)*](#).

To support your institutions and to align with the USDE *Guidance*, the Commission will temporarily waive the substantive change requirements for distance education and contractual agreements put in place in response to the coronavirus. To that end, MSCHE needs updated information from each of our institutions related to any temporary distance education operations, temporary agreements with other institutions, as well as any impact on the academic calendar. By April 1, 2020, and continuing thereafter if your approach changes, please provide formal written notice regarding the following:

1. **Distance education:** If the institution is not approved to offer distance education programs, describe the temporary measures in place to offer distance education. MSCHE will waive the distance education review requirements in the *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* for institutions working to accommodate students whose enrollment is otherwise interrupted as a result of the coronavirus. This waiver applies only to US institutions, per the USDE *Guidance*.
2. **Temporary Agreements with other institutions:** If the institution has plans to temporarily partner with another institution to deliver instruction to students, describe and include the name or names of any prospective partners. MSCHE will waive the contractual agreements review requirements in the *Substantive Change Policy and Procedures* for institutions working to accommodate students impacted by the coronavirus so that students can complete courses at other institutions but be awarded credit by their home institutions.
3. **Academic calendar:** If the institution has had to make or will make any changes to the academic calendar for the current term, describe the steps being taken with regard to the academic calendar and any anticipated impact on future academic terms.

4. **Temporary sites for instruction:** If the institution plans to establish a temporary site or sites for instruction, the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) should enter the address for any temporary site through the secure MSCHE portal as an “other instructional site.”

Formal written notice about the status of institutional changes adopted based on the USDE *Guidance* and the MSCHE waivers should be emailed as a .pdf, signed by the CEO or ALO, and addressed to your institution’s MSCHE Vice President liaison. You may also address any questions or concerns to your MSCHE Vice President liaison.

The Commission’s standards for accreditation and requirements of affiliation require adherence to the USDE *Guidance* and encourages you to outreach to the USDE if your institution has unique circumstances that were not addressed in the guidance to determine what, if any, alternative options may be available. Any additional direction provided to you by the USDE may also need to be reported to MSCHE.

Please note that the Commission continues to monitor the impact of the coronavirus, and updates will be provided at our website under *Travel Warnings and Advisories* as well as communicated directly with constituencies as the circumstances may warrant.

We appreciate your cooperation and timely response to this request. Please be assured of the continuing interest of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education in the safety, health, and well-being of our member institutions and all who contribute to peer review.

cc: Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO)

Download a PDF of this memo at <https://go.msche.org/20200309-Institutions-Memo-Coronavirus-Updates>