

IUP MIDDLE STATES REAFFIRMATION OF UNIVERSITY ACCREDITATION 2013-2016

www.iup.edu/MiddleStates

What is Middle States and why is accreditation important?

- The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (<http://www.msche.org>) is recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education to conduct accreditation activities for institutions of higher education in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- The Commission is a voluntary, non-governmental, membership association that defines, maintains, and promotes educational excellence across institutions with diverse missions, student populations, and resources.
- Accreditation is a highly coveted endorsement that also enables IUP students to be eligible for federal student financial aid.
- The accreditation process fosters reflection, continuous improvement and, at IUP, coincides with ongoing visioning, strategic planning, and institutional renewal efforts.

How does IUP reaffirm accreditation with MSCHE?

- Reaffirmation of accreditation takes place every ten years.
- Institutions engage in a process of self-assessment according to the 14 *MSCHE Characteristics of Excellence*, which cover all aspects of institutional life.
- The self-assessment process culminates in (1) an institutional *Self Study* that is shared with MSCHE and the campus community and (2) an on-campus evaluation visit by a team of 10 peer reviewers selected by MSCHE.

What is the *Self Study*?

- The IUP *Self Study* is the result of two years of work by over 160 members of the IUP community.
- The *Self Study* describes how IUP upholds the 14 *MSCHE Characteristics of Excellence* and the ways in which we as an institution can improve. It is comprised of two parts: the narrative portion, which includes three Key Recommendations for the institution, and the executive summaries of the seven subcommittees that conducted the analysis.

IUP Self Study Key Recommendations

1. Be guided by the University Strategic Plan. The plan emerged after months of university-wide deliberation and input, culminating in unanimous endorsement by both the University Senate and the Council of Trustees. Make it a living document that is monitored, assessed, updated, and used, including as it relates to securing our financial future. While enhancing revenue where possible, base all resource allocation decisions on clearly identified priorities and cost effectiveness.
2. Empower students to invest in their own potential for academic, personal, and social well-being, and encourage them to take advantage of all available resources. First, ensure that academic offerings and advising are of high quality and provide opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students to develop career skills and to obtain financial support. Second, extend to all levels the progress made thus far in assessing the outcomes of student learning. Third, develop mechanisms to respond to assessments and communicate results to students and other stakeholders.
3. Focus on people, the soul of the institution. IUP is 140 years old because dedicated employees, students, alumni, and supporters not only sustained the institution but advanced it. We should honor their legacy and take this university to even greater levels of accomplishment and reputation. First, let this goal drive long-overdue reforms for how we recruit, review, advance, reward, and retain all employees, starting with faculty and staff. Second, support effective transitions and opportunities for professional growth of all personnel by fostering leadership development, technical training, and mentoring. Third, embrace diversity and inclusion by removing obstacles and by taking concrete steps to achieve greater awareness and acceptance of all people.

Next Steps

- IUP's site visit is scheduled for Sunday, April 10 – Wednesday, April 13, 2016; several opportunities will arise during the visit for members of the IUP community to participate.
- After the visit, the team will compose an accreditation visit report. During the summer of 2016, the MSCHE will review the visiting team's report and make their decision on IUP's accreditation standing.

Your involvement during Spring 2016 Site Visit

- While there will be a schedule set and publicized in advance of the team visit, there will be other meetings that will need to be arranged during the visit. These meetings will be called by members of the visiting team, and usually arise as a result of other interactions the team members have while on campus. You can help by being ready to respond to such a request.
- Participate in an open forum.
- Be familiar with the *IUP Self Study*, especially the three Key Recommendations.