

MSCHE Conference Covers Wide Range of Topics

By Don Sutherland

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) held its annual conference at the Downtown Marriott in Philadelphia during December 6-8. The conference covered a wide range of topics including insights related to the accreditation standards adopted in 2014, the new 8-year accreditation process, evidence that demonstrates that an institution is meeting Standard VI (Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement), strategic planning in small and mid-sized colleges, and the use of an institution's mission and periodic assessment to promote institutional improvement.

On Thursday morning, December 7, Dr. Peter McPherson, President of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities discussed, "Accountability in a Changing Environment." Dr. McPherson declared that Higher Education will increasingly be accountable for outcomes related to access, completion, and employment. He discussed existing issues that are drawing public attention, including the large attainment gap between students in the lowest and highest income quintiles. He also noted that the most recent Job Openings & Labor Turnover survey revealed some six million jobs are unfilled, some of which are likely the result of skills-jobs mismatches. Finally, he expressed openness to the concept of "differentiated" or "risk-adjusted" accreditation where institutions that have consistently demonstrated the strongest results would face less rigorous scrutiny (perhaps smaller visiting teams and reduced reporting) than those with a history of weak results.