



Richard Stockton College of NJ Accreditation Reaffirmed by Middle States Commission on Higher Education

**College Receives Commendations
For Progress and Quality of Self-Study Report**

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Contact: **Tim Kelly**
 Office of Public Relations
 Galloway Township, NJ 08240
 Tim.Kelly@stockton.edu
 (609) 652-4950

Galloway, NJ – The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey received notice its accreditation has been reaffirmed with two commendations by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). Much of the work for accreditation was initiated through Stockton's 2020 Strategic Planning process using a balanced scorecard approach developed at Harvard University.

The evaluation team, comprised of representatives of peer institutions, issued a report praising Stockton for its emphasis on teaching and a "uniform commitment to students on the part of the faculty, administration and staff."

Accreditation by MSCHE is for a 10-year term. It was granted by the association following completion of the normal reaccreditation process, which includes Stockton's self-study report and Middle States' comprehensive evaluation. The process includes an on-site visit by a MSCHE evaluation team. A "periodic review report" is due in June, 2017 and no further follow-up is required for compliance. In many cases, such follow-up is the standard procedure, and

the fact Stockton was not asked to provide it is an unusual step by MSCHE, according to Stockton President Herman J. Saatkamp.

"I am quite pleased and gratified that the Middle States Commission on Higher Education has reaffirmed our accreditation in such a positive and decisive way," College President Herman J. Saatkamp said. "This designation confirms our excellence as an institution as we fulfill our mission to maintain an environment for excellence for New Jersey students."

"The MSCHE announcement indicates the College mission, goals and performance standards are being achieved at a time when Stockton is completing its 40th anniversary of teaching and looking ahead toward a very promising future," he said.

The MSCHE assessments are conducted through a series of rigorous accreditation standards and enforcement. The group's self-regulation and peer-review process are designed to help institutions improve and maintain quality assurance for parents and students. MSCHE accreditation is considered a must for parents and students making their choice of a college or university and also impacts the institution's funding and ability to attract quality faculty, administrators and staff. Accreditation is mandatory in order for students to be eligible for financial aid,

"Such a strong reaffirmation of our accreditation – along with our high rankings by such independent evaluators as *U.S. News and World Report's America's Best Colleges*, *Princeton Review* and others, serve as confirmation we are headed in the right direction," Dr. Saatkamp said.

Stockton College Provost and Executive Vice President Dr. Harvey Kesselman said the MSCHE report was highly unusual in today's era of accountability and demand for measurable results. "Today's announcement by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education is an extraordinary result," he said. "Accreditation has never been more stringent or demanding. For Stockton to emerge without conditions and requirements, and to earn two commendations is something the entire College community should be quite proud of," Dr. Kesselman noted.

The evaluation process used by the Middle States Commission of Higher Education measures institutional effectiveness assesses learning outcomes and programs, financial condition, facilities and virtually every phase of operations. It provides detailed "scorecard" of each institution's results. In advance of the MSCHE visit and report, institutions are required to prepare their own self-study reports on these aspects and more. Stockton spent two years and involved more than 100 members of faculty and staff in this self-study.

In its report, the evaluation team commended Stockton's self-study report and gave high marks in the vast majority of the measurement categories, including (among others) quality of teaching and learning outcomes, faculty accomplishment and student services. It also noted Stockton's "sound financial circumstances, characterized by strong assets and a series of unqualified financial statements." The report made note of the fact Stockton had doubled its endowment in five years (and recently has more than doubled) and increased grant funding at the federal, state and local levels by 70 percent.

Stockton's facilities were characterized as "(being) in very good condition and have been expanded to meet the needs of a growing student body." Specific mention was made of the Campus Center, which opened in May 2011, the Carnegie Library Center in Atlantic City, and the Unified Science Center currently under construction, among others. These new and/or expanded facilities have been added to the campus, the report noted, while respecting the ecological sensitivity of the Pinelands National Reserve, which surrounds the majority of Stockton's 2,000 acre campus, the largest in the state.

The Middle States Commission noted the highly qualified and committed faculty, the increase in tenure-track faculty and the reduced student faculty ratio.

On a more detailed basis, the evaluation team reported on (among other aspects) Stockton's mission and goals, leadership and governance; planning, allocation of resources, student retention and admission, support services, faculty, educational offerings, and student learning outcomes.

In many cases, institutions that did not fare as well as Stockton face different levels of actions from MSCHE that include deferring or postponing a decision, recommending issues to be addressed, requirement of a supplemental information report, monitoring reports for possible non-compliance, warnings, probation, suspension or outright removal of accreditation. Stockton's re-affirmation without follow-up is highly unusual and a reflection on Stockton's academic and administrative excellence.

"This is a very exciting time to be at Stockton, and the excellent grades earned in the Middle States Commission report serve as an incentive for continued fine work by our students, faculty and staff," Dr. Saatkamp concluded.

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