



# **Institutional Self-Study**

prepared by

## **Muhlenberg College**

for

### **The Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

and

### the Muhlenberg College Community

February 2016

**Muhlenberg College is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education,  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Muhlenberg College is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and integrity. Founded in 1848, Muhlenberg is an independent, undergraduate, coeducational institution affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The College is located in Allentown, Pennsylvania, in the residential West End neighborhood, approximately 55 miles north of Philadelphia and 90 miles west of New York City. The College has a student body of 2200 in its traditional undergraduate program and nearly 200 additional adult learners in the Wescoe School's evening, day, and weekend programs. Muhlenberg has a full time faculty of approximately 170 members.

As a liberal arts college, Muhlenberg offers programs in the humanities, the natural and social sciences, the performing arts, and in professional areas such as business, education, pre-medical, pre-theological, and pre-law studies. Flexibility is provided through course options and opportunities for independent study, research and internships, and through a plan for self-designed majors. Striving to keep its curriculum vital and current with the rapidly changing intellectual world, the College is now in the second year of implementing a new general education curriculum focused on enhancing integrative learning and diversity. The excellence and integrity of the Muhlenberg program have been recognized by Phi Beta Kappa and by some 13 additional national honor societies which have established chapters at the College.

Through its Wescoe School of Continuing Education, Muhlenberg also serves adult learners in the Lehigh Valley with a variety of innovative and educational opportunities. Wescoe School's academic programs enable adult learners to complete a degree, earn a certificate or take classes for enrichment. Students may also take classes as part of their preparation for graduate, law or medical school. Bachelor's degrees and certificates are offered in the traditional liberal arts in more than 25 fields of study. Associate's degrees are offered in Business Administration, Accounting, Computer Science, and Psychology.

Muhlenberg's academic program is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the Department of Education of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the New York State Board of Regents. The College is on the approved list of the American Chemical Society. It is also a member of the American Council on Education, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, Association of Governing Boards, the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, the College Entrance Examination Board, the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Universities, the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania, the Lehigh Valley Association of Independent Colleges, the National Collegiate Honors Council, the Council of Independent Colleges, the Pennsylvania Consortium of Liberal Arts Colleges, the Consortium for Faculty Diversity, and the Lehigh Valley Inter-Regional Networking and Connecting Consortium.

The historic ties between the College and the Lutheran Church are a significant part of the College's tradition. The name Muhlenberg College was adopted in 1867 – 19 years after the College was founded – in honor of the patriarch of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg. The sons of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg made important

contributions to the early life of our country. General John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg wintered at Valley Forge with George Washington; Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg was the first speaker of the United States House of Representatives; and Henry Ernst Muhlenberg was one of the most eminent early American scientists and the first president of Franklin College, now Franklin and Marshall College. All of these men were clergymen who symbolized the relationship of the church to the life of the mind and the life of public service. Muhlenberg owes much of the distinctiveness of its character and the quality of its life to the historic and continuing relationship with the church.

## **Recent Developments**

In the years since our reaccreditation in 2006, the College has seen significant changes in the general education program, physical plant, administration, diversity initiatives and assessment activities. After engaging in a comprehensive review of the general education curriculum, the faculty approved the current Academic Program Goals in fall 2011. These goals highlight the skills, knowledge, and habits of mind that each graduate is expected to achieve by fulfilling Muhlenberg's academic requirements. In May 2012 the faculty passed the new general education program that emphasizes Academic Skills, Intellectual Exploration, and Integrative Learning. With support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the new curriculum was implemented in AY 2013-2014 with the incoming class of 2017. In the past decade, the faculty also developed new majors in Jewish Studies, Finance, Film Studies, Neuroscience and Public Health, as well as minors in Africana Studies, Creative Writing, Italian Studies, and Latin American and Caribbean Studies. Since 2006 the College has increased funds supporting faculty and student research and created 55 new tenure track appointments. Chapter 4 discusses faculty composition and support, while Chapter 6 discusses the general education review and revisions to the academic program.

Among recent improvements to Muhlenberg's physical plant are the new Multicultural Center located at 2252 Chew Street and a \$31 million expansion and renovation of science facilities, including a new science building, and renovations of Shankweiler (life sciences) and Trumbower (chemistry, physics, math) Halls. These projects were completed in AY 2006-2007. Other significant building projects include: 1) the completion of 2201 Chew Street Residence Hall and the Village, making a total of six new residence buildings that offer apartment-style housing for upper-class students; 2) the opening of the Rehearsal House, which includes an outdoor amphitheater, to provide rehearsal and performance space for the Departments of Theatre and Dance and Music; 3) the renovation and addition to a building that houses the Hillel House and office and classroom space for the Sociology and Anthropology Department; and 4) the completion of renovations to Seegers Union and the addition of the Ilene and Robert Wood Dining Commons, which included new kitchens, servery, student club space, meeting rooms, performance space, and expansion of the Career Center, Academic Resource Center, and Disability Services Office. A comprehensive renovation of East Hall, Muhlenberg's oldest residence hall and a model of Collegiate Gothic architecture, was recently completed. Chapter 2 discusses campus planning and resources.

Since 2006, the College has also welcomed several new members to the President's Senior Staff. Karen Green, Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, was appointed in 2006 and John Ramsay, Provost, took over leadership of Academic Affairs in 2009. More recently,

Rebekkah Brown '99 joined the College as Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations and The Rev. Callista Isabelle was appointed College Chaplain. On December 4, 2014, the Board unanimously appointed John I. Williams, Jr. as the 12th President of Muhlenberg College, whose term commenced on July 1, 2015. President Williams succeeds Peyton "Randy" Helm, who served as president 2003 – 2015. Several new administrative positions were created and filled in 2015: Allan Chen was hired as the College's first Chief Information Officer and Mike Bruckner (previously Vice President for Public Relations) was named Vice President for External Affairs and Community Relations. The College is also currently seeking to appoint a new Vice President of Communications, which replaces the Public Relations office. Chapter 3 discusses administrative structure and governance.

The significant progress made by the College in recent years has laid the groundwork for the challenges and opportunities on the horizon. The College completed implementation of its current strategic plan, Momentum, in AY 2014-15, and the new president is expected to initiate a new strategic planning process. Muhlenberg is currently seeking to raise \$11 million in endowment gifts for financial aid and educational programs as a bridge between its successful Talents campaign (completed in 2010 with \$110.4 million raised) and an anticipated new campaign in support of the next strategic plan. Chapter 2 discusses strategic planning and advancement efforts.

The College also completed a new Strategic Diversity Plan in order to enhance its already strong sense of community while developing greater diversity among its faculty, students, and staff. The goal-driven plan includes specific strategies to recruit and retain diverse students, faculty, and staff which will be assessed on a regular basis to track progress on the plan. These initiatives will build on the strong tradition of religious diversity within its community and provide greater opportunities for dialogue and understanding truly unique among church-related institutions. Chapters 2, 7, and 8 discuss diversity planning and initiatives.

In the past five years there has clearly been an increase in the quality, quantity, communication and support of assessment activity at the College, both to evaluate and improve institutional effectiveness and to measure and support student learning. Assessment results have informed strategic planning, institutional and program curricular change, student support, and priorities for resource allocation. While all chapters highlight assessment results, Chapters 2, 6, 7, and 8 discuss assessment activities, communication, and support.

### **The Self-Study**

In the fall 2013, President Helm appointed a Steering Committee to lead the Middle States self-study process. The committee is co-chaired by the Dean of Institutional Assessment and Academic Planning and a Professor of Political Science, both of whom served on the 2006 Self-Study Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is made up of two Committee Co-chairs, co-chairs of the seven working groups and the Executive Assistant to the President, who serves as the Process Assistant. A faculty member and an administrator are paired as co-chairs for each of the working groups. In order to make sure there is an effective flow of information between individuals involved in institutional decision-making and/or faculty governance, the Steering Committee includes members of the President's Senior Staff, of the Provost Senior Staff, and

faculty who have or currently hold leadership positions as department chairs or committee chairs. Particular attention was paid to having faculty from across the divisions and to having faculty with expertise on assessment, personnel issues, and general education revision. To facilitate college-wide engagement in the self-study process, the Steering Committee consulted regularly with two liaison groups – one comprised of Trustees and one representing the student body. The Chair of the Board of Trustees appointed members to the Middle States Trustee liaison group composed of six members, including the Board Chair. The student liaison group includes the former Student Government President and five other students nominated by staff in Student Affairs and in Academic Affairs and by faculty members. See Appendix A for the membership of the Steering Committee, Working Groups, Trustee Liaison Group, and Student Liaison Group.

In order to support a process that would be most useful to the current and future needs of the institution, the Steering Committee chose the Comprehensive Report as the model for our Self-Study and combined the 14 Standards of Excellence into eight chapters that align with our institutional structure and culture.

Chapter 1	Mission, Goals, and Integrity	Standards 1 & 6
Chapter 2	Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal	Standards 2 & 3
Chapter 3	Leadership, Governance, and Administration	Standards 4 & 5
Chapter 4	Faculty	Standard 10
Chapter 5	Admissions and Financial Aid	Standard 8
Chapter 6	The Muhlenberg Curriculum	Standards 11, 12, & 13
Chapter 7	Student Support Services and Campus Life	Standard 9
Chapter 8	Institutional Assessment and Student Learning Assessment	Standards 7 & 14

### **Goals of the Self-Study**

The Self-Study and supporting documents that Muhlenberg College submits to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) will show that we are in compliance with the fourteen Standards of Excellence and their fundamental elements (see Appendix B for the Fundamental Elements Roadmap). The results of our data collection and analysis will also inform College-wide assessment and planning and fulfill other related goals. As expressed in the Self-Study design, the process of engaging in an institution-wide examination and reflection aimed to achieve the following goals:

- 1) to take stock of who we are as an institution, to prepare for a presidential transition, to strengthen institutional identity and sense of community, and plan for the future;
- 2) to identify, consistent with our mission, strengths and weaknesses and to develop recommendations to support institutional improvement and effectiveness;
- 3) to evaluate assessment processes across the institution and to share best practices in the design of assessment activities and the use of findings to improve effectiveness and to support student learning;

4) to provide a catalyst for the initial assessment of the recently implemented general education curriculum and

5) to demonstrate compliance with the MSCHE Standards.

### **Self-Study Conclusions**

The Self-Study chapters outline existing institutional strengths and challenges related to resources, admissions and financial aid, curriculum, student support, and diversity. Based on careful review of the working group reports, this self-study outlines four recommendations which the College will address within the next five years:

1) We recommend a review of the Board of Observers' process. We also encourage the College to more effectively communicate how academic and administrative department reviews inform institutional planning and resource allocation.

2) We recommend a comprehensive review of student support services to insure that adequate resources continue to be targeted to these areas to support the success of all members of our increasingly diverse student population.

3) We recommend that the College engage in a process of broad and inclusive planning to develop a Campus Master Plan to support College strategic initiatives that includes all aspects of current and future facilities and usage with continued attention to present and future teaching, learning, and work needs.

4) We recommend that the College track the allocation of resources to ensure course offerings and staffing for signature elements of the new curriculum (e.g., clusters, CUE's) are sustainable without sacrificing commitment to major and minor programs, as well as elements of the curriculum that were maintained (e.g., FYS).