



**CHE Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-2680. Tel: 267-284-5000. Fax: 215-662-5501  
www.msche.org

November 21, 2014

Dr. Troy VanAken  
President  
Thiel College  
75 College Avenue  
Greenville, PA 16125

Dear Dr. VanAken:

At its session on November 20, 2014, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education acted:

To accept the monitoring report and to note the visit by the Commission's representatives. To warn the institution that its accreditation may be in jeopardy because of insufficient evidence that the institution is currently in compliance with Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning). To note that the institution remains accredited while on warning. To request a monitoring report, due September 1, 2015, documenting evidence that the institution has achieved and can sustain ongoing compliance with Standard 14. To request that the monitoring report include, but not be limited to, documented evidence of an organized and sustained assessment process, in all programs including general education, that is used to improve student learning, with evidence that assessment information is used in budgeting, planning, and resource allocation (Standards 14). A small team visit will follow submission of the monitoring report. To direct a prompt Commission liaison guidance visit to discuss Commission expectations. The due date for the next evaluation visit will be set when accreditation is reaffirmed.

Enclosed for your information is a copy of the Statement of Accreditation Status for your institution. The Statement of Accreditation Status (SAS) provides important basic information about the institution and its affiliation with the Commission, and it is made available to the public in the Directory of Members and Candidates on the Commission's website at [www.msche.org](http://www.msche.org). Accreditation applies to the institution as detailed in the SAS; institutional information is derived from data provided by the institution through annual reporting and from Commission actions. If any of the institutional information is incorrect, please contact the Commission as soon as possible.

A Public Disclosure Statement has also been developed, consistent with the Commission's policy on *Public Communication in the Accrediting Process*. The statement provides an explanation of the nature of the institutional accreditation action that has been taken by the Commission. The Public Disclosure Statement will accompany the institution's Statement of Accreditation Status and will be made available on the Middle States Commission on Higher Education web site. Your institution is invited to submit an official statement. The statement may be linked to the PDS from your institution's website or the Commission may include a web reference to your institution's website at the Commission's direction.

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Please check to ensure that published references to your institution's accredited status (catalog, other publications, web page) include the full name, address, and telephone number of the accrediting agency. Further guidance is provided in the Commission's policy statement *Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status*. If the action for your institution includes preparation of a progress report, monitoring report or supplemental report, please see our policy statement on *Follow-up Reports and Visits*. Both policies can be obtained from our website.

Please be assured of the continuing interest of the Commission on Higher Education in the well-being of Thiel College. If any further clarification is needed regarding the SAS or other items in this letter, please feel free to contact Dr. Sean A. McKittrick, Vice President.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George A. Pruitt". The signature is stylized and cursive.

George A. Pruitt, Ph.D.  
Chair



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## STATEMENT OF ACCREDITATION STATUS

**THIEL COLLEGE**  
75 College Avenue  
Greenville, PA 16125  
Phone: (724) 589-2000; Fax: (724) 589-2860  
[www.thiel.edu](http://www.thiel.edu)

**Chief Executive Officer:** Dr. Troy VanAken, President

### INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION

**Enrollment (Headcount):** 1100 Undergraduate  
**Control:** Private (Non-Profit)  
**Affiliation:** Religious- Evangelical Lutheran Church  
**Carnegie Classification:** Baccalaureate - Diverse Fields  
**Approved Degree Levels:** Associate's, Bachelor's;  
**Distance Education Programs:** Not Approved  
**Accreditors Recognized by U.S. Secretary of Education:** n/a

### Instructional Locations

**Branch Campuses:** None  
**Additional Locations:** None  
**Other Instructional Sites:** None

### ACCREDITATION INFORMATION

**Status:** Member since 1922  
**Last Reaffirmed:** November 21, 2013

### Most Recent Commission Action:

November 20, 2014: To accept the monitoring report and to note the visit by the Commission's representatives. To warn the institution that its accreditation may be in jeopardy because of insufficient evidence that the institution is currently in compliance with Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning). To note that the institution remains accredited while on warning. To request a monitoring report, due September 1, 2015, documenting evidence that the institution has achieved and can sustain ongoing compliance with Standard 14. To request that the

monitoring report include, but not be limited to, documented evidence of an organized and sustained assessment process, in all programs including general education, that is used to improve student learning, with evidence that assessment information is used in budgeting, planning, and resource allocation (Standards 14). A small team visit will follow submission of the monitoring report To direct a prompt Commission liaison guidance visit to discuss Commission expectations. The due date for the next evaluation visit will be set when accreditation is reaffirmed.

**Brief History Since Last Comprehensive Evaluation:**

- November 21, 2013: To accept the Periodic Review Report and to reaffirm accreditation. To request a monitoring report, due September 1, 2014, documenting further implementation of an organized and sustained assessment process, including the use of direct measures, to improve student learning and overall institutional effectiveness, with evidence that assessment information is used in budgeting and planning (Standards 7 and 14). A small team visit will follow submission of the report. To direct a prompt Commission liaison visit to discuss Commission expectations. The next evaluation visit is scheduled for 2017-2018.
- March 6, 2014: To note the visit by the Commission's representative. To remind the institution that a monitoring report is due September 1, 2014, documenting further implementation of an organized and sustained assessment process, including the use of direct measures, to improve student learning and overall institutional effectiveness, with evidence that assessment information is used in budgeting and planning (Standards 7 and 14). A small team visit will follow submission of the report. To direct a prompt Commission liaison visit to discuss Commission expectations. The next evaluation visit is scheduled for 2017-2018.

**Next Self-Study Evaluation:** n/a

**Next Periodic Review Report:** n/a

**Date Printed:** November 21, 2014

**DEFINITIONS**

**Branch Campus** - A location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. The location is independent if the location: offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential; has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

**Additional Location** - A location, other than a branch campus, that is geographically apart from the main campus and at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program. ANYA ("Approved but Not Yet Active") indicates that the location is included within the scope of accreditation but has not yet begun to offer

courses. This designation is removed after the Commission receives notification that courses have begun at this location.

**Other Instructional Sites** - A location, other than a branch campus or additional location, at which the institution offers one or more courses for credit.

**Distance Education Programs** - Fully Approved, Approved (one program approved) or Not Approved indicates whether or not the institution has been approved to offer diploma/certificate/degree programs via distance education (programs for which students could meet 50% or more of the requirements of the program by taking distance education courses). Per the Commission's Substantive Change policy, Commission approval of the first two Distance Education programs is required to be "Fully Approved." If only one program is approved by the Commission, the specific name of the program will be listed in parentheses after "Approved."

## EXPLANATION OF COMMISSION ACTIONS

An institution's accreditation continues unless it is explicitly withdrawn or the institution voluntarily allows its accreditation to lapse. In addition to reviewing the institution's accreditation status at least every 5 years, the Commission takes actions to approve substantive changes (such as a new degree or certificate level, opening or closing of a geographical site, or a change of ownership) or when other events occur that require review for continued compliance.

Any type of report or visit required by the Commission is reviewed and voted on by the Commission. Reports submitted for candidacy, self-study evaluation, periodic review or follow-up may be accepted, acknowledged, or rejected.

The Commission "Accepts" a report when its quality, thoroughness, and clarity are sufficient to respond to all of the Commission's concerns, without requiring additional information in order to assess the institution's status.

The Commission "Documents receipt of" a letter or report when it addresses the Commission's concerns only partially because the letter or report had limited institutional responses to requested information, did not present evidence and analysis conducive to Commission review, were of insufficient quality, or necessitated extraordinary effort by the Commission's representatives and staff performing the review. Relevant reasons for not accepting the letter or report are noted in the action. The Commission may or may not require additional information in order to assess the institution's status.

The Commission "Rejects" a letter or report when its quality or substance are insufficient to respond appropriately to the Commission's concerns. The Commission requires the institution to resubmit the report and may request a visit at its discretion. These terms may be used for any action (reaffirm, postpone, warn, etc.).

### Types of Follow-Up Reports:

**Accreditation Readiness Report (ARR):** The institution prepares an Initial Accreditation Readiness Report during the application phase and continually updates it throughout the candidacy process. It is for use both by the institution and the Commission to present and summarize documented evidence and analysis of the institution's current or potential compliance with the Commission's accreditation standards.

**Progress Report:** The Commission needs assurance that the institution is carrying out activities that were planned or were being implemented at the time of a report or on-site visit.

**Monitoring Report:** There is a potential for the institution to become non-compliant with MSCHE standards; issues are more complex or more numerous; or issues require a substantive, detailed report. A visit may or may not be required. Monitoring reports are required for non-compliance actions.

**Supplemental Information Report:** This report is intended only to allow the institution to provide further information, not to give the institution time to formulate plans or initiate remedial action. This report is required when a decision is postponed. The Commission may request a supplemental information report at any time during the accreditation cycle.

#### **Commendations:**

Periodically, the Commission may include commendations to the institution within the action language. There are three commendations. More than one commendation may be given at the same time:

To commend the institution for the quality of the [Self-Study or PRR] report. The document itself was notably well-written, honest, insightful, and/or useful.

To commend the institution for the quality of its [Self-Study or PRR] process. The Self-Study process was notably inclusive.

To recognize the institution's progress to date. This is recognition for institutions that had serious challenges or problems but have made significant progress.

#### **Affirming Actions**

**Grant Candidate for Accreditation Status:** This is a pre-accreditation status following a specified process for application and institutional self-study. For details about the application process, see the MSCHE publication, *Becoming Accredited*. The U.S. Department of Education labels Candidacy as "Pre-accreditation" and defines it as the status of public recognition that an accrediting agency grants to an institution or program for a limited period of time that signifies the agency has determined that the institution or program is progressing toward accreditation but is not assured of accreditation) before the expiration of that limited period of time. Upon a grant of candidate for accreditation status, the institution may be asked to submit additional Accreditation Readiness Reports until it is ready to initiate self study.

**Grant Accreditation:** The Commission has acted to grant accreditation to a Candidate institution and does not require the submission of a written report prior to the next scheduled accreditation review in five years.

**Grant Accreditation and request a Progress Report or Monitoring Report:** The Commission has acted to grant accreditation to a Candidate institution but requires the submission of a written report prior to the next scheduled accreditation review to ensure that the institution is carrying out activities that were planned or were being implemented at the time of the report or on-site visit.

**Reaffirm Accreditation via Self Study or Periodic Review Report:** The Commission has acted to reaffirm accreditation and does not require the submission of a written report prior to the next scheduled accreditation review in five years. The action language may include recommendations to be addressed in the next Periodic Review Report or Self Study. Suggestions for improvement are given, but no written follow-up reporting is needed for compliance.

**Reaffirm Accreditation via Self Study or Periodic Review Report and request a Progress Report or Monitoring Report:** The Commission has acted to reaffirm accreditation but requires the submission of a written report prior to the next scheduled accreditation review to ensure that the institution is carrying out activities that were planned or were being implemented at the time of the report or on-site visit.

#### **Administrative Actions**

**Continue Accreditation:** A delay of up to one year may be granted to ensure a current and accurate representation of the institution or in the event of circumstances beyond the institution's control (natural disaster, U.S. State Department travel warnings, etc.). The institution maintains its status with the Commission during this period.

### **Procedural Actions**

**Defer a decision on initial accreditation:** The Candidate institution shows promise but the evaluation team has identified issues of concern and recommends that the institution be given a specified time period to address those concerns. Institutions may not stay in candidacy more than 5 years.

**Postpone a decision on (reaffirmation of) accreditation:** The Commission has determined that there is insufficient information to substantiate institutional compliance with one or more standards. The Commission requests a supplemental information report.

**Voluntary Lapse of Accreditation:** The institution has allowed its accreditation to lapse by not completing required obligations. The institution is no longer a member of the Commission upon the determined date that accreditation will cease.

### **Non-Compliance Actions**

**Warning:** A Warning indicates that an institution has been determined by the Commission not to meet one or more standards for accreditation. A follow-up report, called a monitoring report, is required to demonstrate that the institution has made appropriate improvements to bring itself into compliance.

**Probation:** Probation indicates that an institution has been determined by the Commission not to meet one or more standards for accreditation and is an indication of a serious concern on the part of the Commission regarding the level and/or scope of non-compliance issues related to the standards. The Commission will place an institution on Probation if the Commission is concerned about one or more of the following:

1. the adequacy of the education provided by the institution;
2. the institution's capacity to make appropriate improvements in a timely fashion; or
3. the institution's capacity to sustain itself in the long term.

Probation is often, but need not always be, preceded by an action of Warning or Postponement. If the Commission had previously postponed a decision or placed the institution on Warning, the Commission may place the institution on Probation if it determines that the institution has failed to address satisfactorily the Commission's concerns in the prior action of postponement or warning regarding compliance with Commission standards. This action is accompanied by a request for a monitoring report, and a special visit follows. Probation may, but need not always, precede an action of Show Cause.

By federal regulation, the Commission must take immediate action to withdraw accreditation if an institution is out of compliance with accreditation standards for two years, unless the time is extended for good cause.

**Show Cause:** An institution is asked to demonstrate why its accreditation should not be withdrawn. A written report from the institution (including a teach out plan) and a follow-up team visit are required. The institution has the opportunity to appear before the Commission when the Commission meets to consider the institution's Show Cause status. Show Cause may occur during or at the end of the two-year Probation period, or at any time the Commission determines that an institution must demonstrate why its accreditation should not be withdrawn (i.e. Probation is not a necessary precursor to Show Cause).

### **Adverse Actions**

**Withdrawal of Accreditation:** An institution's candidate or accredited status is withdrawn and with it, membership in the association. If the institution appeals this action, its accreditation remains in effect until the appeal is completed.

**Denial of Accreditation:** An institution is denied initial accreditation because it does not meet the Commission's requirements of affiliation or accreditation standards during the period allowed for candidacy. If the institution appeals this action, its candidacy remains in effect until the appeal is completed.

**Appeal:** The withdrawal or denial of candidacy or accreditation may be appealed. Institutions remain accredited (or candidates for accreditation) during the period of the appeal.

Other actions are described in the Commission policy, "Range of Commission Actions on Accreditation."





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## **Public Disclosure Statement**

Thiel College

November 20, 2014

By the Middle States Commission on Higher Education

This statement has been developed for use in responding to public inquiries, consistent with the Commission's policies on Public Communication in the Accrediting Process, Range of Commission Actions on Accreditation, and Standardized Language for Commission Actions on Accreditation. It should be read in conjunction with the *Statement of Accreditation Status* for Thiel College, a copy of which is attached. The policies listed above explain what information the Commission makes public regarding its member institutions and what information remains confidential, describe the various accreditation actions the Commission can take, and define the terms used in the Commission's actions.

Thiel College, a private, non-profit institution affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church, is located in Greenville, Pennsylvania. It has been accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education since 1922. Thiel College offers Associate's and Bachelor's degrees. A summary of the most recent Commission actions relative to the institution's accreditation follows.

### **Current Accreditation Status**

On November 20, 2014, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education acted to accept the institution's monitoring report and to note the visit by the Commission's representatives. The Commission further acted to warn the institution that its accreditation may be in jeopardy because of insufficient evidence that the institution is currently in compliance with Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning). The full text of the Commission's action is provided below. The Commission's accreditation standards are available online at <http://www.msche.org/publications/CHX-2011-WEB.pdf>.

***Thiel College remains accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education while on warning.***

The Commission places an institution on warning when, in the Commission's judgment, the institution is not in compliance with one or more Commission accreditation standards. A follow-up report, called a monitoring report, is required to demonstrate that the institution has made appropriate improvements to bring itself into compliance.

### **Summary of Recent Commission Actions**

Five years after its accreditation has been reaffirmed by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, an institution is required to submit to the Commission a Periodic Review Report. The PRR is a retrospective, current, and prospective analysis of the institution. As an essential phase of the accreditation cycle, the PRR should demonstrate that the institution meets the standards by which the Commission reaffirms or denies accreditation. Thiel College submitted its PRR to the Commission during Spring 2013. The PRR was subsequently reviewed by the Commission's PRR readers and by the Committee on Periodic Review Reports.

On November 20, 2014, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education acted as follows:

To accept the institution's monitoring report and to note the visit by the Commission's representatives. To warn the institution that its accreditation may be in jeopardy because of insufficient evidence that the institution is currently in compliance with Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning). To note that the institution remains accredited while on warning. To request a monitoring report, due September 1, 2015, documenting evidence that the institution has achieved and can sustain ongoing compliance with Standard 14. To request that the monitoring report include, but not be limited to, documented evidence of an organized and sustained assessment process, in all programs including general education, and is used to improve student learning, with evidence that assessment information is used in budgeting and planning (Standards 14). A small team visit will follow submission of the monitoring report. To direct a prompt Commission liaison guidance visit to discuss Commission expectations. The due date for the next evaluation visit will be set when accreditation is reaffirmed.

On March 6, 2014, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education acted as follows:

To note the visit by the Commission's representative. To remind the institution that a monitoring report is due September 1, 2014, documenting further implementation of an organized and sustained assessment process, including the use of direct measures, to improve student learning and overall institutional effectiveness, with evidence that assessment information is used in budgeting and planning (Standards 7 and 14). A small team visit will follow submission of the report. To direct a prompt Commission liaison visit to discuss Commission expectations. The next evaluation visit is scheduled for 2017-2018.

On November 21, 2013, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education acted as follows:

To accept the Periodic Review Report and to reaffirm accreditation. To request a monitoring report, due September 1, 2014, documenting further implementation of an organized and sustained assessment process, including the use of direct measures, to improve student learning and overall institutional effectiveness, with evidence that assessment information is used in budgeting and planning (Standards 7 and 14). A small team visit will follow submission of the report. To direct a prompt Commission liaison visit to discuss Commission expectations. The next evaluation visit is scheduled for 2017-2018.

## **Current Status and Expected Activities**

*Thiel College remains accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education while on probation.*

Following submission of a monitoring report on September 1, 2015, the Commission will conduct a small team visit to assess the institution's compliance with the Commission's standards. Following the on-site visit, a report by the visiting team will be completed. The monitoring report, the small team report and the institutional response to the small team report will be considered by the Committee on Follow-Up Activities, and then by the Commission .

Following review by the Committee on Follow-up Activities, the Commission will take further action, in accordance with the Commission's policy, *Range of Commission Actions on Accreditation* (available at <http://www.msche.org/documents/RangeofCommissionActions103012.pdf> . If, based on the monitoring report and small team report, the Commission determines that Thiel College has made appropriate progress in addressing the cited concerns, the Commission may act to remove the warning and reaffirm accreditation. If the Commission determines that progress sufficient to demonstrate compliance with its accreditation standards has not been made, the Commission may take further action as allowed under the *Range of Commission Actions on Accreditation*.

## **For More Information**

The following resources provide additional information that may be helpful in understanding the Commission's actions and Thiel College's accreditation status:

*Statement of Accreditation Status for Thiel College* ([http://www.msche.org/institutions\\_directory.asp](http://www.msche.org/institutions_directory.asp)) provides factual information about Thiel College and the full text of the Commission's recent actions regarding the institution.

*Media Backgrounder* (<http://www.msche.org/documents/MediaBackgrounder2014.pdf> ) answers questions about accreditation such as "What is accreditation?" and "What is the Middle States Commission on Higher Education?"

*Informing the Public about Accreditation* ([www.chea.org/public\\_info/index.asp](http://www.chea.org/public_info/index.asp)), published by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, provides additional information on the nature and value of accreditation.