

March 26, 2014

Middle States Commission on Higher Education  
3624 Market Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Dear Commissioners:

Academic libraries play an essential role in supporting the student learning and research missions of our colleges and universities. Libraries, librarians, and in particular the information literacy programs developed and implemented by those librarians, are key partners in higher education; they are especially effective when incorporated into core curricula. We write today, on behalf of all of our member institutions and librarians, to express concerns about the proposed revisions to the Middle States *Characteristics of Excellence In Higher Education*, specifically, the omission of any reference to information literacy in the entire document.

Thanks to the provisions of the current *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*, academic librarians have made great strides in the process of integrating information literacy into the curriculum, and institutions have come to view their libraries as important, mission-critical resources for their entire communities. In order to ensure that these advances are maintained and that our institutions continue to support them, we ask that the Middle States Commission on Higher Education consider adding language that would recognize the importance of information literacy while still allowing the *Characteristics of Excellence* to realize the desired reduction in overall text.

For example:

- 1) Standard Five, Criterion Three currently lists eight examples for improving educational effectiveness. We recommend adding:
  - Achieving collaboration between librarians and faculty to integrate information literacy education into the curriculum; and
  - Integrating information literacy education into the curriculum to improve student research.

The Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL) recently revised *Standards for Libraries* specifically identifies the "recognition of information literacy as the catalyst for the library's educational role." We believe it would be beneficial to our region's academic librarians to have the *Characteristics of Excellence* in alignment with ACRL's *Standards*. To that end, we recommend that MSCHE:

- 2) Specifically name and include academic libraries, along with other learning resources, in Standard III: Student Learning Opportunities, and

- 3) Specifically include information literacy in the list of essential skills provided in Standard III, as it is related to, but separate and distinct from, the other skills listed there, such as critical analysis, communication, and technological competency.

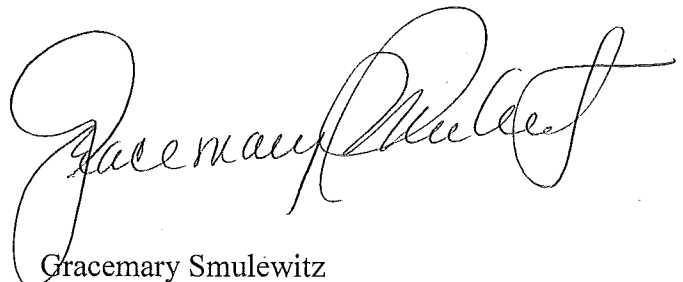
Finally, please consider that today's business world expects our graduates to be fully information literate.<sup>1</sup> In our current economy, where the employment arena is so competitive, it is vital that they learn and demonstrate strong information literacy skills in order to succeed in the workplace.

Ensuring student learning and success is a fundamental mission of libraries in higher education. We believe these few additions to the proposed *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education* will help to ensure that academic libraries continue to meet this need.

We thank you for your continued support.



Taras Pavlovsky  
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the consortium of academic libraries of New  
Jersey



Gracemary Smulewitz  
President, NJLA CUS/ACRL-NJ

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<sup>1</sup> See: Takes More than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success: An Online Survey among Employers Conducted On Behalf Of the Association Of American Colleges And Universities By Hart Research Associates, April 10, 2013 (pg. 8) [http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/2013\\_EmployerSurvey.pdf](http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/2013_EmployerSurvey.pdf)