CBFA 2003 Conference: PANEL SESSION
Best Practices in Program Quality Improvement: Pursuing Professional Accreditation

Participants

Ken Armstrong, Anderson University
Randy Nutter, Geneva College
Sam Dunn, Northwest Nazarene University
Becky Havens, Point Loma Nazarene University
Larry Strand, Biola University
Doug Viehland, Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs

Session Overview

As Christian business faculty and administrators, we desire to use our gifts, talents, and resources to their fullest capacity for Christ, and to have the greatest impact on Christian students, in order to expand the Kingdom of God. To do this, it is critical to provide Christian business students with the highest quality programs we can possibly develop and sustain. Christian business students who are excellently trained in high quality business theory and practice, will be able to translate their competence in business – and their Christian witness – to make a greater impact for Christ in the business world, than they could if they took low quality skills and strong faith into their business careers.

In addition, universities facing reaffirmation of accreditation by their regional associations find that the assessment of student learning has become a significant requirement in the self-study process. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) changed its review process to include a shorter capacity audit and a longer effectiveness audit. The effectiveness audit includes institutional effectiveness, of which a primary component is educational effectiveness and student learning outcomes assessment. Institutions of higher education that cannot demonstrate significant work in the use of evidence to determine students' progress on learning objectives, will be put on probation, or worse – see their accreditation revoked.

- **Introduction & Purpose of Session**

  The purpose of this session is to discuss best practices in the management, development and assessment of programs of excellence in Christian business education, and to understand how the pursuit of voluntary specialized professional accreditation can lead to program quality improvement, the use of external standards to assess whether the program is of high quality, and the development of evidence to document excellence in student learning outcomes to support reaffirmation of regional accreditation.

  The method used in this session will be a panel of experts on the attainment of voluntary business professional accreditation. Each panel member will discuss a

different aspect of business accreditation – the benefits, process, standards, assessment, and impact. This panel of university administrators has experience leading their institutions in the pursuit of accreditation by the Association of Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), and each has served in leadership roles in the ACBSP organization as well. Two have experience as President of the Board of Commissioners; two have experience as commissioners; three have experience as Board of Directors members; and three have experience in regional leadership, either as President or President-Elect.

- **Mission of ACBSP**

  The mission of ACBSP is to be the leading specialized accreditation association for business education to support, celebrate, and reward teaching excellence.

- **Context – Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP)**

  ACBSP is not the only professional business accreditation organization. We are here to simply explain how ACBSP helped each of our institutions achieve greater quality in our business programs, but we encourage you to talk with other CBFA members about their experience with other professional accreditation organizations.

- **Recognized by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)**

  ACBSP is currently one of two specialized business professional accreditation associations that are recognized by CHEA, the organization that represents the United States' colleges and universities on all issues, policies and debates regarding accreditation.

  Reference: www.chea.org/Directories/special.cfm

- **Session Highlights and Outcomes**

  Highlights of the session will be to discuss a variety of topics, including the benefits, process, and standards of professional accreditation. Outcomes of the session will be an understanding gained regarding these topics, plus practical tools regarding outcomes assessment of student learning, and the benefit of personal experiences and contact with experts on professional accreditation. In addition, the chance to discuss what constitutes quality in business education, learn about what other schools consider quality programs, and share with other Christian business faculty who can provide expertise and mentoring, provides external validation and a chance to reflect about each of our programs and what we can do to improve them.

- **Core Values**

  ACBSP standards and criteria draw heavily from the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Education Criteria and the Missouri Quality Award. Core values and concepts are the foundation for developing and integrating all requirements.

  - Learning-centered education – *focus on learning outcomes*
  - Leadership – *clear vision and strategies for achieving excellence*
  - Continuous improvement and organizational learning – *regular cycles of planning, execution and evaluation for all processes and systems*
  - Faculty and staff participation and development – *investment in faculty and staff development and participation in continuous quality improvement systems*
  - Partnership development – *building internal and external partnerships*
  - Design quality – *educational programs include clear learning objectives and a means to gauge student progress*
  - Management by fact – *the measurement and analysis of data systems is critical to sound planning and improvement*
  - Long-range view – *commitment to long-term change necessary to achieve quality and an assessment program focused on student learning*
  - Public responsibility and citizenship – *serve as role model and give back to community*
  - Fast response – *fast and flexible response to the needs of students and stakeholders*
  - Results orientation – *focus on results that reflect and balance the needs and interests of students and stakeholders*

- **Principles of Accreditation**

  ACBSP is committed to mission-based accreditation, which serves the dual role of promoting accountability and promoting continuous academic improvements, and is governed by the following important principles.

  1. Linking criteria and standards to institutional/program mission.
  2. Allowing flexibility in defining quality.
  3. Linking the assessment process to outcomes instead of input measures.
  4. Creating an environment that supports innovation and experimentation.
  5. Encouraging broad consultation in development of standards.
  6. Emphasizing student assessment in accreditation.
  7. Linking accreditation with institutional planning.
  8. Coordinating accreditation visits with regional accreditors to reduce cost and duplication.
  9. Eliminating excessive and irrelevant data requests.
  10. Developing a minimal baseline database.
  11. Decreasing the costs of accreditation.
  12. Lengthening the time cycle between reviews.

13. Maintaining and strengthening confidentiality in reporting.
14. Increasing the consistency of comments and recommendations from different reviewers at different institutions.
15. Separating accreditation from advocacy for more resources.
16. Recognizing the broader institutional goals.
17. Stating accreditation requirements more clearly.
18. Assuring that accreditation does not dictate program curriculum.
19. Assuring a continual review process of all standards/criteria.
20. Compressing the time-line from initiation of any self-study through conclusion.

The Panel – Best Practices in Business Program Quality Improvement: Pursuing Professional Accreditation

1. The Benefits of Pursuing Professional Business Accreditation

Dr. Ken Armstrong – Dean, Falls School of Business, Anderson University
Former Chair, Four-Year Commission & Board of Directors, ACBSP
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- **Introduction**

  Dr. Armstrong will discuss the benefits of seeking professional accreditation, and share his experiences of pursuing and attaining accreditation. He will answer the "why" question – why would any business school want to subject themselves to the external scrutiny of voluntary professional accreditation?

  Anderson University made a decision 14 years ago to pursue second level accreditation for its business program. One of the major reasons for this is that the business school had "come of age" so to speak. The University was finally ready to admit that the business program was and should be more than a cash cow…that it were an integral part of the University programming, and that the role in the future would be an expanded one. Seeking accreditation allowed business to be viewed internally as one of the "professional programs" on the campus. It settled the issue of legitimacy and installed the business program as one of the quality programs on campus. That's the short story…now let's look at the reasons and benefits of professional accreditation.

- **Why pursue professional accreditation?**

  - Opens collective discussion around what goals and objectives should be
  - Encourages department/school to replace subjective evaluation of quality with more objective comparative data from other schools and accreditation standards
  - Validates work of department/school internally

- Provides an objective, third-party evaluation for university administrators in areas relating to faculty quality, financial resources, curriculum and facilities
- Provides an external measure of quality for consumers

- **Benefits of professional accreditation**

  - ***Curriculum ownership***: One of the major positive results of the process of accreditation is that faculty take ownership of the totality of the curriculum, especially CORE classes, rather than just being concerned with what happens in their own classes

  - ***Internal recognition***: Colleagues across the university are more aware and respectful of the work of the business department. It cements the legitimacy of business as a professional program that is valued as an important contributor to the future of the institution

  - ***Business Education Contribution***: An accrediting association provides the opportunity to be and active contributor to an organization committed to improving business education throughout the world

  - ***Marketing***: This is a very real benefit of accreditation. In the competitive marketplace of today, accreditation provides concrete benefits in the recruiting of both graduate and undergraduate students.

  - ***Outcomes assessment***: Maybe not our favorite word, but professional accreditation requirements move us into a leadership role within the university in the area of assessment.

  - ***Resourcing***: Accreditation provides objective information and standards that can help administrators determine the level of commitment necessary to provide a top quality business program

  - ***Professional Development***: Faculty are given opportunities to become program evaluators. There are also opportunities for professional presentations dealing with the art and science of teaching. These opportunities exist at both the national and regional level.

  - ***Morale***: There is a very real positive morale affect from both the striving and the obtaining of professional accreditation. A feeling that we have achieved this recognized standard of excellence is one that in our universities, often characterized by isolation from the greater academy, can be a source of commitment and high morale.

  - ***Excellence***: There is a perception today that bigger is automatically better when in comes to academic opportunity in higher education. If we do not

actively combat this perception, Christian parents are faced with a disheartening choice: Should I choose a "Christian education" or should I choose the "best education" for my son or daughter? Professional accreditation is one way to actively commit to excellence that is judged objectively by colleagues in the academy, and can legitimately be used to help parents struggling with the above question.

- **Experiences**

  - Anderson University

    In 1993, Anderson University became the first CCCU school to receive professional accreditation from the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs. The process was grueling, the discussions intense among our faculty as we struggled with the costs vs. the benefits of accreditation. However, the benefits have been real. We have enjoyed all of the benefits mentioned above. However, maybe the most important results are not listed above. Accreditation of our undergraduate program was the first step in our progress that has led to a fully accredited MBA program with over 200 students enrolled and the first DBA program in a CCCU school. Could we have done this without accreditation? I think I would honestly say the answer is no! For us, accreditation did two primary things in addition to what is mentioned above. (1) It changed our internal attitude toward one of change and action rather than inaction, and (2) it showed to our administrative leadership that we were serious about quality and about becoming the best we could be. These have been the two primary stepping stones that have allowed us to continue to grow, to dream and to flourish.

  - Chair of Board of Commissioners, ACBSP

    One of the primary reasons that Anderson University is a member of the particular accrediting association that we are is that the approach of ACBSP is to work with schools that are genuinely interested in improving. The goal is always to move schools closer to accreditation rather than to see how many can be kept outside of the process. Some think that means that standards should be so flexible that anyone can become accredited based on their own testimony that "they really are a great school." I firmly oppose that. Accreditation, if it is to be meaningful, should cost something…but I applaud the association for the efforts to work with institutions to evaluate the cost and find ways of covering those costs so that the process results in a positive outcome for the college/university. I have witnessed this approach over and over in my years on the baccalaureate/graduate degree commission and on the board of directors. I would encourage anyone who has an interest in improving the education your business students are receiving by saying that there are those ready to

help you in that pursuit. Probably none of us are as good as we think we are, as we want to be or as we could be; but together we can all be better and can improve dramatically the quality of business education our students receive.

2. The Process of Achieving Accreditation

Dr. Randy Nutter – Chair, Department of Business, Geneva College
Chair, Four-Year Board of Commissioners and Member, Board of Directors, ACBSP
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- **Introduction**

  Dr. Nutter will discuss the process an institution goes through in order to attain accreditation. He will discuss the timeline and answer questions about candidacy, the self-study process, the external review, and reaffirmation. He will talk about what the external evaluators look for during the site visit, and how the commission makes the final decision about accreditation.

- **Process**

  - Preliminary Assessment
  - Candidacy
  - Self-Study
  - External Review – Site Visit
  - Decision on Accreditation
  - Annual Report
  - Reaffirmation

- **Timeline**

- **Comments on Personal Experience – Geneva College**

3. The Features of High Quality Programs in Business Education

Dr. Sam Dunn – Professor, School of Business and Economics, and Retired Vice President for Academic Affairs, Northwest Nazarene University
President-Elect, Region 7, ACBSP
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- **Introduction**

  Dr. Dunn will discuss the features, or standards, of a good business school. He will address the question – what are the distinctive standards of high quality business education?

- **INPUTS – Neither Necessary Nor Sufficient, But Important**

  1. Conceptual Framework for Program

  2. Quality of Curriculum

     - Core of Common Knowledge

  3. Teaching and Learning Resources

     - Access to Information
     - Technologies

  4. Quality and Quantity of Faculty

     - Covering Functional Areas
     - Teaching in Area of Preparation
     - Professional Development for Faculty

  5. Quality and Quantity of Students

     - Critical Mass
     - Preparation and Background

  6. Community of Learning

- **OUTPUTS**

  1. Functional Knowledge Validated by Nationally Normed Tests

     - GRE
     - ETS

  2. Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes Tests

  3. Success on Certification and Professional Examinations

     - CPA
     - LSAT
     - GMAT

  4. Success in Finding and Sustaining Positions in Business

5. Testimonials
    - Employers
    - Self
    - Faculty

- **ACBSP Standards of Accreditation**
    - Reference: www.acbsp.org

- **Personal Story – Impact on Northwest Nazarene University**

4. The Assessment of Quality Business Programs

Dr. Becky Havens – Associate Provost for Faculty Development and Dean of Social Science and Professional Studies, Point Loma Nazarene University
Chair, Point Loma Nazarene University Assessment Committee
Member, Board of Directors, ACBSP
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- **Introduction**

  Dr. Havens will discuss how an institution can implement an assessment plan to support their pursuit of professional accreditation and regional accreditation. She will share a model for the assessment of learning outcomes, and discuss best practices in assessing student learning.

- **What is Assessment?**

  Assessment is to evaluate or determine the merit of, relative to a standard. The standard provides a benchmark to know where and how to improve (ACBSP Conference Workshop, June 2002).

- **Why do Assessment?**

  We care what our students learn! If regional accreditation organizations are forcing us to do assessment activities, why not cater it to meaningful, continuous quality improvement? Assessment should be creatively adapted to each program to ensure there is meaningful data, and carefully interpreted results, used to actually improve the quality of the program.

- **How? An Assessment Model – The Nichols Five Column Model**

  The Nichols model is a simple, effective means of doing assessment that allows each educational unit to devise their own three to five program objectives and creatively apply them to program quality improvement. This method links

program mission to student learning outcomes, and focuses on program impact on student learning through devising data collection efforts that are simple, yet effective and meaningful (James Nichols, 1995).

- Column 1: Program Mission

  Link program mission to institutional mission, and explain how your student learning outcome objectives come out of your program mission.

- Column 2: Intended Educational Outcomes

  Select three to five desired educational objectives for each major program and degree. Think about what the program will contribute to student learning. Make sure the program objectives are measurable. Write the learning objectives in terms of what students will know, think or do.

- Column 3: Means of Assessment & Criteria for Success

  Think about measurement – how will you know whether you have achieved the three to five educational objectives? Measure student performance in relation to the established goals and desired outcomes. (Examples of best practices in selecting tools appear below.)

  Think about defining what success means – how will you know if the student performance is acceptable? Before collecting data, specify a condition that defines success. For example, specify a certain percentage of students were able to complete a task or answer a question correctly, or specify a certain percentage of internship supervisors claimed the student's performance was at a certain level.

- Column 4: Summary of Data Collected

  Collect data on the three to five educational objectives specified in the assessment plan. Be selective, systematic and continuous. Use results for groups of students by factoring out individual professors, students and individual courses. Build in objectivity and external validity. Use trends and comparisons.

- Column 5: Use of Results

  Think carefully about how the results of the data collected will be used to improve the program. Interpret and reflect – data does not "speak for itself"! Be careful to not over-interpret the data. Demonstrate that the results were used to make improvements in the program.

- Repeat the cycle

  The system is designed to achieve continuous quality improvement. Remember: ***Assessment is like laundry – it is never done!!***

- **Best Practices in Assessment**

  - Focus on Learning Outcomes
    - *Knowledge outcomes*: areas students can recall, relate and appropriately deploy
    - *Skills outcomes*: capacity to do something (ex. think critically, communicate effectively, perform a technique or procedure, etc.)
    - *Attitudinal/Affective outcomes*: changes in beliefs or development of values (ex. altruism, service, respect for diversity, ethical behavior, etc.)
    - *Learned Abilities/Competencies*: integration of knowledge, skills and attitudes in complex ways that require multiple elements of learning (ex. leadership, teamwork, effective problem solving, etc.)

  - Selecting Tools to Measure Outcomes
    - Each desired outcome is measurable
    - Each desired outcome should have 1-2 tools to verify continuous improvement
    - Tools should include external validation
    - *Weakest tools*: self-reported data, internally generated data, senior surveys (ex. Can you add 2+2? Do you like to add 2+2?)
    - *Strongest tools*: employer surveys, nationally normed tests, internship evaluations by supervisor – use consistent form and require it of all interns (ex. Add 2+2 – put down your answer.)

  - Principles of Good Evidence
    - "Evidence is the substance of what is advanced to support a claim that something is true." (WASC Evidence Guide, January 2002)
    - Evidence should be intentional and purposeful
    - Evidence should cover knowledge and skills taught throughout the program's curriculum
    - Evidence should involve multiple judgments of student performance
    - Evidence should provide information on multiple dimensions of student performance
    - Evidence should involve more than surveys or self-reports of competence and growth by students
    - Evidence requires interpretation and reflection
    - *Relevant*: pertains to underlying objectives
    - *Verifiable*: documentable and replicable
    - *Representative*: typical of underlying condition; trends over time

    - *Cumulative*: use of multiple sources and methods that provide independent corroboration
    - *Actionable*: reflective interpretation that provides guidance for action and improvement

- Determining Success
    - *Appropriate*: success indicator is not too low or too high with respect to corresponding scale
    - *Consistent*: criteria is similar to one used by comparable institutions
    - *Achievable*: environment and resources are sufficient to reach and go beyond the criteria
    - *Dynamic*: criteria can be adjusted as the assessment cycle starts over

- Data Collection – Examples of Direct Evidence
    - Examination of student work and performance
    - Capstone exams and assignments
    - Performance and demonstrations
    - Portfolios – focus on objectives and representative sampling
    - Samples of representative student work generated by course requirements
    - Internship reviews by supervisor
    - Licensing exams

- Interpretation and Analysis
    - Do not over-interpret results using small sample sizes
    - Assess impact of program, not individual courses
    - Use trends for comparison, rather than a single data point
    - Rely on multiple sources to affirm and confirm results
    - Rely on external validity to objectify results

- Pitfalls to Avoid
    - Relying on anecdotal data
    - Settling for sporadic assessment efforts
    - Taking a non-integrative approach – assessment is a process, not a checklist
    - Proceeding without faculty support, involvement and understanding
    - Trying to measure everything
    - Generating too much data
    - Generating data you don't use
    - Establishing no criteria to determine if results are acceptable
    - Relying solely on student self-reported data
    - Confusing student satisfaction with student outcomes
    - Changing or ignoring tools because of undesirable results
    - Trying to be too precise
    - Over-interpreting the results
    - Closing the cycle prematurely

- **Implementing the Model – Experience at Point Loma Nazarene University**

  This report is filed annually, with attachments: survey instruments, data collected and displayed.

Expanded Statement of Institutional Purpose	*Program Intended Educational Outcomes*	*Means of Program Assessment and Criteria for Success*	*Summary of Data Collected*	*Use of Results*

- **Application of the Model – Examples from Point Loma Nazarene University**

  - Reference – Internet Resources for Higher Education Outcomes Assessment: www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/resource.htm

  - Reference – American Association of Higher Education (AAHE): www.aahe.org

5. The Impact of Accreditation on Business Program Quality

Dean Larry Strand – Dean, School of Business, Biola University
President, Region 7, ACBSP
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- **Introduction**

  Dean Strand will share the Biola story – how accreditation impacted the quality of his institution's business program. He will focus on specific changes that occurred as a result of attaining and maintaining business accreditation.

- **The Biola Story**

  - Success in the process depended on:

    - Determine the "fit" on your campus for professional accreditation
    - Build early rapport with the Academic administrators on campus for affirmation and support
    - Begin to attend the ACBSP regional and annual meetings to gain information and establish networks with accredited institutions

  - Seek a mentor institution, member of CCCU suggested, as a partner in the early stages
  - Apply for a candidacy status as soon as is feasible
  - Be objective when developing your self study

- Impact is significant to the school (department):

  - External validation for qualifications for new faculty hires
  - Build framework for curriculum (CPC)
  - Build framework for faculty load and evaluation
  - Build framework for student learning outcomes
  - Be affirmed by other professionally accredited schools and departments on campus
  - Accreditation is a valuable tool in fundraising
  - Accreditation is important part of positioning your program in the marketplace
  - Accreditation has an ongoing review component and encouragement for continuous improvement
  - Attract higher quality of students
  - Attract higher quality of new faculty

- Impact is significant to the university (college):

  - Affirmed by the President, Provost (Chief Academic Officer), and the Board of Trustees
  - Affirmed by administrators (Deans and Department Chairs) of the programs, schools on campus with professional accreditation
  - Part of the overall strategic planning for all professional accredited programs
  - Points to a quality measurement that provides some priority in resource allocation.
  - Significant contribution to the overall marketing plan for the university

6. The Goals and Future Outlook of ACBSP

Mr. Doug Viehland – Executive Director, ACBSP
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- **Introduction**

  Mr. Viehland will discuss what is occurring at the organizational level of ACBSP. He will answer questions such as – how is the organization improving service and benefits to its members? He will discuss the goals of the organization and its future direction. He will discuss recent changes in ACBSP and what the organization is doing to meet current trends in higher education.

- **Part One: Accreditation and the Stakeholders**
    - The institution is the target, not the stakeholder
    - The faculty members need to see/receive benefits beyond accreditation
    - The president and chief academic officer need to see the value of and trends in business education
    - The institution is not buildings, but all the people that are the true fabric of delivery of higher education
    - Previously, primary representative and alternate representative models are used
    - Now, four categories of stakeholders:
        - President (1)
        - Chief Academic Officer (1)
        - Head of Business Unit (1)
        - Faculty (up to 100)
    - Introducing…the CHAMPION

- **Part Two: New Tools to Support Stakeholders**
    - Directory of Business Schools and Programs
        - All Stakeholders Included
        - All Stakeholders Receive
        - User Friendly
    - Business Education Week
        - Summary of News
        - Valued Information
        - Exclusive Focus
        - User Friendly
    - Background Kits
        - A Resource Kit
        - Focus on Business Education Exclusively
        - Uses Existing Sources
        - User Friendly
    - Benchmarking Survey
        - Uses Existing Accreditation Data
        - Comparison With Your Peer Group
        - Adds Value to Entire Process
    - Affinity Groups
        - Individuals With Common Interest Joining Together
        - Elect Officers/Facilitators
        - Sponsor Educational Tracks
        - Participate in Listserv

- Peer Review Service
  - Abbreviated accreditation process—three months
  - Use by new dean, academic officer, test for accreditation
  - Written report is provided
  - Estimated cost is $5,000
  - Not a substitute for accreditation, but can be prelude to process

References

1. ***ACBSP Standards and Criteria for Demonstrating Excellence in Baccalaureate/Graduate Degree Schools and Programs***, Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs, July 1998.

2. ***The Accreditation Process for Baccalaureate/Graduate Degree Schools and Programs***, Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs, July 1998.

3. ***Evidence Guide: A Guide to Using Evidence in the Accreditation Process***, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), January 2002.

4. Internet Resources for Higher Education Outcomes Assessment: ww2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/resource.htm

5. Nichols, James O. ***A Practitioner's Handbook for Institutional Effectiveness and Student Outcomes Assessment Implementation***, 3rd edition, New York: Agathon Press, 1995.

6. www.acbsp.org, Association of Collegiate Schools and Programs website.

7. www.aahe.org, The American Association of Higher Education