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## Academic Administration
## In Higher Education

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# The Challenges of U.S. Women Academics in Higher Education: Management Disciplines

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## Abstract

*This study examined the current situation of female management professors and provided information concerning gender-specific employment experiences. Results indicated that gender inequity within management academe may still exist. For example, the percentage of female management faculty has increased to only 23.3 percent of the total. Furthermore, those surveyed were asked to respond to questions concerning their discriminatory experiences with regards to gender. The majority of women had encountered gender-related discrimination. However, the percentage of respondents (n = 118) in the senior ranks (65.8%) was much greater than the AACSB national averages which show females comprising only 36.5% of senior business faculty. Implications of these findings are discussed.*

According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, the proportion of female managers has grown markedly in the past 30 years. In 2002, 45.9% of all executive, administrative and managerial employees were women. Additionally, the number of women in middle management positions continues to increase (Oakley, 2000). However, women are still underrepresented in senior level management positions. For example, only six of the company leaders making a recent Fortune 500 list were women (The Fortune 500, 2004). Thus, the statistical picture taken of female representation at the managerial level is blurred. In fact, the Glass Ceiling Act of 1991 states "that women remain underrepresented in management and decision-making positions in business and that artificial barriers exist to the advancement of women in the workplace" (The Glass Ceiling Act, 1991). Even in the 21st century, gender continues to force stereotypes in the workplace.

Unfortunately, this gender bias also walks the halls of academia. According to The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), women currently only make up 23.3% of U.S. business school faculty (Closing the Gender Gap, 2001). Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of female business faculty members hold the rank of instructor. Only 13% of all full professors are female (AACSB International Salary Survey, 2003-2004). In addition, the percentage of women deans at AACSB-accredited schools is only 9.1%. Therefore, it appears that the glass ceiling has and continues to inhibit the professional development of women in academia (Fletcher, 2007 Fisher, Motowidlo, & Werner, 1993;).

Moreover, according to the Digest of Education Statistics (2005), few women are being represented in the higher ranks of academia. More specifically, a report conducted by the American Association of University Professors states that

> Women faculty are less likely than men to hold full-time positions. Women in those full-time positions are underrepresented in tenure-track positions, and have not attained senior faculty rank at the same rates as men. At each full-time faculty rank,

women earn less than men, and the accumulated disadvantages of position are exemplified by the comparison of overall average salary (West and Curtis, 2006, p. 6).

In fact, an annual national study indicates that male assistant professors earned $3,226 more than women assistant professors; male associate professors earned $4,028 more than female associate professors; and male full professors earned $9,595 more than female full professors (Bell, 2000). Overall, the trends in wage inequality across all professions influence the ongoing trends that are evident in the overall gender pay gap (Blau and Kahn, 2007).

In an attempt to address the gender discrepancies in higher education, universities and various accrediting agencies have developed numerous rules and guidelines. For example, an institution that is attempting to become AACSB accredited is strongly encouraged to show that "it values a rich variety of viewpoints in its learning community by seeking and supporting diversity among its students and faculty" (Eligibility procedures and accreditation standards for business accreditation, 2004, p. 12). Increasingly, legislative audits or the courts have strongly motivated schools to consider adding diversity policies. Recently, at the request of state Senator Ben Hermalin, the University of California's system came under close scrutiny for suspected gender inequities in its hiring practices (Closing the Gender Gap, 2001). According to researchers, lawsuits against universities for sex discrimination are widely evident and have had a dramatic impact on the academic pocketbook (Brown, 1999; Green, 2000; Pollack, 1999; Premeaux & Mondy, 2002; U.S. college wants sex-bias award overturned, 1999).

Yet, the concept of diversity discrepancies in higher education is not novel. Several studies have examined gender issues in academia. One such longitudinal study, using data gathered over a twenty year time period, suggested that "female economists had lower levels of professional attainment and career advancement than did their male colleagues with similar attributes" (McDowell, Singell, & Ziliak, 2001, p.225). Carolfi, Pillsbury, and Hasselback (1996) studied the percentage of women in academic accounting, and discovered that more than sixty-nine percent of the schools surveyed had either zero or only one female faculty member. A similar study (Lanier & Tanner, 1999) indicated that a majority of academic women accountants had experienced gender-related discrimination, and sixty percent of minorities encountered race-related inequities. Additionally, Weisenfeld and Robinson-Backman (2007)

found that approximately 30% of female respondents within the accounting professorate perceived some form of gender discrimination.

Probably one of the most disturbing side effects of these forms of sex discrimination in higher education is the resulting lack of strong feminine role models. In a 2000 study on gender trends, the AACSB concluded that "the single most important factor affecting undergraduate and graduate enrollments in business, and particularly management, over the past three decades has been the increase in the number of women pursuing degrees in business" (Men, Women and Business School-Gender Trends in Management Education, 2000, p. 1). Fisher et. al (1993) emphasized the importance of role models for female students entering the management discipline, and the necessity of women faculty in educating these future business leaders. In a related and recent study, more than half (56%) of women MBA students surveyed cited the lack of role models as the primary reason more women don't seek graduate business degrees (Bisoux, 2002). Given the severity of this issue and of its consequences, it is no surprise that research has been conducted examining the experience of female faculty in many of the business disciplines. However, to date, no study has specifically addressed gender issues in the management professorate.

Therefore, this study has three main objectives. The first objective is to assess the current situation of female management faculty, specifically those employed at accredited four-year institutions of higher learning. The second objective is to provide information about any gender-related experiences of these females. Finally, the third objective is to provide awareness to institutions and to individuals about gender-related issues that exist in relation to women employed as management professors.

This study should provide institutions of higher learning with necessary data to consider in the development of recruitment and retention strategies. In addition, these findings can assist institutions in developing and providing an environment that is attractive to females in academic management. Furthermore, the study should provide a sound framework by which universities and business schools can redefine their policies, procedures, recruitment strategies, and appointments.

## Research Methodology

In order to learn more about gender discrimination among female management professors, a systematic random sample of 500 female management professors

throughout the United States was selected from Dr. James Hasselback's management faculty directory. Dr. Hasselback compiles faculty directories for several different disciplines, and each directory contains the faculty listings for several hundred schools from around the world for that particular discipline. Questionnaires were mailed to each faculty member selected. Usable responses were obtained from 118 faculty members, for a response rate of 23.6%. A widely cited source on survey research indicates that "mail surveys with response rates over 30 percent are rare, and response rates are often 5 to 10 percent (Alreck & Settle, 1985, p.45).

The instrument contained demographic questions which would help us learn more about the backgrounds of the respondents. Additionally, the instrument included five questions relating to respondents' perceptions concerning experiences with discrimination in their jobs.

## Personal Characteristics of Survey Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are detailed in Table 1. Two of these are noteworthy for discussion.

With respect to race, the overwhelming majority of the respondents were Caucasians, with equal percentages of African Americans and Asian/Pacific Island respondents. This finding is consistent with findings of previous studies in related business disciplines (see Lanier & Tanner, 1999; Norgaard, 1989) and national studies of business faculty (Overview of U.S. Business Schools, 2004).

Of those responding, more than 64 percent were married, while more than 15 percent had never been married, and more than 20 percent were either divorced, separated, or widowed. The high percentage of those married within the sample is consistent with previous studies and the U.S. Labor Force indications of continuous increase in the number of married women within the workforce. Within academia, this phenomenon may create administrative problems. Many married faculty members must make the choice to either live separately or to make career sacrifices in order to remain at the same institution. Therefore, universities must be prepared to address the issues resulting from the increasing number of married female faculty members.

## Career History Characteristics

The data presented in Table 2 details respondents' work history experiences. More than 65 percent of the respon-

| TABLE 1 | |
|---|---|
| CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS | |
| Demographic Variable | Percent of Respondents |
| Age Category: | |
|     Less than 40 | 23.5 |
|     41 – 46 | 27.8 |
|     47 – 52 | 22.6 |
|     Older than 51 | 26.1 |
| Race/Ethnic Origin: | |
|     African American | 5.1 |
|     Asian/Pacific Islander | 5.1 |
|     Caucasian | 85.5 |
|     Hispanic | 1.7 |
|     Other | 2.6 |
| Marital Status: | |
|     Widowed | 1.7 |
|     Married | 64.4 |
|     Separated | 0.8 |
|     Divorced | 17.8 |
|     Never Married | 15.3 |
| Highest Degree Attained | |
|     Master's Degree | 5.9 |
|     Doctorate | 89.0 |
|     Other | 5.1 |

dents held ranks of either associate (47%) or full professor (18.8%). These numbers are significantly higher than the AACSB national averages which show females comprising only 13% and 23.5% of the full professor and associate professor ranks, respectively (AACSB International Salary Survey, 2003-2004).

In 2006 the American Association of University Professors reported that the percentage of female professors who had been granted tenure was actually declining (West and Curtis, 2006). And, historically, researchers have consistently noted lower tenure rates for women as compared to men (See Benjamin, 1999; Collins, Parrish, & Collins, 1998; Ferber & Green, 1982; Lanier & Tanner, 1999). However, the results from the current study seem to suggest otherwise. More than 63 percent of the respondents reported to have already earned tenure. This result might be explained by an examination of the data concerning years of experience.

Due to the shortage of new doctoral faculty in the business disciplines, faculty salaries are spiraling out of control. Olian (2004) concludes that "demand is

| TABLE 2 CAREER HISTORY CHARACTERISTICS | |
|---|---|
| Career History Variable | Percent of Respondents |
| Academic Rank: | |
| Instructor | 5.1 |
| Assistant Professor | 26.5 |
| Associate Professor | 47.0 |
| Full Professor | 18.8 |
| Other | 2.6 |
| Tenure Status: | |
| Tenured | 63.6 |
| Not Tenured | 36.4 |
| Years of College Teaching Experience: | |
| 3 – 6 Years | 13.6 |
| 6 – 9 Years | 18.7 |
| 9 – 12 Years | 20.3 |
| 12 – 15 Years | 9.3 |
| 15 – 18 Years | 11.0 |
| 18 – 21 Years | 11.0 |
| More than 21 Years | 16.1 |
| Annual Salary: | |
| Less than $9,999 | 0.0 |
| $10,000 - $19,999 | 0.0 |
| $20,000 - $29,999 | 0.9 |
| $30,000 - $39,999 | 0.0 |
| $40,000 - $49,999 | 4.3 |
| $50,000 - $59,999 | 20.5 |
| $60,000 - $69,999 | 0.0 |
| $70,000 - $79,999 | 12.8 |
| $80,000 - $89,999 | 19.7 |
| $90,000 or more | 33.3 |
| Average Teaching Load per Term | |
| 3 credit hours | 7.8 |
| 6 credit hours | 29.3 |
| 9 credit hours | 47.4 |
| 12 credit hours | 13.8 |
| 15 credit hours or more | 1.7 |

outstripping supply, and in most business schools, salary inversion affects the assistant-through-full-professor ranks due to annual escalation of up to 10 percent in starting salaries" (p.1). However, disparities still exist between male and female faculty professors, with men earning more than women at every rank (LeClair, 2003). According to recent AACSB Salary Surveys, the gap is widest at the higher ranks where on average male full professors earn $108,200 compared to female full professors who earn $97,600.

The salary breakdowns of the current respondents appear to reflect these national trends. The average salary ranges by rank are $50,000-$59,999, $70,000-$79,999, $70,000-$79,999, and $80,000-$89,999 for instructors, assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors, respectively.

## Characteristics of Respondents' Institutions

Previous research has shown that professional experiences and career decisions of faculty can vary significantly based on institutional characteristics (Blackburn & Bently, 1993; Ethington, Smart, & Zeltmann, 1989: Norgaard, 1989; Saftner, 1988; Teevan, Pepper, & Pellizzari, 1992). Data regarding the characteristics of the respondents' employing institutions are presented in Table 3. More than 79 percent of the respondents reported currently teaching at universities with 20,000 or less students. These universities were located throughout 32 different states in the United States. Additionally, more than 68 percent of the respondents reported teaching at public, state-supported institutions. Furthermore, almost slightly less than 84% of the women surveyed were teaching at universities which were accredited by the AACSB at the time of the survey.

| TABLE 3 CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS' INSTITUTIONS | |
|---|---|
| Institutional Variable | Percent of Respondents |
| Enrollment at Current University: | |
| 0 – 10,000 students | 42.7 |
| 10,001 – 20,000 | 26.5 |
| 20,001 – 30,000 | 13.7 |
| 30,001 – 40,000 | 10.3 |
| 40,001 – 50,000 | 1.7 |
| More than 50,000 students | 5.1 |
| Type of University: | |
| Private, non-religious | 20.3 |
| Private, religious | 11.0 |
| Public, state-supported | 68.7 |
| AACSB Accreditation Status: | |
| Accredited by AACSB | 83.8 |
| Not Accredited by AACSB | 16.2 |

## Perceptions Of
## Discriminatory Work Experiences

Although the percentage of women who receive Ph.D.s in business continues to rise, female professors remain a minority. As previously noted, less than a quarter of all full-time U.S. business school faculties are female (Closing the gender gap, 2001). Numerous researchers have shown that large gender based disparities still exist in academe (Bellas, Ritchey, & Parmer, 2001; Benjamin, 1999; Ginther & Hayes, 2003; LeClair, 2003; McDowell, Singell, & Ziliak, 2001; Monks & Robinson, 2000; Orser, 1992; Premeaux & Mondy, 2002). Generally, the female faculty experiences have been described as "chilly" (Orser, 1992) and devaluing (Bellas et. al, 2001). Additionally, in examining the academic labor market, Barbezat (1991) found that 30-34% of the male-female wage gap could be attributed to direct discrimination. Thus, the current study was designed to gain information concerning the sex discrimination experiences of female management faculty.

### Gender-Related Discrimination

Table 4 shows the responses to questions related to sexual discrimination in the workplace. Of the current respondents, more than half (50.8%) reported that they had experienced gender-based discrimination. Further analysis demonstrated that there were no significant differences between the expected and actual instances of sex discrimination by rank. However, significantly more tenured faculty reported discrimination encounters than was expected. These results are consistent with

| TABLE 4 | |
|---|---|
| RESPONSES TO SEX DISCRIMINATION QUESTIONS | |
| **Sex Discrimination-Related Question** | **Percent of Respondents** |
| Do you feel, as far as work is concerned, that you have been in any way discriminated against because of your gender? | |
|     Yes | 50.8 |
|     No | 49.2 |
| What is the most recent way in which you were discriminated against because of your gender? | |
|     Not hired or interviewed | 5.0 |
|     Not promoted or assigned to certain jobs | 26.7 |
|     Evaluation of job performance | 5.0 |
|     Relations with co-workers | 10.0 |
|     Relations with supervisors | 1.7 |
|     Paid less for the same work | 43.3 |
|     Demoted or laid off | 0.0 |
|     Nothing specific, I just think my employer discriminates | 1.6 |
|     Other | 6.7 |
| What, if anything did you do about this discrimination? | |
|     Took no specific action | 27.1 |
|     Tried to solve the problem informally | 39.0 |
|     Registered a complaint with a supervisor | 16.9 |
|     Filed a grievance with employer or union | 6.8 |
|     Took legal action (EEOC, filed lawsuit, went to court) | 6.8 |
|     Other | 3.4 |
| What eventually happened? | |
|     Nothing | 51.7 |
|     Employer took action to solve the problem | 20.7 |
|     Grievance or other legal action was settled in my favor | 6.9 |
|     Grievance or other legal action was unsuccessful | 0.0 |
|     I quit the job | 5.2 |
|     Other | 15.5 |

those reported by Lanier & Tanner (1999) in their examination of female accounting academicians.

Of those who felt they had been discriminated against because of their gender, more than 43 percent said the most recent way was that they were paid less for the same work. Furthermore, more than 26 percent reported gender-related discrimination within their job progression experiences. There were no significant differences among the type of discrimination experiences reported, and either tenure status or faculty rank,

Respondents were also asked to report on any actions taken by them against the sex discrimination. More than 27 percent said they took no specific action, and 39 percent said they tried to solve the problem informally. It is interesting to note that of all the formal actions available to them (Registered a complaint with a supervisor, Filed a grievance with employer union, or Took legal action) only slightly more than 30 percent of the respondents availed themselves of such action. Once again there were no significant differences between rank or tenure status and the various actions taken against the perceived discrimination.

Finally, respondents were asked to report the consequences of the actions taken. Again, more than half (52.7%) of the respondents who felt they had experienced some type of gender discrimination and had taken some type of action about it said that nothing happened as a result of these actions. Additionally, almost seven percent reported successful legal action. It is encouraging that in more than 20 percent of the occurrences the employer solved the problem and in only 5.2 percent of the cases did the respondents feel that they had quit their job to solve the problem. Although these numbers are low and are still indicative of an on-going problem, they do show a marked improvement over the indices reported by female academic accountants in a previous study (Lanier & Tanner, 1999).

## Summary and Conclusions

This study provides current data concerning the status of female management faculty and their work experiences. The data indicate that women in the academic environment still experience hostile work environments (Blum, 1991). However, contrary to the national data, the percentage of respondents in the senior ranks (65.8%) was more than double the percentage at junior ranks (31.6%). In fact, respondents were most prevalent in the Associate rank (47%). These data, combined with years of experience, show that those surveyed do appear

to be progressing faster than academic females in other disciplines (Fisher et. al, 1993; Hasselback & Carolfi, 1995; Lanier & Tanner, 1999, McDowell et. al, 2001; Wilson, 2004).

More than half of this study's respondents cited instances in which they perceived they had encountered gender-related discrimination. The most frequently cited form of discrimination involved being paid less than their male counterparts for the same work. Additionally, more than half of the women reported either taking no action or trying to solve the problem informally. Only slightly more than 5 percent felt that it was necessary for them to quit their jobs.

It was originally expected that differences would exist between the career history characteristics of the respondents and their reported discrimination experiences. Specifically, differences were anticipated between the variables, rank and tenure, and actions taken by those surveyed in response to the perceived discrimination. However, no significant differences were found. The reported discrimination experiences did not appear to be influenced appreciably by either career-related variable.

The findings of this study have serious implications for university administrators, such as deans and department heads. Institutions must continue their efforts to create an environment that encourages the development and productivity of female academicians. In particular, several issues associated with gender equity issues for female management faculty need to be addressed.

First, as witnessed in recent years, there is a potential for serious litigation exposure. For example, an award of $12.7 million was granted to a former female professor at Trinity College of Connecticut because of sexual discrimination in denying her tenure (U.S. college wants sex-bias award overturned, 1999). In addition, numerous gender-related discrimination lawsuits occur daily and never make the headlines. Even if the institution receives a favorable verdict, the costs associated in defending against such cases can be phenomenal. Yet, there are also intangible costs associated with gender-related issues.

As the number of women enrolled at both the graduate and undergraduate level continues to grow, business schools need to make sure they are creating a climate that encourages them at the college level. Almost half of undergraduate students in U.S. business schools are women and yet, female professors comprise less than one-quarter of business school faculty. Universities must consider the impact on students of the skewed

faculty gender ratios. Street, Kimmel, and Kromrey (1996) concluded that gender role attitudes and behaviors exhibited by faculty and administrators had a "pronounced effect on students" (p. 615). A majority of female graduate students surveyed cited lack of role models as the primary reason more women don't pursue an MBA (Bisoux, 2002). Furthermore, Nora, Cabrera, Hagedorn, and Pascarella (1996) found that the mentoring experiences with faculty had the most significant effect on college persistence for female students. Therefore, research suggests that female management students may "pay" as well for institutional gender inequities.

Finally, it is perhaps the subtle side of sex discrimination that harms the academic community the most. Even when paid equitably, female professors often still "feel like second-class members of the faculty" (Women still feel marginalized at MIT, 2002, p. 1). Female professors still face hurdles and sometimes women don't even know what the hurdles are. The rules of the academic game are not always known to women, but they may affect women disproportionately (Closing the gender gap, 2001). Additionally, Orser (1992) concludes that "an absence of women in senior academic positions contributes to biased research and funding, weakens the tenure review process, and contributes to the lack of feminist research in the administrative sciences" (p. 1). In this era, diversity is a much touted issue in management research. The AACSB standards are clear that institutions seeking accreditation must "demonstrate continuous efforts to achieve demographic diversity among students, faculty, and staff" (Eligibility procedures and accreditation standards for business accreditation, 2004). Based on the cold hard facts, institutions must ask and answer the question, "How diverse are we?"

Given these findings and associated implications, researchers should continue in their exploration of the situations and experiences of female academicians.

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# Establishing a Mentoring Program in a Business School: The Experience at Samford University

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## ABSTRACT

*In the fall of 2006 Samford University's Brock School of Business made a decision to establish a mentoring program for undergraduate students utilizing business professionals sourced from those with an affinity to the school. The implementation of the mentoring program has been very successful. This paper examines various aspects of the program's implementation as a model for other schools that might be considering such a venture.*

## BACKGROUND

There is a scant amount of literature on the use of mentorship programs in Schools of Business in the United States. However, there is some information on mentoring programs within the corporate world. For example, a recent in-depth study of 30 professional service firms found that such organizations, in order to survive, must revive mentoring. It has been a casualty of hypercompetitiveness and rapid growth in such firms. Nevertheless, the authors argue that a successful mentoring program must be revived if firms are to prosper (DeLong, Gabarro, Lees, 2008).

## IMPLEMENTING A MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

In fall 2006, one year after arriving at Samford University's Brock School of Business, Dean Beck Taylor discussed an idea with Barbara Cartledge, the Director of Undergraduate Programs in the School of Business, for establishing a mentoring program for undergraduate students. The two discussed the need and opportunity for professional mentors for Samford's undergraduate students that would take advantage of the rapidly growing Samford Business Network (SBN). The SBN had been formed during the 2005-2006 academic year by Taylor and had been an instant success. With active chapters in Birmingham, Nashville, and Atlanta, the purpose of the Network is "to engage Samford School of Business alumni, other Samford University alumni, and business professionals in an effort to provide meaningful opportunities to connect with other business professionals, to participate in events that promote continued learning, and to become involved in the life and mission of Samford University." The tentative plan was to incorporate some of these members in an important way in a mentoring relationship with certain students.

In April 2007, the Dean's Student Advisory Council and Undergraduate Programs Office met with the Brock School of Business Advisory Board – Undergraduate

Programs Committee. The Advisory Board subcommittee developed a template for the program's potential structure and responded to feedback from students and undergraduate staff. During the summer of 2007, the Undergraduate Programs Office in coordination with the Dean's Office developed the implementation and design of the initial mentoring program launch.

In August 2007 at a Samford Business Network event, the Chairman of the Undergraduate Programs Committee of the Advisory Board announced the program and distributed forms to attendees seeking participants who would serve as mentors. This was followed in September 2007 at other Samford Business Network meetings in Atlanta and Nashville where the program was discussed and mentors were sought from among these groups.

A key component of the program was that all members of the Dean's Advisory Board for the Brock School of Business were automatically entered into the program. This approach was designed to garner commitment, not only from the group as a whole, but also at an individual level to emphasize the program's importance and show its value to this prime group of supporters.

In September 2007 a "Welcome Back" event was held for Business undergraduate students where the mentorship program was announced. The program was described and interested students were recruited as mentees.

During October and November 2007, initial matches were made based on mentors' professions and students' interests/majors/gender. Males were matched with males and females were matched with females. Letters were mailed to mentors and emails were sent to mentees describing the mentorship plan and expectations. Mentor and mentee contact information was also provided through this communication. Sixty-five matches were made. Unfortunately, after this first assignment, there remained six unmatched female mentees. This suggested that there was an unexpected shortage of female mentors identified during the recruitment process. Conversely, the program had several unmatched male mentors as a result of the aforementioned SBN promotion and a local *Birmingham News* article soliciting participants.

In November 2007 mentors and mentees were sent a follow-up email message to determine if an initial contact had been made. It was discovered that only about 50 percent had made contact; if contact had not been made, then follow-up emails were sent to mentors.

At the end of January 2008, after students returned for the Spring term, a cover letter (Exhibit 1), evaluation instrument (Exhibit 2) and a set of student dialogue guidelines (Exhibit 3) were sent to each set of matched mentor/mentee. The response rate for the evaluation was 20 percent. While the response rate was not what administration had hoped for the results of the mid-point surveys did provide some interesting responses. All of the survey respondents (mentors and mentees) had had at least some contact with their respective party. In fact eighty-five percent of respondents had three or more communications (email, phone, face to face) in the brief period leading up to the mid-point survey. Forty-two percent of these meetings occurred over lunch with an additional twenty-one percent occurring at the mentor's office or place of work. The mentors also provided a wide array of interactions with their mentees including resume reviews, office tours and attendance at business meetings.

## CHANGES FOR 2008-2009 ACADEMIC YEAR

As a result of the formal and informal feedback with mentors and mentees, the beginning dynamics of the 2008-09 mentor program are different from those of the initial launch. Solicitation for participation is occurred late spring of 2008. Invitations for participation were sent to current and interested individuals from the 2007-08 cycle. Matches for the 2008-09 year will be made in summer 2008. Participants will be notified of their match via U.S. mail and email in late August. In this correspondence, both the mentor and mentee will be given meaningful information about their respective mentor's or mentee's interests, hobbies, career ambitions or successes that will engender worthwhile conversation at their first meeting. In support of the successful start, a kick-off event is scheduled for the second week of September that will allow mentor and mentee to meet and discuss the next steps in their relationship. At this event, successful 2007-2008 mentoring relationships will be highlighted and presented to provide motivation for a successful 2008-2009 mentoring program. Subsequently, a mid-term evaluation will be made when students return from Christmas break and a final evaluation is scheduled for early May 2009.

## FUTURE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

**Because the Samford mentorship program startup was so successful, the authors have a planned research process to determine the mentors' and mentees' perspective on the program. The objectives for the research study are to survey participants and**

gauge several dimensions of the mentorship program experience at Samford's Brock School of Business. The purpose will be to identify areas of success and weakness in the implementation of the program from both groups' perspective. The ultimate aim of the research is to provide direction for future decisions as Samford administrators and faculty seek to increase their successful implementation of a mentoring program within the School of Business which might serve as a model for others.

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| ExHibit 1 |
|---|

**BROCK**
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

January 23, 2008

Dear Mentor:

On behalf of the Brock School of Business, we greatly appreciate your commitment and participation with the Mentoring Program. Many meaningful relationships have developed over the past semester between mentor and student mentee, and we look forward to hearing more about yours.

As mentioned in the initial confirmation letter, the mentors and students determine how their correspondence is handled. Whether the connections were developed by phone conversations, e-mails, or in-person meetings, we hope your participation continues to grow throughout this coming spring semester.

Since we are entering a new semester, we consider this an opportune time to solicit feedback from both sides of the relationship. Please review the attached brief questionnaire and offer your suggestions. The form can be e-mailed back to gdorsey@samford.edu or faxed to 205.726.2540. Please send us your feedback by **Friday, February 1st** so that we can consider your input for this year's program in a timely manner.

We'd also like to invite you to the Samford *Business Network Birmingham Meeting & Breakfast* held on February 13th. Please visit http://www.samford.edu/business/resources/events/20080213.php for details. This could be a great opportunity for you and your student to meet —we encourage you to register.

We hope you've had a great start to the New Year, and thank you for making this commitment to our students!

Sincerely,
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008, 115-121.

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**EXHIBIT 2**

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**BROCK**
**SCHOOL OF BUSINESS**
**SAMFORD UNIVERSITY**

**Student- Mentoring Program Mid-point Feedback 2007-2008**

1.  **Have you been able to make contact with your mentor?** __yes __no

2.  **If you have been unable to make contact with your mentor, please indicate the primary reason:**

    __Job constraints              __Student did not respond
    __Not able to make contact

    Other_____

3.  **Approximately how many times have you corresponded with your mentor?  Phone, e-mail, in-person meeting?**
    1        2        3        4        5        6 or more

4.  **If you've met your mentor face-to-face, please describe the location and length of your visit:**

    __Mentor's office              __Samford's Campus
    __Lunch location               __Samford Business Network event

    Other_____

5.  **Which types of activities did you engage in with your mentor?  *Some examples may include: resume review, office tour, business meeting observation, speaker program attendance, etc.***

    __Resume review                __Office tour
    __Business meeting observation __Speaker program attendance

    Other_____

6.  **What recommendations do you have for further improvements or enhancements in the Brock School of Business Mentoring Program?  Other comments you'd like to share?**

008, 115-121.

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EXHIBIT 3

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## Student Guide for Mentoring Program

### I. Current Career

**Job Overview**

*Describe a typical work day/week.*

*If your colleagues described you, what would they say?*

*What is your potential career path from your current position?*

**Job Requirements**

*What education, experience, skills, or personal qualities would you say are required for your position?*

**Career Goals**

*What is your current career goal and how do you plan to achieve it?*

*What do you want to be known for in your career?*

**Company Information**

*Why did you choose to work for your company?*

*What information would you be willing to share with me about your company?  (i.e., annual report, strategic plans, org chart, etc.)*

*Would it be possible to have a tour of your office?*

**Market Trends**

*What is the current employment outlook for your industry?*

*What are some common misconceptions or stereotypes about your job/industry?*

### II. Your Journey

**First Job after Graduation**

*What was the first job you had after graduation?*

*What did you like about that job?*

*What did you dislike about that job?*

*What was the biggest adjustment for you going from school to work?*

*What was the most surprising thing you learned after leaving school?*

**Personal Experiences**

*What are some of the challenges you see in your future?*

*What activities or interests do you have outside of work?*

*How do you balance career, family, and community service?*

### III. Professional Advice

**Professional Development**

*What steps would you recommend for me to take now as I prepare for the workplace?*

*What makes a student a marketable employee?*

*Recommendations for networking & developing a career?*

*What professional organizations and trade publications are available for your field?*

*What do you see as the future direction of your profession?*

*Would you recommend I pursue a post-graduate degree?*

*Would you be willing to review my resume & offer suggestions?*

**Real-life Lessons**

*What are the common workplace practices and expectations of new graduates?*

*What management styles have you used?  What works and what doesn't?*

*What would you do differently if you were graduating today?*

*What do prospective employers look for during recruiting events on campus?*

# Challenges and Best Practices: Meeting AACSB and SACS Requirements

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## ABSTRACT

*Institutions of higher learning are facing considerable pressure to make improvements in program performance in order to satisfy accrediting agencies. The driving forces behind the changes include concerns about retention (Wolff & Tinney, 2006), expectations of proof or evidence of student learning (Suskie, 2004), and accountability from educators (Mundhenk, 2005), legislators, parents, and donors (Pringle & Michel, 2007). This is especially true for colleges and schools of business striving to meet changing standards for professional and regional accreditation. The major challenge for many Southern institutions is addressing recent changes in the standards while meeting the requirements for both AACSB and SACS. This paper addresses three critical issues for colleges and schools of business concerning the requirements for regional (SACS) and professional (AACSB) accreditation. First, it summarizes the major revisions to the AACSB standards for accreditation or reaccreditation. Second, it synthesizes the areas of agreement and disagreement for AACSB and SACS requirements. Third, it discusses best practices for colleges and schools of business to meet the standards for both agencies.*

## Introduction

In the face of pressure for student retention (Wolff & Tinney, 2006), evidence of student learning (Suskie, 2004), and accountability from educators (Mundhenk, 2005), institutions of higher learning are scrambling to make improvements to demonstrate the quality of outcomes and return on investment for its stakeholders. This is especially true for colleges and schools of business striving to meet changing standards for professional and regional accreditation.

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, International (AACSB) accredits over 554 business schools globally; 477 of which are located in the United States and Canada (AACSB, 2008). The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools is the regional accrediting body in the eleven U.S. Southern states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia) charged with institutional accreditation. The major challenge for many colleges and schools of business in the Southern U.S. is addressing recent changes in the standards for AACSB, while meeting the requirements for SACS. This paper addresses three critical issues concerning the requirements for regional (SACS) and professional (AACSB) accreditation. First, it summarizes the major revisions to the AACSB standards for accreditation or reaccreditation. Second, it synthesizes the areas of agreement and disagreement for AACSB and SACS requirements. Third, it discusses best practices for colleges and schools of business to meet the standards for both agencies.

## AACSB Changes

The changes ratified by the AACSB International in April of 2003 have had a major impact on colleges and schools of business. These changes required a shift in processes and data from input type criteria to output measures that demonstrate quality and continuous improvement. AACSB also shortened the accreditation cycle from ten- to five-year periods. Other standards did not change, but are now more explicit about what is required to meet the standard by detailing the specific requirements in a "basis-for-judgment" section (Thompson, 2004). The new standards for initial accreditation and reaccreditation adopted by the agency focus on three distinct areas: the strategic management process, qualifications for faculty members and students, and assurance of learning (AACSB International, 2003; Miles, Hazeldine & Munilla, 2004).

## Strategic Management Process

The new standards relevant to strategic management emphasize the role of the mission statement as the guiding force for a college or school of business. To meet the new standards, the mission should be developed and reviewed periodically based on stakeholder input, congruent with the university mission, focused on student outcomes, and supported with the necessary financial resources. In addition, colleges and schools of business are required to develop and implement processes for continuous improvement (AACSB International, 2003). The major emphasis of the 5-year review is on the strategic management processes implemented by the school to maintain quality, make continuous improvements, and move the school toward its mission (Thompson, 2004).

## Assurance of Learning

The most significant impact of the AACSB changes concerns the assessment process used to evaluate the attainment of program objectives or assurance of learning (AoL) (Thompson, 2004). The new standards shift emphasis to outcomes rather than inputs, and programs are required to directly demonstrate a process for measurement of AoL and continuous improvement based on the data. Schools that successfully implement AoL focus on the program use direct and indirect measures of skills and knowledge, increase faculty involvement, and develop systematic processes for taking action based on assessment results.

### Focus on program

The focus of assessment activities, with respect to AACSB, centers on the degree program rather than a specific major or concentration within the program. Assessment at the major and/or concentration level falls under the purview of SACS (AACSB, 2006; Blood, 2006). For the former, this broader view requires coordination beyond departments as core courses in which assessment will be conducted will likely cut across majors and disciplines.

### Direct (and indirect) measures of skills and knowledge

The new standards require programs to include direct measures of learning in addition to the indirect measures previously accepted (AACSB, 2006). Indirect measures such as surveys, interviews, and focus groups to gauge the opinions of students, alumni, and employers on how well students have attained the learning objectives for the program can produce valuable information for aligning the program with stakeholders' expectations. However, institutions must also use direct measures of assessment that require students to demonstrate knowledge or skills (Martell & Calderon, 2005). This is often done at the completion of a degree program to demonstrate graduates' competencies. While AACSB provides a list of typical skills and knowledge that it believes to be relevant for management education, the organization does not dictate which, if any, of these skills must be mastered by program graduates. Instead, each school/college must select skills or knowledge that it believes are appropriate for the mission. Though no specific number is required, most programs select between six and twelve skills to be assessed.

### Faculty involvement

Another change is the extent of faculty involvement in the assessment process (AACSB, 2006; Hazeldine & Munilla, 2004). Faculty should be involved in the review of the mission, the development of learning goals for the degree program, and in determination of improvements ('close the loop' activities) based on results. Faculty may or may not be involved in collecting and interpreting assessment data, as some institutions assign one or more individuals to oversee these tasks.

### Follow-up and change

The critical challenge for many colleges of business is taking the necessary steps to close the loop by implementing changes based on the results of assessment. The results should be used to improve student learning of skills, knowledge, and competencies needed by program graduates (AACSB, 2006). In addition, programs are expected to be monitored over time and changes tracked.

## Faculty and Student Qualifications

The third area affected by the new standards set by AACSB concerns the criteria for evaluating faculty members and students based on the mission. The criteria for students address important areas such as admission requirements, retention policies, and support resources such as advisement and placement. There have also been changes in the process of evaluating faculty sufficiency, relevancy, and currency in support of the mission. AACSB requires that at least 50 percent of faculty members teaching in a program meet AQ (academically qualified) status; 90 percent must meet AQ or PQ (professionally qualified) status. Colleges and schools of business define their own AQ/PQ standards, but many

institutions are using a 2 (peer reviewed journal articles) in 5-year period or 3 in 5-year criteria for faculty currency. There are exceptions for newly minted PhDs or doctoral students who have not had a 5-year window in which to publish. In addition, business schools are required to provide sufficient resources to support faculty development (AACSB International, 2003).

## AACSB and SACS Requirements

Many Southern colleges and schools of business are faced with the challenge of making changes to meet the new standards set by AACSB, while at the same time meeting the requirements for regional accreditation set by SACS. There is some overlap in the major areas of concern for the two agencies; however, there are some differences in how the criteria are defined by each agency (Benburg & Trapnell, 2007).

### Mission

There is considerable agreement between the AACSB and SACS concerning the importance of the mission for setting the direction of the institution. Both AACSB and SACS emphasize the need for a comprehensive and updated mission statement that is widely communicated and guides decision making for the institution. One difference is that AACSB is more concerned with involving stakeholders in the development and review of the mission.

### Program

Both AACSB and SACS have standards concerning minimum requirements to complete a program, in terms of program length, and credit hours earned. As might be expected, SACS focuses on general education requirements whereas AACSB is more concerned with management knowledge and skills such as communications abilities, ethical understanding and reasoning, analytic skills, use of information technology, multicultural and diversity understanding, and reflective thinking.

### Outcomes Assessment

Considerable emphasis is also placed on outcomes assessment by both agencies. AACSB and SACS require colleges and schools of business to identify outcomes or learning goals, assess achievement of the outcomes or learning goals, and use a systematic process to document improvements based on the results of assessment. The standards set by AACSB and SACS also require programs to support student learning and development

by providing services and activities that are consistent with the mission.

### Faculty Qualifications

There is less agreement between the AACSB and SACS concerning faculty qualifications. In evaluating faculty competence, both AACSB and SACS emphasize academic credentials, but define faculty qualification differently. SACS considers 18 graduate hours in the teaching field to be "best practice," but will allow an institution to create faculty portfolios to demonstrate qualification based on work experience, honors, awards, licensure, and other factors in making a case for faculty credentialing. Unlike AACSB, SACS does not have a currency requirement; experiences can have accrued over the faculty member's lifetime. The burden, however, is on the institution in defending credentials of faculty who have less than 18 graduate hours in the discipline.

With respect to number of graduate hours completed in the discipline, AACSB is more flexible, for example allowing faculty members with a MBA – who may not have 18 graduate hours in the teaching discipline – to be qualified so long as s/he has the relevant work experience and maintains currency in the discipline. In terms of faculty deployment, SACS requires a certain percentage of courses be taught by faculty with the terminal degree (undergraduate-25%; graduate-100%), while AACSB requires that 75% (60% in each discipline) of faculty be participating (rather than supporting faculty).

### Best Practices

This section discusses some of the best practices that are being adopted by colleges and schools of business to meet the new standards. The practices are relevant to the following four categories: increased focus on the mission and program learning objectives, emphasis on faculty involvement in the process, emphasis on directly measuring skills and knowledge, and closing the loop.

### Focus

The starting point for meeting current standards for AACSB and SACS is to revisit the mission statement to ensure it is current, comprehensive, communicated, and aligned with the viewpoints of stakeholders. This is a critical step because the mission guides the direction of the programs, faculty credentialing, and resources needed to support the mission. The next step is to develop learning objectives at the program (for AACSB) and major and concentration (for SACS) levels. The learning objectives should support the mission and should state

| Table 1<br>Curriculum Alignment Matrix | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MBA Program | | | | | | |
| Assurance of Learning Standards | Acc. | Info. Sys. | Econ. | Fin. | Mgmt | Mktg |
| Communication | | | | | MGT 580 | |
| Ethical and legal responsibilities | | | | | MGT 532 | |
| Financial analysis | ACC 501/502 | | | FIN 508/509 | | |
| Creation of value | | | ECO 506/507 | | MGT 522/580 | MKT 541 |
| Group dynamics | | | | | MGT 530 | |
| Statistical analysis | | | ECO 507 | | MGT 521/522 | |
| Information technologies | | ISC 545 | | | | |
| Domestic and global economic environments | | | ECO 506/507 | | | MKT 544 |
| Strategic Decision-Making | | | | | MGT 580 | MKT 541 |
| Independent Learning | | | | FIN 509 | | |

the specific skills, knowledge and competencies graduates will possess at completion of the program. The next step is to align the curriculum by developing standardized learning goals for each required course. Developing a curriculum alignment matrix (CAM), as shown in Table 1, can be useful to illustrate where objectives for a program, major, or concentration are covered.

## Involvement

Widespread involvement in the assessment process is an important practice for colleges and schools of business striving to meet current AACSB and SACS requirements. A good place to start is the designation of a central coordinator responsible for directing the assessment process. This approach may be more effective than assigning additional duties to an individual for release time or diffusing the responsibilities among several individuals. It is also necessary to involve members from all levels of the college or school including deans, chairs, and faculty in the assessment process. The process should be faculty driven with teams of faculty working with a course coordinator for each core course taught in the program, and the course coordinators working with the chairs, deans, and central coordinator. The central coordinator, deans, chairs, course coordinators, and faculty should all be involved in interpreting the results

and making improvements that are documented in annual reports.

## Measurement

An important challenge for assessment is the need to use direct measures to show evidence of student learning – in addition to indirect measures – that indicate how students and other stakeholders feel about learning (Pringle & Michel, 2007). Direct measures may include course embedded assessments (standardized assessment questions, case studies, presentations, and projects), and performance demonstration (standardized tests, projects or presentations, portfolios and mock interviews). One note of caution is that both AACSB and SACS require assessment at the individual student level; therefore, group projects may present challenges for assessment in that a group outcome cannot be used as an individual assessment. Indirect measures such as surveys, interviews, and focus groups can be used to determine the perceptions of students, employers, and alumni relevant to student learning. One suggestion for implementing and monitoring measurement is to develop assessment forms for tracking the assessment plans, results, and close the loop activities for each core course, as shown in Table 2. Another suggestion is to develop rubrics for presentations, writing assignments, and projects to facilitate standardized assessment. The rubrics,

which should be shared with the students, identify specific criteria for the assignment and the standards used to evaluate the criteria.

## Action

A critical and often neglected step in assessment is the process of continuous improvement; taking action based on the assessment results. This step requires colleges and schools of business to make changes by addressing deficiencies identified during the assessment process. Improvements could include adding a new class, modifying a course or concentration, updating admission standards, or providing support for faculty development. In addition, colleges and schools of business are required to have processes in place for documenting the changes, such as the form shown in Table 2, as well as in annual reports. According to Martell (2007), closing the loop is an area where many colleges and schools of business are not quite making the grade.

## Faculty Development

ment of program objectives, and the quality of students coming out of the program. It is necessary for colleges and schools of business to establish minimum standards for sufficiency, relevancy, and currency to meet the requirements set by AACSB and SACS. In addition, institutions should provide support for faculty development to maintain qualifications. One suggestion is to develop a checklist of criteria to meet the standards such as academic credentials, appropriate development activities, and AQ/PQ requirements. This could help faculty maintain qualifications and enable the program to meet minimum accreditation standards. Much like closing the loop in assessment, an improvement plan for those whose AQ or PQ status lapses should be considered. Such a plan outlines objectives, intended results, and a timeframe for action providing a blueprint for reinstating faculty qualification.

## Discussion and Conclusions

Institutions of higher learning, and particularly colleges and schools with discipline-level accreditation, are being pressured to demonstrate the quality of outcomes and

**Table 2**
**Core Course Assessment Form**

Course: _____
Course Coordinator: _____

Instructors:

_____
_____
_____

| Objective(s) | Assessment Method(s) | Assessment Semester | Acceptable Performance | Results | Planned Action |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ☐ Pre-/Post-test<br>☐ Case<br>☐ Written Assignment<br>☐ Presentation<br>☐ Project<br>☐ Standardized Exam<br>☐ Other | ☐ Summer<br>☐ Fall<br>☐ Spring | | | |

The final category of best practices for meeting current standards set by AACSB and SACS is relevant to maintaining faculty qualifications. The quality of the faculty can have a significant impact on learning, the attain-

return on investment. Southern colleges and schools of business are attempting to make strides in program improvement to meet current standards set forth by AACSB and SACS; some of which are dissimilar. This

article address the challenges faced by Southern colleges and schools of business by summarizing the changes necessary to meet new AACSB standards, synthesizing the requirements for meeting the standards set by both agencies, and providing an overview of best practices for meeting current accreditation standards.

The major challenge faced by colleges and schools of business is putting programs and processes in place to address strategic management, assurance of learning, and faculty and student qualifications issues. Anecdotally, AoL and faculty qualification appear to be areas causing the most difficulty for colleges and schools of business attempting to maintain accreditation. Research on the progress of business schools in developing and adopting assessment practices indicate that while many schools have made great strides, some schools fall short in the development of strong assessment programs to meet the new AACSB standards (Martell, 2007). An interesting point is that the strategic management process and faculty and student qualifications are equally important, and both may have a direct impact on assurance of learning and program outcomes. A critical concern is that the deadline for implementing the changes passed in 2007, so colleges are already expected to have conducted a full assessment cycle with the results guiding continuous improvement. Another challenge for institutions in the South is satisfying both AACSB and SACS. The agencies agree on the importance of the mission, assurance of learning and continuous improvement, curricula structure and content, and expectations for faculty evaluation and development. The major difference is the criteria for evaluating faculty sufficiency, relevancy, and currency.

In an effort to address the challenges faced by colleges and schools of business to meet accreditation standards, many programs are adopting best practices. Some important best practices that should be considered include: focus on the mission, establish objectives for program performance, widespread involvement in the assessment process, use of direct measurement techniques focused on skills and knowledge, and processes for closing the loop by making improvements based on assessment results.

An interesting note is the connection between business strategies for competitive advantage and areas addressed by accreditation standards. The standards required by the two agencies (especially those ratified by AACSB in 2003) have three major goals: 1) using a systematic process to manage quality, 2) making continuous improvements in performance outcomes, and 3) better managing stakeholder relationships. These goals are strikingly similar to business initiatives considered critical for gaining competitive advantage such as total quality management, continuous improvement, and connecting with the environment and stakeholders. An important question concerns the future for standards of accreditation. One movement is the emphasis on currency as a critical measure of qualifications. This includes program currency or the alignment of the program with stakeholders and the environment, faculty currency or continuous development and improvement, and student currency or educational achievement. According to Thompson (2004), educational achievement may replace credit hours over time; while impact of research may be an outcome measure for faculty qualification in the future (Cosier & LeClair, 2008).

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