

Accreditation 2012 -- The Impossible Dream?

With the calendar turning over into 2008, the CoB's next attempt to retain its AACSB accreditation is already looming. The recent faculty departures of Barry Babin (MKT), Charles Sawyer (ECO), Sean Salter (FIN), and Franklin Mixon (ECO) -- all easily "Academically Qualified" by research, using the CoB's standard for its 2007 re-accreditation attempt -- will make things that much more arduous when 2012 rolls around. With the loss of 2007 to the so-called "6th Year Review" of 2007-08, things were already looking bleak, even without considering these, and other, faculty departures.

With "GH Chatter" already pointing toward additional departures on the horizon, it is never too early for the CoB's central administration -- even the Interim central administration that currently sits atop the organization -- to consider some preemptive decisions vis-à-vis the 2012 AACSB visit. Here are five that reporters at USMNEWS.NET put forward for consideration:

- Change the CoB's "Academically Qualified" criteria
- Shift the CoB's peer and aspirant institutions
- Identify key research producers, and keep them happy
- Reassess all sources of advice and counsel
- Establish new faculty governance initiatives

The CoB's current (2007) "AQ" designation is nothing to write home about. It is -- at 3 pieces of evidence of scholarly activity -- significantly weaker than the "3 in 5" rule from 1997 that generally referred only to journal publications. Under the CoB's current "3 pieces . . ." criterion, journal publications are not necessary, although as Interim Dean Alvin Williams noted in various CoB faculty meetings, they (journal pubs) certainly "make things easier." With the faculty losses situation described above, the CoB is well beyond the days of getting things done the easy way. Now it must face the daunting task of redefining "Academically Qualified" in a way that both weakens the current (2007) definition without meeting potential disfavor from any in the pool of 2012 AACSB Peer Review Teams.

This brings us to item two above -- the potential pool of PRTs. Following the same strategy detailed above regarding the "AQ" definitions, the CoB should begin to consider changing its 2007 list of Peer Institutions to become its 2012 list of Aspirant Institutions. When 2012 does roll around, the CoB will be diminished further from its 2007 aspirants than it was in February of 2007. This suggested reclassification will allow the CoB of 2012 "to aspire to be" more like its 2007 list of peer schools.

To make the "get weaker" plans above work, the CoB will need to take extraordinary measures to keep its key research producers happy. These individuals will need to be identified first. Reporters at USMNEWS.NET are happy to provide that identification here:

- Marc DePree and Chang Hsieh, SAIS
- Talai Osmonbekov and Sharon Topping, MGT/TM & MKT/FM
- Tom Lindley and Edward Nissan, EFIB

This task will be easier said than done. With the exception of Edward Nissan, and possibly Chang Hsieh at times, none of the faculty listed above has had his or her accomplishments appropriately recognized by CoB administrations, past and present. Steven Jackson, Director of the SAIS, appears to have already written off information systems faculty. In terms of accounting, professor DePree will not likely receive even the recognition that will go to Mary Morgan Anderson, an assistant professor of accounting and sister of Joe Morgan, USM's Chief Financial Officer.

Sharon Topping, professor of management, is the only CoB faculty at present doing any real, significant grant procurement/work. Although her grant efforts are recognized nationally, past administrators (e.g., Barry Babin) looked only in derision at Topping's external funding successes. At the same time, Talai Osmonbekov's publications successes are continually spurned in favor of recognition of Michael Wittmann, Beth LaFleur, and perhaps other (much) poorer performing faculty in marketing.

Not only has Tom Lindley produced premier publications in both economics and finance, at present Lindley, a professor of finance, is the only finance faculty member who is doing research *in finance*. Sources tell USMNEWS.NET that the remaining finance faculty are publishing in either economics or marketing. In the end, sources tell USMNEWS.NET that some, if not most, of the faculty listed above with Lindley are more likely to have targeted for punishment by favor-courting CoB administrators than appropriately recognized and rewarded by those very same administrators.

Item #4 above will critical to future success. The CoB's new Dean will have to seek advice and counsel from sources other than Mary Morgan Anderson, Stephen Bushardt, George Carter, Donna Davis, Harold Doty, David Duhon, William Gunther, Steven Jackson, Charles Jordan, Elizabeth LaFleur and/or Gwen Pate in order to be successful as a Dean, and have the CoB succeed in its 2012 attempt to retain its AACSB accreditation. Not only is this a prerequisite for victory, the new sources will have to be chosen very carefully. There are newer

faculty waiting for an opportunity to pounce into the political void that would be left behind by the group above.

The final initiative listed above could come in many forms. One might be the Senate-style faculty governance/government system proposed by former Dean William Gunther shortly after his arrival in 1998. The CoB's faculty voted down such a proposal at that time, and all constituencies involved now, from students to alumni, may be paying the price for it. In whatever form it might take, the CoB's next dean is going to have to show an ability to be more forward-thinking than CoB administrators (and faculty) have been in the past.