

## *Editorial*

### **While we're on the subject of AACSB accreditation...**

Recently usmnews.net commented on a report in University of West Florida's [The Voyager.net](#), April 9, 2013, entitled "AACSB reaccredits UWF's College of Business, provides recognition and suggestions."

The editorial concluded that Martha Saunders' actions overlooking business and accounting faculty plagiarizing AACSB accreditation documents at the University of Southern Mississippi seems to cast doubt on the ethics of her participation in accreditation at UWF.

In this report, we offer a taste of the details:

Colleagues did not set out to find questionable ["copied without proper citation"] documents during AACSB reaccreditation process, nor did they search for others after they discovered the first instance. The first questionable document seemed like a chance occurrence, a simple mistake easily corrected or explained. Colleagues were aware that the Accreditation Committee could have said, "Oops! We forgot to include a citation." Or, "It's customary for schools to copy from the accreditation documents of other schools."

The second instance of copying "without proper citation" was found coincidentally in efforts to learn what other schools think about plagiarism. Its discovery, however, was more worrisome given the citations included in the original document, but not USM's copied version. Let's be clear about this. The Whitman School's Academic Integrity Policy listed extensive citations for the use of others' words and ideas but USM copied Whitman's Academic Integrity Policy except its citations. Nevertheless, USM's administrators, involved faculty, and AACSB might have made a case that an Academic Integrity Policy was boilerplate. They might have simply and publicly stated for the benefit of all AACSB institutions that accredited members were free to copy other Colleges' submissions to the AACSB and publish them without citation. However, they did not.

A researcher had asked questions about Dean Harold Doty's and Charles Jordan's copying "without proper citation [Jordan's phrase]," awaited response, but early on realized that the events unfolding were a proper subject for study regardless of the outcome. If USM and AACSB embraced transparency and an open discussion, it would have been an inspiring case report about how Dean Doty, Professor Jordan, and AACSB's Jerry Trapnell, Ted Cummings, and C. Ed Arrington had worked to improve the ethics and understanding of all AACSB members. More importantly, the report would have provided the dialogue and conclusions with regard to practical details of the parameters of plagiarism. Alternatively, if the administrators at USM and AACSB chose secrecy, refused to build an understanding of plagiarism to the benefit of all AACSB members, and failed to persuade USM administrators to follow its standards and advice, the study would be a cautionary report that the AACSB does not signal academic quality, i.e., does not follow its own standards. The choice was USM's and AACSB's. The choice was USM Dean Doty's, Professor Jordan's, and AACSB Jerry Trapnell's, Ted Cummings', and C. Ed

Arrington's. And they chose to disgrace and dishonor USM's and AACSB's principles and standards.

Note that the choices USM and AACSB made, and are chronicled in Ethics, Power, and Academic Corruption Parts 1 and 2 (available at Amazon), continue to be relevant today. The USM College of Business's copied "Academic Integrity Policy" remains posted on its website without the original school's lengthy list of citations. (<http://www.usm.edu/business/academic-integrity-policy> Last accessed July 10, 2013.) Anyone who reads the "Academic Integrity Policy" on USM's website is led to believe that it is original work: another deception. Thus, in the absence of an investigation or open dialogue, the question whether USM's "Academic Integrity Policy" and other documents "copied without proper citation" constitute plagiarism remains officially unanswered. This, too, was a choice USM administrators and AACSB officials made. Furthermore, USM's College of Business is due for another round of AACSB reaccreditation in the future. Will the College Accreditation Committee copy "without proper citation" other documents and submit them to the AACSB as their own? Will the AACSB continue to approve in secret copying other member's documents "without proper citation"?

Last but not least, will USM's current business school dean, Faye W. Gilbert, and the current Director of Accounting, Skip Hughes, continue to plagiarize Syracuse University Whitman School's Academic Integrity Policy? Or, will they, with the explicit imprimatur of the AACSB, announce to everyone that copying codes of ethics is not plagiarism and is approved behavior of any AACSB member or AACSB applicant?