

Until recently, professional accreditation standards have encouraged conformity and have not allowed much flexibility. The American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business has taken a lead in bringing about change. Its new standards encourage institutional diversity and link faculty roles to mission.

Accreditation: *Impact on Faculty Roles*

With the onset of the Information Economy, we are seeing the reorganization of business and government on a global scale. The challenges of the 1990s call for a new set of assumptions for how we do business, govern, and yes, how we educate. Many of the assumptions underlying education today are a holdover from the earlier Industrial Economy. Our paradigm of faculty roles, as Ernest Boyer (1990, pp. 9-10) observed, had its beginnings after World War II, and evolved from the needs of the baby-boom generation.

Accreditation bodies helped to define and maintain faculty roles in the emerging disciplines throughout the '50s, '60s, '70s and '80s. Typically, accreditation standards have encouraged conformity, and have not allowed much institutional flexibility. Will the groups that set these standards now resist the pressure for a reorganization of higher education? Or, will they take the lead and provide the "paradigm shift" necessary in education to meet the needs of a rapidly changing Information Economy?

There are encouraging signs that some will take a constructive approach. A case in point is the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the accrediting agency for nearly 300 business schools throughout the U. S. In April 1991, AACSB members overwhelmingly adopted new mission-linked accreditation standards and procedures that support institutional diversity in management education. These are illustrated in AACSB's new 1993 handbook entitled *Achieving Quality and Continuous Improvement through Self-Evaluation and Peer Review*.

The most important new AACSB standard reinforces diversity of mission within AACSB member schools. In contrast to the past, diversity is now viewed as a positive characteristic to be fostered, not a disadvantage to be minimized. The Handbook states:

"The school should articulate its mission as a guide to its view of the future, its planned evolution, and its infrastructure and use of resources... Each business school is faced with choices as a result of a wide range of opportunities and inevitable resource limitations. The development

of a mission requires decisions regarding these alternatives and the mission embodies these choices" (p. 9).

In a recent article in the *MBA Newsletter*, Allan Bailey, President of AACSB, and Dean of the College of Business Administration, San Diego State University, identified four critical factors in the change process. Those factors are:

- 1) the need to engage faculty in a new commitment to the importance of strategic academic planning;
- 2) a greater focus on the identification and involvement of stakeholders in academic planning;
- 3) the development of team-based organizational culture; and,
- 4) a focus on continuous improvement as a way of operating (1993, p. 2).

A school's ability to meet the new standards will depend on how well it adjusts to these key factors.

The new AACSB guidelines continue to have a number of traditional standards, such as Faculty Composition and Development, Curriculum Content and Evaluation, Instructional Resources and Responsibilities, Students, and Intellectual Contributions. Diversity is encouraged by the requirement that a school's response to these standards be consistent with its particular mission. A careful review of each mission component as stated in the AACSB Handbook (p. 9) reveals the following:

M. 1: The school must have clear and published mission statement that is subjected to periodic review and revised as needed.

The development and revision of the school's mission must be a part of a planning process that involves all of the key stakeholders, such as faculty, students, administration, alumni, and the business community. The result should be a highly dynamic and focused mission statement.

M. 2: The school's mission must be appropriate to higher education for business and management and consonant with the mission of the institution of which it is a part.

Institutions of higher education, if they are to confront change effectively, must do a better job of managing institutional resources. For instance, the significant public policy issue -- namely, faculty productivity -- must be addressed within the framework of a clearly defined and accepted mission.

M. 3: The school must specify the educational objectives of each degree program offered and identify the characteristics of students and other constituents served by each of those degree programs.

Educational objectives against which performance will be evaluated must be defined in concrete and measurable terms. Market intelligence that includes geographical orientation of each degree program (local, regional, national, international) and types of students served by the programs is essential to the planning process. It calls for faculty to be proactive in confronting these changes rather than be reactive to them.

M. 4: The school must specify its relative emphasis on teaching, intellectual contributions, and service.

The school must be responsive to new expectations, both internal and external, and communicate a reasonable set of faculty performance standards -- standards that are derived from the mission and not from the traditional discipline-based market standards. The focus on "relative emphasis" may contribute to the adoption of the professional portfolio as described by R. C. Froh, P. J. Gray, and L. M. Lambert

(1993) as a more heuristic method of representing faculty work.

M. 5: The school's activities must be consistent with its mission.

The AACSB Handbook (p. 1) indicates that "accreditation review focuses on a school's clear determination of its mission, development of its faculty, planning of its curricula, and delivery of its instruction. In these activities, each school must achieve and demonstrate an acceptable level of performance consistent with its overall mission while meeting AACSB standards."

The "mission-linked" accreditation standards of AACSB represent a fundamental change in the way business schools operate. The emphases on strategic planning, stakeholder participation, faculty teams, and continuous improvement, when combined form the bases for cultural change. This new culture will assist faculty in responding to the demands for greater accountability and productivity. The traditional responses of the '80s will not be adequate to meet the demands of the '90s. Other accreditation bodies, hopefully, will follow the lead of AACSB in preparing for the future.

Suggested Reading:

Achieving Quality and Continuous Improvement through Self-Evaluation and Peer Review, Handbook prepared by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, St. Louis, Missouri, 1993.

Bailey, Allan R., "Bailey says the MBA now faces a paradigm change." *The MBA Newsletter*, 1993, 2 (12), 1, 2, 11.

Boyer, E. L. *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities for the Professorate*. Princeton, N.J.: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990.

Froh, R. C., Gray, P. J., and Lambert, L. M. "Representing Faculty Work: The Professional Portfolio." *New Directions for Higher Education*, 1993, 81, 97-110.