

# Academic BRASS

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Patrick Sullivan  
Business Reference Librarian  
San Diego State University

## **AACSB - New Standards for Changing Times**

On April 25th, 2003 the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) approved the new standards for Business School accreditation. The previous standards were adopted in 1991 and were subsequently revised in 1993, 2000, 2001 and have been scrutinized over the years as a number of factors changed business education, both within the United States and internationally. These factors include issues such as distance education, the balance of tenured faculty versus adjuncts, more flexible curriculums, and a growing number of foreign business schools seeking accreditation.

Katherine Mangan has highlighted the most recent accreditation changes in an article that appeared in the Chronicle of Higher Education on May 9th, 2003<sup>3</sup>. These changes according to Ms. Mangan include:

- 5 years between reviews rather than the previous 10 years. (Note: she observes that at the same time the paperwork required will be decreased.)
- Mission-based approach to accreditation will continue to grow. "Business schools will have to set goals....and then create ways of measuring whether they've succeeded".
- Faculty members will have to "actively participate in student's education". Whereas previous standards focused on the number of faculty with doctorates and full-time faculty, now the emphasis, is on an engaged faculty within the college.

The Chronicle article addresses the accreditation changes from the College of Business' perspective, but what are the impacts from the Library's perspective? Historically, libraries have seen the AACSB standards linked to rather rigid, prescriptive measurements, such as percentages of "core collections". The library segment of the overall business education process (journal and monograph collections, databases, instruction, etc.) has always had an important role in accreditation. But this has changed over the past decade. In this past decade we have seen a move to the "mission-based", "outcome oriented" standards, with libraries still playing a visible role within the written standards. Our involvement, until recently, was highlighted under the Instructional Resources section of the standards, with the library being mentioned by name five times within this previous accreditation document. In the most recently approved 2003

AACSB document <sup>1</sup>, the standards have been reduced from 41 to 21, and the word library is mentioned only once, almost parenthetically. In Standard 5 it is noted that the school should have "...financial strategies to provide resources appropriate to, and sufficient for, achieving its mission and action items." and the adequacy of the "school's infrastructure" is also discussed. In this section, laboratories and databases are mentioned, and under the "Adequacy for the Array of Programs" sub-section they specifically mention the expectation that "campus-based undergraduate programs would normally be expected to provide sufficient classroom and computing facilities for students...including library and other information access". The document goes on to note that "doctoral education programs would require information and support sufficient for basic research activity".

The library seems to be playing a more subdued role in many of the accreditation bodies recently. After reading the AACSB standards and observing the diminished importance afforded libraries, I drafted a note to the Managing Directory of Accreditation Services, Dr. Milton Blood, observing that the Instructional Resources section of the previous standards had disappeared. His e-mail response perhaps sums up the situation best.

"The shift in emphasis that you rightly point out, is in line with the shift that is taking place throughout higher education accreditation from emphasis on inputs to emphasis on learning outcomes. This shift is encouraged by major higher education associations such as ACE, NASULGC, AASCU, etc....the emphasis on learning achievement lessens the attention to resources. Of course, resources are important, but the impact on learning will lead to concerns about resources, rather than resources being a goal in their own right" <sup>2</sup>.

So, how do we approach the new standards for accreditation? I would guess that the impact will be minimal for the BRASS readership since a strong connection between the Business School and the Library is still a critical component of the "learning outcomes" highlighted in the new standards. Business librarians may want to utilize the new standards as a discussion point with their faculty on the role the library and the information resources housed there will play in an "outcome based" approach to business education. There are a number of possibilities that come to mind, including assignment design assistance, increased outreach to distance education classes, development of assessment tools for monitoring information literacy successes, etc. While it may not be business as usual with the new standards, librarians who are "actively engaged" with their faculty and students will continue to do well. I would encourage BRASS members to review both the Chronicle article and the new Eligibility Procedures and Standards for Business Accreditation which is available at: <http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/standards.asp>.

## Reference List

1. AACSB. "Eligibility Procedures and Standards for Business Accreditation." Eligibility Procedures and Standards for Business Accreditation, AACSB International, St. Louis, 2003.

2. Blood, Milton Dr. (Blood, Milton Dr.). "RE: New accreditation standards." E-mail to Patrick Sullivan ( [sullivan@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:sullivan@mail.sdsu.edu)). 12 May 2003.
3. Mangan, Katherine. "New Accreditation Rules Give Business Schools More Leeway on Faculty Hiring." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 49, no. 35 (2003): A15.

**Editor's note:** For additional information on the AACSB process, see the [AACSB Resource Guide](#) published by the BRASS Academic committee. The guide includes sample library submissions.