



AACSB INTERNATIONAL

Driving improvement in the quality of management education worldwide, the non-profit AACSB International—The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business strives to provide continuous support to its members through accreditation, thought leadership and value-added services. Vice President of Knowledge Development at the Association, **Juliane Iannarelli**, discusses the means by which it achieves this goal

Can you introduce AACSB International (AACSB), and its chief objectives and overall mission?

Many people know AACSB as an accrediting body for business schools around the world. While accreditation and quality assurance have been at the core of the association's activities since its founding in 1916, its mission is broader – to advance the quality of management education worldwide. The accreditation standards themselves serve as a framework for quality improvement, and these are complemented by a wide range of professional development services

and platforms for benchmarking and networking. AACSB also strives to inform and influence management education stakeholders through research, communication and outreach.

What does your role as Vice President of Knowledge Development entail?

Within knowledge development, my role involves research and communication. I support AACSB's role as a central node facilitating the exchange of information and insights among members, as well as its efforts to better understand the

challenges and opportunities facing business schools. Through our network of members and other higher-education serving organizations, I'm afforded the distinct honour of working closely with individuals who have an incredible understanding of the trends shaping management education.

My position includes acting as staff liaison for AACSB's Committee on Issues in Management Education (CIME). Charged with identifying and addressing emerging issues and challenges within the management education sphere, CIME is a deeply committed group of business school leaders who represent some of the brightest minds leading business schools – and innovations in business education – around the globe today.

How would you describe AACSB's influence in the overall landscape of business and management education?

Despite accreditation systems stereotypically being very prescriptive and inhibiting innovation, AACSB has succeeded in crafting accreditation standards that don't just allow for different approaches to fulfil a school's mission, but expect them. The process that schools go through every five years to maintain their accreditation is as much consultative as evaluative. We hope that through accreditation we are influencing the landscape of business education by providing a framework for quality, while encouraging the approaches required within a world with very diverse needs from management education. Our research and services reinforce this philosophy.

In 2013, AACSB's accredited membership unanimously approved new standards in which one of the overarching priorities was engagement with industry. Many schools were already heavily engaged with the business community, but this emphasis brought recognition to these efforts and provided a framework for doing more. Industry engagement permeates the standards, including those related to research impact, faculty deployment, and curriculum development. AACSB's Board also moved to establish an advisory council of business practitioners, many of whom lead their firms' talent recruitment and development efforts, to address issues mutually beneficial to both business and academia.

The fact that our schools have responded so positively to the engagement dimension of the standards, and the overwhelmingly positive response from industry representatives to the establishment of the advisory council, suggest that there are enormous opportunities to do more to strengthen these connections. We look forward to playing an active role in supporting them.

One of your key efforts is to provide current, relevant data and analyses to enlighten a wider variety of stakeholders and peers. Who are you hoping to inform and why?

Our membership is the primary audience for our data and analysis. These schools are the heaviest users of AACSB's global business school database – DataDirect – and of AACSB's publications that rely on that data. Recognized as the world's most comprehensive database on business schools, DataDirect exists because AACSB's members understand the value of having access to industry information and contribute their own data to the system. In turn, we strive to provide the benchmarking tools and industry analysis that support their ability to make informed, strategic decisions. Others, such as higher education researchers and members of the media, also rely heavily on AACSB's global management education database to support their investigations into the challenges and opportunities facing business schools and the communities they serve.

As our database continues to grow in terms of the number and diversity of schools represented, we're able to better understand the industry as a whole, as well as the unique circumstances facing schools of a particular geography or model.

Your own research interests centre on the globalization of management education, what have been some of your key findings in the field?

One area that I find most interesting is the growing number of connections between business schools located in developed and emerging economies. In 2013-14, 25 per cent of existing school-to-school collaborations reported by AACSB members in developed countries were with schools in emerging economies, but more than half of their

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THE FUTURE OF AACSB

AACSB represents more than 1,450 institutions across 89 countries. To further the creation of connections and the fostering of information sharing among its business schools, it is:

- Encouraging and supporting stronger connections between schools and the business community – both at the individual school level and at the broader industry level
- Initiating and facilitating innovation in education, knowledge creation and the management of schools
- Helping schools enhance their impact on students, the business community and the broader world, and to better measure and communicate this influence



'desired' collaborative agreements were with schools in emerging economy countries or geographic regions that consist predominantly of emerging economies.

Beyond merely facilitating student exchange, such partnerships are deepening research insights into the ways that different cultures, social norms, economic policies and governing models influence the practice of business and management. In some cases, the arrangements explicitly serve to build management education capacity in emerging economies by focusing on developing new educational offerings, research programmes and expertise, and sometimes even new institutions altogether. With the emergence of new technologies and technological platforms for connecting individuals around the globe, faculty and students alike are communicating in ways that draw attention to the distances between their ideas and experiences, rather than their geographies.

At AACSB, we're making it a priority to support meaningful connections between schools around the globe, by helping schools to identify and reach out to potential partners and by creating platforms for cross-border mentorship and information exchange.

In 2011, the Globalization of Management Education Task Force report was published, on which you were the lead researcher. Four years on, have you noticed any emerging or interesting trends which contribute to the subject?

This was such an exciting project, and we are extremely grateful for Emerald's support in publishing the report. Perhaps this outcome is to be expected given the wide range of topics that the book explored, but I continue to be amazed at breadth of initiatives that this body of work has informed. For example, the 2013 report of AACSB's Doctoral Education Task Force explored opportunities for expanding global access to quality doctoral-level training. The task force referenced findings related to faculty and student mobility, but also explored delivery models such as those utilizing supervisors from multiple institutions, distance-learning or online platforms.

In just four years, we've also seen signs that schools are pursuing increasingly sophisticated and multi-faceted partnerships. We're seeing more alliances – strategic partnerships involving multiple institutions with an implied long-term commitment. Often building on positive experiences in exchange programmes, dual degrees or other activities, these alliances unite schools around a commitment to a shared purpose, mission or value, and support a range of activities that span knowledge creation and education.

In what way has AACSB taken an interest in emerging questions about the impact of business school research?

The impact of business school research has been an important topic for AACSB over the years. The expectation that business schools invest in the creation of new knowledge through research is central to AACSB's accreditation model and our concept of the ways in which business schools impact society. Business school research has advanced management theory, practice and education, and investments in scholarship should continue to be a priority for schools and the entities that support them. As a 2008 task force noted, however, there are opportunities for business schools to increase the value and visibility of their research.

We explored some of those opportunities in a follow-up report in 2012, in which we profiled the experiences of ten schools that explored strategies for assessing and enhancing the impact of their research. From this, we strengthened the expectations for accredited schools to provide evidence of high quality and impactful research. The examples of impact that are emerging are diverse, impressive and encouraging. As schools further invest in strengthening their relationships with industry, we expect these examples to become even more widespread.

You are actively involved in AACSB's bi-monthly magazine, BizEd. Could you explain its core goals and why dissemination is so important to AACSB?

BizEd magazine connects all those working within business schools, regardless of discipline or role. The award-winning publication covers business education through in-depth features on a variety of topics, and also strives to help readers keep tabs on emerging innovations and best practices. Having long highlighted some of the impactful research emerging from business schools, the magazine recently began to draw even more attention to faculty research findings in a new dedicated section. Other sections cover curricula and pedagogical trends, insights into business school administration, and news from schools.

By enabling schools to learn from one another's experiences and providing a channel for helping individuals within business schools stay abreast of emerging opportunities, BizEd is a key component of AACSB efforts to advance the quality of management education worldwide. Our hope is that one idea or insight in each issue plants a seed that helps each school do something a little bit better.

How do you see your research area evolving and developing in the next three years – what topics are going to be the next hot ones?

AACSB is currently leading an effort to create a vision for the next era in management education. In collaboration with business schools and other organizations, the Association is curating and further encouraging a global conversation around current challenges and future opportunities for business schools. We are drawing on that effort to coalesce around themes that will push these schools towards new ways of thinking about their role vis-à-vis society and higher education.

Some of the ideas we're seeing are really interesting, and suggest new areas of research on our horizon. For example, we are beginning to pay closer attention to the way that faculty roles are changing – what is expected of a faculty, and what individual faculties expect from their schools and one another, seems to be evolving. We are also looking at ways that learning pathways are shifting, influenced by new technologies and technology platforms, as well as evolving demands for information and accountability. That same drive for accountability is also leading schools to do more to ensure the impact of research. As I mentioned before, this has been an ongoing area of importance for AACSB, but we have likely only scratched the surface of understanding the opportunities, and so I expect this to remain on our horizon for some time.