University of Cincinnati

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February 15, 2001

TO: Dean Melvin T. Stith, Dean Richard A. Cosier, Dean Lewis Mandell
Peer Review Team, University of Cincinnati Reaffirmation of Accreditation

FROM: Frederick A. Russ
Dean

SUBJECT: Response to Peer Review Team Visit Report

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the visit report of the Peer Review Team and the willingness of AACSB to reevaluate the continuing review decision that was based on a draft report to which we were not given the opportunity to respond.

Our response focuses on the two areas that the report indicated should be addressed prior to reaffirmation: (1) the development and implementation of a formal planning process, and (2) the Bachelor of Science in Applied Business (BSAB) offered by UC's College of Evening and Continuing Education (CECE).

With regard to #1, we believe:

(a) the facts we presented in our self-study and during the Peer Review Team visit are evidence of (M1) a clear, published and (M2) appropriate mission statement, as well as (M5) activities consistent with that mission;
(b) these facts are consistent with a finding that UC has met the Mission and Objectives standard for reaccreditation;
(c) the AACSB's *Standards for Business Accreditation* do not support the expectation by the Peer Review Team that the College display a <u>formal planning process</u> as a requirement for reaccreditation.

With regard to #2, we believe:

(a) the facts we presented in our self-study and during the Peer Review Team visit are evidence that the BSAB program offered by UC's CECE does not have more than 25% of its content/credit hours in subjects commonly available in a school of business;
(b) that, although the facts DO show that the labeling and promotion of CECE's BSAB program convey a connotation of a program in business, the mitigating circumstances involved (our ongoing consultation with AACSB staff while CECE was creating its program) should allow reaccreditation while the College works with CECE, the University and AACSB to revise the labeling/promotion of that program.

We develop each response further in the pages that follow.

Exhibits Attached

cc: John Kraft, Chair, Business Accreditation Committee (via Barbara Levin)
Anthony J. Perzigian, Senior Vice President and Provost for Baccalaureate and Graduate Education, University of Cincinnati

MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

The oral report of the Peer Visit Team to the College and the Provost emphasized a concern about the lack of a formalized planning process. The Dean acknowledged that, over time, the planning process had not always been formal but suggested that planning processes need not always be formal to achieve results consistent with a college's mission (and indeed, despite the expectations expressed by the Peer Visit Team, there is no language in the accreditation standards that requires a formalized planning process.)

To our surprise, the written draft of the Visit Team Report suggests that UC's CBA has no mission statement, objectives, or action plans to meet these objectives. (For example, the team indicated they "failed to discover a clear, recent (within 5 years) written mission statement…") The facts we presented in our self-study and during the visit suggest otherwise. To demonstrate, we provide excerpts below from the self-study report and exhibits.

As a starting point, consider the following quote from the first page of the material we currently use when communicating with external constituencies (our donors and corporate customers and prospects).

Our Mission:	**Today's mission is clear. The College of Business Administration strives to serve Cincinnati, the region and the nation by developing and providing:** • an outstanding practical education, recognized as one of the best in the country, • expertise that can improve current and future business practices, • exceptional employees and leaders.

The document package for which this is the front page has been used by the College since 1996-97. In addition to external constituencies, the college's administrative team and faculty were introduced to this document at that time and have had it available for their use ever since. Further, the faculty or faculty committees have reaffirmed this mission, either formally or informally, on numerous occasions over the last five years. The most recent formal reaffirmation of the mission was at the first faculty meeting of the fall quarter 2000, whose minutes were, to the best of our knowledge, available to the Peer Visit Team.

<u>More Excerpts</u>

On the next two pages and in exhibits attached to this document, we provide excerpts from the self-study (along with a few annotations) that further indicate that the college has a clear and appropriate mission, objectives, action plans, and results.

"CBA intends to be Greater Cincinnati's Business School. This is entirely consistent with the history of the college and the university. At the same time, as we interpret it, it is a new, exciting, and concrete vision of what we ought to be. For CBA, being Greater Cincinnati's Business School means providing Education, Employees, and Expertise -- known for high quality and value -- to Greater Cincinnati (and beyond.)...

"In 1990, CBA was basking in the glow of a variety of significant successes... At that point, the college had the misfortune to raise its undergraduate admissions standards at the same time that demand for undergraduate business education began a dramatic decline, both locally and nationally. Simultaneously, in connection with reaccreditation, the college took over the evening BBA program, matched its curriculum to the day programs, and embarked on an ambitious plan to grow evening enrollments. This program, too, had problems generating demand. While the demand problems were surfacing, the college was having difficulty creating strategies that generated favorable responses from the University; and the University began to disinvest in the College.

"This situation led the college to create a Strategy Task Force, whose job was to develop a new strategy for CBA. STF sought input from all the College's constituencies and began reporting and refining its results, based on further input, in late fall 1992... At the core, the mission and objectives in this document stressed relevance and value added with an "urban mission." Faculty and business leaders did not, however, react favorably to the urban focus: it was seen as too limiting and even had negative connotations for some."

[Note: the college continued to refine its mission, objectives, and strategy.]

"Within another year, the "urban mission" idea had evolved as a result of many discussions, most notably an Executive Committee retreat in Fall 1995, into what is still today the college's mission: being Greater Cincinnati's business school. (See, e.g., Exhibit 3.)"

[Note: excerpts from Exhibit 3 are provided at the end of this document. With rare, insignificant exceptions we have achieved the objectives in that statement of "dimensions of CBA Strategy."]

"This, for the college, implied taking advantage of and contributing to our Cincinnati location, being intimately tied to the activities and success of the Greater Cincinnati business community. At the same time, it meant seeking -- not ignoring -- national recognition, because meeting the needs of Cincinnati's world class firms demands it."

[Note: the Peer Visit Team was concerned about reconciling a goal of national recognition with a goal of being greater Cincinnati's business school. We believe the statement above, along with supporting documents and conversations, does provide that reconciliation: national recognition is not an end in itself, but a means to attracting ever better students, faculty, and resources so that the college can meet the needs of the region's world-class firms.]

"This mission/vision continued to be communicated, discussed, and refined throughout the rest of the decade... Importantly, for both pragmatic and philosophic reasons, the CBA mission/vision/strategy are always communicated in draft and discussion documents... Throughout the last half of the decade,

"Greater Cincinnati's business school" and "national recognition" have driven decision-making criteria in all that we do."

[Note: the self-study report referenced exhibits that gave examples of different ways the college communicated its mission, objectives, and strategy to various constituencies and over time.]

"Translating Mission into Programs"

"The work of the Strategy Task Force in 1992-93 (Exhibit 1, page 3) forecasts many of the College's major initiatives and commitments since then:

1. Quality improvement in the undergraduate program through curriculum revision and the creation of an honors program (once called "leaders for tomorrow," now the Carl H. Lindner Honors-PLUS program) to attract the best students;
2. Expansion of the MBA program through re-engineering (remote sites and better scheduling for part-time programs; a four-quarter "fast-track" full-time program;
3. A commitment to relevance in our research and educational programs, which has consistently meant discussing new program needs with our customers -- Greater Cincinnati's business community; and
4. A faculty who are professional and caring teachers while becoming widely known for the quality/impact of their research and professional contributions.

"Talking with our customers has led to a tremendous and tremendously successful globalization effort, ranging from (a) undergraduate curriculum revision and foreign travel to (b) MBA coursework in Europe and Asia (and Latin America, coming soon) that has involved a high percentage of our full-time and part-time MBAs in the last 30 months.

"Talking with our customers has allowed us to significantly increase revenues for the university -- through significant enrollment growth and a dramatic graduate tuition increase. The College has shared in those revenue increases, allowing more faculty hiring and "quality of life" improvements.

"Talking with our customers has also led to significant new programs in the Cincinnati Center for Management and Executive Development, programs that are consistently characterized by partnerships between CBA and our customers -- and very different from the "market it and they will come" philosophy that was CBA's previous approach.

"And talking with our customers (in this case, our academic customers, through graduate program reviews) has produced significant revisions to our PhD program.

"A commitment to developing and hiring faculty who are competent and caring in the classroom while conducting high impact research has been directly implemented in faculty development opportunities, faculty mentoring programs, new promotion and tenure guidelines, more faculty teaching awards and research grants.

> "Our progress in translating mission, vision, and strategy into programs, revenues, and reputation has restored and/or significantly enhanced credibility within the university. It can be summarized in presentations made to the faculty and the business community in fall 1999. (See Exhibit 8.)"
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> *[Excerpts from Exhibit 8 of the self-study are provided at the end of this document.]*

Conclusion

In summary, the facts show that the college does have a clear mission, objectives, strategy, and results. Whether all of this is sufficiently formalized can be debated, but the current accreditation standards do not require it. Based on these facts, the Peer Review Team should have judged that the College of Business Administration did meet the "Mission and Objectives" standard for reaccreditation.

PRECONDITIONS

The Peer Visit Team raised issues around the BS in Applied Business Program of the College of Evening and Continuing Education. They point out, correctly, that the program is positioned as a business degree for working adults and that it is not administered by CBA. While we acknowledge that this appears to violate AACSB preconditions/standards, we point out:

(a) that the program designed by CECE does not violate the 25% rule and that the report of the Peer Visit Team did not suggest that it does;
(b) that AACSB does not have specific prohibitions against the use of terms related to business in programs not administered by business schools, which leaves candidates for reaccreditation to guess what will and will not be allowed; and
(c) that, as a result, the college consulted carefully with AACSB staff when CECE approached us about a new program in order to assure that the university was not violating the letter or the spirit of AACSB standards. Under these mitigating circumstances, continuing review is not an appropriate penalty, or, if it is, it should be for a shorter time using a consultative process that produces appropriate changes in language.

The facts show that the program CECE designed (in consultation with CBA faculty and administrators, who in turn consulted with AACSB staff) does not violate the 25% rule. It is a 90-credit hour program (the equivalent of 2 years full time) for working professionals who have already completed an Associate degree in any of a wide variety of fields. Although some of these individuals are working in corporate settings, others are not. The number of credit hours in "business" courses represents < or = 25% of the course content. The Peer Visit Team has not argued in its draft report that the BSAB offered by CECE violates the 25% rule.

The Peer Visit Team does argue that the program falls within the scope of the accreditation review because it conveys a "connotation of a program in business administration or management." We agree that it does from their perspective, but previously believed, based on consultation with AACSB staff, that the way the program was positioned and interpreted made the language acceptable and that, therefore, the program should not fall within the scope of the accreditation review.

The facts that are the basis for our belief are (1) the business accreditation standards manual, (2) reaccreditation decisions at other universities, and (3) the advice we received from AACSB staff.

The crux of the "connotation" problem is that connotations are interpretations and the business accreditation standards manual does not supply unambiguous guidance regarding the labeling and promotion of programs that are outside the scope of reaccreditation review.

Universities with degree programs outside AACSB's scope that use business terms in branding, labeling, and promotion are easy to find. AACSB specifically allows some of them – hotel management, agribusiness, recreation management, health care administration, and engineering management – and suggests that there could be others. For example, based on other reaccreditation reviews, "general management" programs and "organizational leadership" programs that do not violate the 25% rule appear to be permissible within AACSB standards,

even though their customers are typically working professionals aiming to advance their careers in corporate settings and the programs are promoted as such.

The language in labels and promotional material is open to interpretation, indeed many interpretations, which is why we consulted with AACSB staff on multiple occasions. These conversations led us to believe that the label "Applied Business" was acceptable, given the mission of CECE's program and the fact that the label is distinguishable from a Business degree (in much the same way that "general management" or "agribusiness" are distinguishable from "management" or "business" degrees).

However, since our Peer Visit Team has found CECE's language unacceptable, and assuming that BAC concurs, we are concerned that the closer scrutiny involved in continuing review could leave CECE in a position where language it suggests is unacceptable, even though it is essentially identical to programs that have not been found with the scope of reaccreditation review at other universities.

We are willing to consider making changes in the labeling and promotion of the program (although it carries substantial costs for the university), but it only makes sense to do so if AACSB is willing to help us (and, by extension, all AACSB members) by providing clear rules that allow universities to determine, without guesswork, what labels and promotional messages will and will not be allowed.

When the Peer Visit Team raised concerns about the language used to describe the BSAB degree during their visit, we immediately proposed to begin the process of changing the labels and promotional material connected with the program. We believed that we could do so fairly quickly if a process could be found that meant any changes we made were acceptable within the university and to AACSB. The team advised us not to proceed until we had a chance to respond to their draft report and we subsequently heard from the Business Accreditation Committee. Unfortunately, there was no guidance in the BAC's report, undoubtedly because of the AACSB "process lapse" to which our Provost referred in his letter of December 22.

Conclusion

Given that we relied upon good faith consultation with AACSB when advising CECE about the design of their program, the College should not be penalized by placement under continuing review. Instead, the college should be reaccredited immediately and asked to provide information about the labeling changes made by CECE prior to the 5-year interim report. The University is willing to make appropriate changes and can accomplish them quickly, if the required changes in language are neither a mystery nor different than what has been found acceptable at other universities.

The College is willing to provide any additional information the Peer Visit Team or the Business Accreditation Committee that will help in your deliberations. We are also willing to appear in person before the BAC. We look forward to hearing from you.

Excerpts from Exhibit 3 from Self Study. Progress on achieving these objectives is noted in italics (and in red if printed in color).

DIMENSIONS OF CBA STRATEGY
(Draft 10/11/95)

GREATER CINCINNATI'S BUSINESS SCHOOL AND NATIONAL RECOGNITION

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PROGRAMS
Undergraduate -- a "quality shift" through
new curriculum *[completely implemented as of 1998]*
"honors" program *[admitting the fifth class in spring 2001]*
enhanced co-op *[implemented in Honors-PLUS, but awaiting a new university co-op director to refine this approach.]*
international opportunities *[10% of undergrads taking international trips in 2000-01; expanded vision includes MBAs as well, with nearly 50% of all MBAs going abroad in 2000-01]*
Master's -- significant growth through
improved accessibility *[new programs in a suburb and downtown launched 3 years ago]*
new programs/concentrations *[2 new degree programs, for example]*
links to honors program and 5-year accounting program *[too early for this to be implemented yet]*
Management development -- significant growth through joint programs, e.g.,
Business Consortium *[expanded]*
Management Development Cooperative *[expanded]*
Physician Leadership Program *[launched 4 years ago]*
IAMS *[launched last year]*
Goering Center EP *[launched last year]*
Applied research -- growth through centers, e.g.,
Center for Productivity Improvement *[new director hired, expansion planned]*
Center for Integrated Research Systems *[not implemented; entrepreneurship center launched, however]*

ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROGRAMS (capabilities and reputation)
Instructional technology *[college investments and $1.5 million Cleveland Foundation grant are enablers of ongoing progress]*
Faculty hiring, retention, and development *[~45 faculty hired in last five years; university leader in faculty development funding and new faculty mentorship]*
PhD program *[revised; new sources of funding developed]*
Resources: new enrollments (degree and non-degree programs), funded research, development activities *[enrollment growth producing significant budget increases; modest funded research; new development staff added, with good early results]*
Communication programs *[external relations staff and activities expanded; work with local media, especially the Business Courier; investment in national PR firm]*

Excerpts from Exhibit 8 in Self Study. This is an example of the way, in a fall faculty meeting and in a subsequent Advisory Council meeting, that the Dean reported progress on achieving objectives and challenged the college to set new objectives.

CBA ADVISORY COUNCIL PRESENTATION
FALL, 1999

SLIDE 1:
5 years ago...

- 40% of you were not here.
- The 1-year MBA and implementation of the new BBA curriculum had just begun.
- There were 400 fewer students enrolled and student quality was lower.
- Honors-PLUS, the Blue Ash MBA, MS-Accounting, MS-Taxation, and a redesigned PhD program were not even on our radar screens.
- The university didn't seem to understand the link between investments and revenues.
- High impact research was much less frequent.
- We'd hosted no AMA Doctoral Consortium, no national INFORMS meeting
- CCMED was MDC, had significantly lower revenues and profits, and the concept of working with partners to design programs was brand new.
- Only very modest external relations or development efforts were underway.
- Our IT efforts faced severe constraints.
- BBA students had never been to Nantes.
- And MBA students in Toulouse, Barcelona, Linz, Singapore, Chiang Mai, Aachen...are you kidding?

SLIDE 2:
Today...

- The changes I've noted have occurred.
- We are a model within the university...
  - ...for enrollment management, new program creation, and program revenue growth
  - ...for faculty mentoring and development
  - ...for IT in classes and labs, and
  - ...for what we do to create a better learning environment for students.
- Staff are focused on ways to provide even better service in a more complicated environment.
- Revenue increases allow us to offer better programs and do more to enhance and reward productivity.
- Our impact within the university and the community (both business and academic) is significantly higher.

SLIDE 3:
So... let's rest on our laurels.

- Our programs are as good as they can be.
- We're really efficient, too.
- Opportunities are few and far between; besides...
  - ...we've already got too much to do;
  - ...the timing is bad; and
  - ...the opportunities will still be around when we are ready to seize them.
- The university can get along without our help; what they do doesn't matter -- we're pretty well self-contained.
- And continuous improvement is a myth or of doubtful value anyway.

SLIDE 4:
Or, let's continue our momentum and heighten our impact:

- Pursue opportunities for new initiatives:
  - ...an executive MBA
  - ...joint programs with engineering--

manufacturing management
"biotechengineering entrepreneurship"

...launch of the already approved business minor
...an entrepreneurship center
...MGA, CQM, and SAP
...the "Manhattan Campus Project"

- Pursue opportunities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of what we do:
  ...BBA curriculum improvements
  ...Curriculum consistency across MBA programs
  ...A core of transportable course material
  ...Enrollment management (marketing and retention)
  ...Technology in the (virtual) classroom
  ...Better links between research and teaching