University and Business Accreditation Processes:
Building on Commonalities

Jonathan R. Anderson
University of West Georgia

Mary Kassis
University of West Georgia

Faye S. McIntyre
University of West Georgia

Brad Prince
University of West Georgia

National and regional accrediting bodies have specific requirements of higher education institutions designed to ensure educational quality and institutional effectiveness. Specialized accrediting bodies such as AACSB also outline expectations designed to meet similar goals. However, the requirements vary in both scope and scale, and terminology differs. There are many areas of overlap in the principles and standards of national and regional accrediting bodies for universities and of AACSB, including strategic planning and assessment or assurance of learning. This article presents the experiences of one college of business and how its leadership team has built synergy to meet the requirements of both accrediting bodies while minimizing duplication of effort.

INTRODUCTION

The Higher Education Act of 1965 mandates that only institutions of higher education who are accredited by a U.S. Department of Education-acknowledged body are allowed access to federally funded financial aid (Title IV funding) for students. For the majority of institutions of higher education, this accreditation is not optional; it is required for student recruitment and for operational funding. Almost 92% of college/university students in the U.S. are enrolled at a regionally accredited institution (see Table 1).

AACSB International (the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) accreditation is an indicator of quality for a business college and can provide a significant competitive advantage; however, it is optional and not mandated by regulation or the marketplace. In the U.S., accredited programs represent fewer than 32% of institutions offering business degrees.

Though requirements vary in both scope and scale, there are many areas of overlap in the principles and standards of national and regional accrediting bodies for universities and of AACSB, including strategic planning and assessment or assurance of learning. This article presents the experiences of one college of business and how its leadership has built synergy to meet the requirements of both accrediting bodies while minimizing duplication of effort. The University of West Georgia holds SACSCOC (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges) accreditation, and the Richards College of Business also holds AACSB accreditation in both business and accounting.

The following sections provide the institutional setting, an overview of both SACSCOC and AACSB accreditation, and outlines how the Richards College has built synergy to meet the requirements of both accrediting bodies in two key areas of strategic management and assessment or assurance of learning.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE CONTEXT

The University of West Georgia is a charter member of the University System of Georgia, commissioned by the Georgia State Legislature in 1906. Named West Georgia College in 1933, the institution was renamed the State University of West Georgia in 1996, and its current title, University of West Georgia, was adopted in 2005. The main campus sits on over 600 acres approximately 45 miles west of Atlanta, GA. In fall 2015, 12,834 students were enrolled in one of six academic colleges/schools: Colleges of Arts & Humanities, Education, Science & Mathematics, Social Sciences, Business, and the School of Nursing.

The University (then West Georgia College) has offered undergraduate business degrees since 1969 and graduate degrees since 1972. The Division of Business and Economics was restructured in 1973, creating the School of Business. The School was elevated to College status in 1997 and named the Richards College of Business in honor of Roy Richards, Sr. (founder of Southwire Company) and his wife Alice Huffard Richards.

The Richards College is housed in two building on campus: Miller Hall with over 33,000 sq. ft. and Adamson Hall with almost 21,500 sq. ft. The College is organized into four departments: Accounting & Finance, Economics, Management (which includes MIS), and Marketing & Real Estate. Four centers are housed within the College: Small Business Development Center, Center for Economic Education, Center for Business & Economic Research, and BB&T Center for Ethics & Free Enterprise. Fall 2015 enrollment in the College was 2,337, representing just over 18% of the University total.

Institutional Accreditation

For universities and colleges within the United States, regional and/or national accreditation became significant with the passing of the Higher Education Act (HEA) in 1965. The HEA expanded accreditors' role "by entrusting them with ensuring academic quality of the educational institutions at which federal student aid funds may be used subject to oversight by the federal government through the recognition process" (United States Department of Education, 2016a). This act provided contracts, loans, and small grants to students in need and required institutions of higher education who administered the grants to hold accreditation. Although in the beginning the act funding was limited to $1,000,000, according to the FY15 annual report, "The federal student loan portfolio grew to more than $1.2 trillion, representing an increase of over 7 percent compared to FY 2014. In total, Federal Student Aid delivered over $128 billion in aid to almost 12 million students at over 6,100 schools this past fiscal year" (Federal Student Aid a Department of the United States Department of Education, 2016). Since the time regional or national accreditation became the gatekeeper to these funds, holding accreditation has become not only evidence of a quality educational experience, but a boon to institutions whose students have access to Title IV financial aid funding.

The United States Department of Education (US DOE) recognizes the seal of approval from two categories of accreditors (regional and national) as well as a small number of state agencies when deciding whether or not institutions "establish eligibility to participate in Title IV programs" (United States Department of Education, 2016b). It is the responsibility of each of these accrediting bodies to

"ensure that education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality. Accrediting agencies, which are private educational associations of regional or national scope, develop evaluation criteria and conduct peer evaluations to assess whether or not those criteria are met. Institutions and/or programs that request an agency's evaluation and that meet an agency's criteria are then 'accredited' by that agency." (United States Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education, 2016). Once accredited, the institution can distribute Title IV financial aid funds to students on behalf of the US DOE.

There are distinct differences between national and regional accreditation. "Regional accrediting bodies conduct comprehensive reviews of institutions of higher education and operate primarily in a specific geographical area. The accreditation granted encompasses the entire institution including reported branch campuses, other instructional sites, online programs, and distance learning modalities. Regional accrediting bodies typically accredit a wide range of institutions offering associate, baccalaureate, masters and/or doctoral degrees. There are seven regional accrediting associations in the United States comprising eight commissions that grant institution-wide accreditation. While there are some modest differences in accreditation standards across regions, they operate similarly and all are recognized by the United States Department of Education (U.S.D.E.) to conduct accreditation activities. Regional accrediting bodies also serve a "gate keeper" function for access to Title IV funds" (SACSCOC, 2016).

Alternatively, "National accrediting bodies conduct comprehensive reviews of institutions and operate primarily throughout the United States. The accreditation granted encompasses the entire institution. Most of the accredited institutions are private and have missions focused either on career education or religious education" (Sacscoc.org, 2016). Many national accrediting agencies also provide a pathway for students to access Title IV financial Aid funding (United States Department of Education, 2016a).

The United States Department of Education publishes Performance Data by Accreditor for institutions of higher education which show that nearly 92% of all students enrolled in degree seeking institutions are enrolled in regionally accredited universities and colleges, while regionally accredited universities and colleges comprise only 47% of the institutions (see Table 1; Calculations completed by an author using data from: United States Department of Education, 2016a). In these data, specialized/programmatic accreditation often refers to independent, stand-alone institutions for career and/or professional education (i.e. a medical school within a hospital or stand-alone technical school). Since Regional Accreditors have a 92% market share and focus on the types of institutions that often house AACSB accredited colleges and schools of business, the remaining discussion will focus on regional accrediting commissions.

Regional accreditation bodies require institutions who hold their seal of approval to provide evidence that they meet federal standards and accreditation commission specific standards by implementing and assessing policies, practices, and procedures. The University of West Georgia is a Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) accredited institution. As such in order to keep Title IV financial aid funding eligibility, the University has to remain compliant with SACSCOC principles.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools was founded in 1895, and the Commission on Colleges was founded in 1912 (SACSCOC 2016). Today SACSCOC is the accrediting body for institutions of high education in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Latin America and other international sites. Its mission is to "assure the educational quality and improve the effectiveness of its member institutions." As of December 31, 2014, SACSCOC membership included 803 institutions and one candidate institution (SACS 2014).

TABLE 2
INSTITUTIONS AND ENROLLMENT BY ACCREDITATION TYPE

Accreditation Type	Number of Institutions	Undergraduate Degree/Certificate Seeking Enrollment	% of Institutions	% of Enrollment
National	3,587	1,267,920	46.66%	7.58%
Regional	3,586	15,311,360	46.65%	91.56%
Specialized/programmatic	438	117,116	5.70%	0.70%
State Agency	76	26,492	0.99%	0.16%
Total	7,687.00	16,722,888	100.00%	100.00%

Business Accreditation

Brink and Smith (2012) found that U.S. institutions holding AACSB accreditation expended more resources on instruction, had more personnel (instruction/research faculty and staff), and paid higher faculty salaries than institutions holding two other business accreditations: the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) and the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE).

AACSB is the oldest of the three business accrediting bodies, founded in 1916. IACBE was founded in 1977, and ACBSP was founded in 1988. All three are recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), and each has expectations and guidelines for achieving accreditation.

AACSB is "a global, nonprofit membership organization of educational institutions, businesses, and other entities devoted to the advancement of management education"; its mission is to advance "quality management education worldwide through accreditation, thought leadership, and value-added services" (AACSB 2016a). AACSB boasts that it provides the world's largest network of business schools, with over 1,400 educational members in 88 countries and territories (AACSB 2016a).

The Richards College of Business received initial AACSB accreditation in 1984, and the accounting programs received separate accreditation in 1998. Globally, fewer than 5% of business schools hold AACSB accreditation. In the U.S., accredited programs represent fewer than 32% of institutions offering business degrees.

AACSB celebrates its 100 year anniversary in 2016 and is currently undergoing a visioning initiative to prepare its members and others for the future of management education. A key element of this initiative is to ensure business schools "can deliver on their own missions in a way that produces a wider impact on society" The most recent accreditation standards were adopted in 2013 after more than two years of study and numerous conversations with constituents throughout the world, in both academia and industry.

BUILDING SYNERGY BETWEEN SACSCOC and AACSB

There are many areas of overlap between SACSCOC principles and AACSB accreditation principles. Table 2 provides an overview of the areas evaluated for accreditation and the time frame for review. Also noted are two key areas of significant overlap: strategic planning and assessment or assurance of learning.

TABLE 2
AACSB vs. SACSCOC STANDARDS COMPARISON

Accreditation	AACSB	SACSCOC
Overview	6 Eligibility Criteria 15 Standards for Accreditation	1 Principle of Integrity 12 Core Requirements 14 Comprehensive Standards
Review Cycle	Every 5 years	Every 10 years (with Fifth Year Interim Report)
Strategic Planning	*Standard 1:* The school articulates a clear and distinctive mission, the expected outcomes this mission implies, and strategies outlining how these outcomes will be achieved. The school has a history of achievement and improvement and specifies future actions for continuous improvement and innovation consistent with this mission, expected outcomes, and strategies.	*Standard: 3.1.1* The mission statement is current and comprehensive, accurately guides the institution's operations, is periodically reviewed and updated, is approved by the governing board, and is communicated to the institution's constituencies.
Assessment of Learning	*Standard 8:* The school uses well-documented, systematic processes for determining and revising degree program learning goals; designing, delivering, and improving degree program curricula to achieve learning goals; and demonstrating that degree program learning goals have been met. *Standard 9:* Curriculum content is appropriate to general expectations for the degree program type and learning goals.	*Standard: 3.3.1:* The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas: (Institutional Effectiveness) *Standard 3.3.1.1:* educational programs, to include student learning outcomes
Faculty Credentials	*Standard 5:* The school maintains and deploys a faculty sufficient to ensure quality outcomes across the range of degree programs it offers and to achieve other components of its mission. Students in all programs, disciplines, locations, and delivery modes have the opportunity to receive instruction from appropriately qualified faculty.	*Core Requirement 2.8:* The number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and integrity of each of its academic programs. *Standard 3.7.1:* The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate,

		undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty.

Although SACSCOC accreditation efforts are led at the University level, all colleges and schools (along with non-academic units) are essential in building accreditable programs and in providing necessary documentation to demonstrate compliance with the standards. Likewise, although AACSB accreditation is primarily the responsibility of the Richards College, the University plays a key role in building a quality program that is sustainable. The University's influence is felt by not only the Richards College; eleven different colleges, departments, or programs at UWG hold specialized accreditation. Each has a unique approach to accreditation with specific requirements, adding to the complexity to this task.

Efforts at UWG to align institution-wide efforts with College-level efforts are facilitated by ongoing dialogue between multiple parties at both levels regarding how best to identify and implement changes that will advance the Richards College and support (or at least don't conflict with) University-level initiatives to ensure compliance with regional accreditation expectation. Including faculty, staff and administrators together to discuss and appreciate different approaches to continuous improvement are key to finding the optimal alignment between the requirements of regional accreditation and AACSB accreditation.

Multiple points of communication include the following: The dean serves on the President's Advisory Council and the President's Cabinet; All assistant and associate deans across campus meet monthly; All deans, assistant and associate deans and department chairs meet monthly in an Administrative Council. The chair of the College Undergraduate Programs Committee and Graduate Programs Committee each serve on the University equivalent committee. All leaders across campus with five or more direct reports participate in Leadership Development Institutes quarterly.

The dean of the Richards College has served in her position for more than eleven years and led the efforts to implement the 2003 standards as well as those adopted in 2013. The College leadership team of assistant and associate deans, department chairs, and engaged senior faculty leading key committees (e.g., strategic planning, undergraduate programs, and graduate programs) have collaborated to ensure continuous improvement efforts necessary for AACSB accreditation are implemented and documented.

Further bridging SACSCOC and AACSB accreditation efforts occurred when a former Richards College associate dean joined the provost's office and was appointed to lead the regional accreditation efforts.

The following sections outline how the Richards College has built synergy to meet the requirements of both accrediting bodies in the two key areas of strategic management and assessment of learning.

Strategic Management

Section A of AACSB's 2013 standards focuses on Strategic Management and Innovation and is based on the "principle that a quality business school has a clear mission, acts on that mission, translates that mission into expected outcomes, and develops strategies for achieving those outcomes" (AACSB 2016b). Standard 1, in particular, provides guidance for the strategic planning process, including development of the college mission and strategies to achieve that mission.

Two groups share primary responsibility for gathering input and making strategic recommendations within the Richards College. The Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) is comprised of two faculty members from each department, one staff member, and ex-officio members including the dean, associate dean and assistant dean. The SPC is responsible for recommending policy or policy changes in: mission, vision, objectives, goals, and statement of ethical expectations; strategic planning process; financial and resources planning; technology planning; faculty governance; participant standards relating to faculty and staff; and AACSB eligibility requirements. Each of the department chairs, assistant dean, associate dean, and chair of SPC serve on the Dean's Advisory Council. SPC typically meet monthly and DAC typically meets twice monthly, though meetings may be more frequent if needed.

A key goal of the College strategic management efforts is to ensure that all College-level statements and processes are consistent with the University. The process for revising the College strategic plan provides a clear illustration of these efforts.

On July 1, 2013, UWG welcomed a new president. One of President Marrero's first actions was to work with the UWG Faculty Senate Strategic Planning Committee to begin revising the University's vision, mission, and strategic goals. The University process included utilizing existing resources and partners to draft a new strategic plan, gathering and incorporating input from multiple constituents, then presenting the plan for endorsement to the Student Government Association, Faculty Senate, Staff Advisory Council, general faculty, and the entire UWG campus. The Board of Regents of the USG gave final approval in fall 2014.

Richards College Dean McIntyre was part of the UWG Strategic Planning Committee and was able to facilitate moving the College strategic planning process forward concurrently with the University's. The DAC and SPC took feedback collected during 2012-13, collected additional input from faculty, staff, students, and board members (Board of Advisors and Accounting Advisory Board), developed a draft plan, and presented revised vision, mission, and strategic goals at the spring faculty and staff meeting. The revised statements were approved by unanimous vote of College faculty and staff on April 16, 2014, and subsequently endorsed by the advisory boards and the Dean's Council of Student Leader.

A similar process produced the earlier *Richards College of Business 2011-2016 Strategic Plan*. During the 2011 AACSB Maintenance of Accreditation visit, the peer review team noted "The strategic plan is well aligned with UWG's strategic plan."

Assessment/Assurance of Learning

Assessment first appeared in the AACSB standards in 1991. The focus in the 1991 standards was on "outcome assessment," and most of the emphasis was on indirect assessment measures such as surveys of students or employers. With the 2003 standards, AACSB moved away from outcome assessment and introduced the idea of Assurance of Learning (AOL). Although indirect measures were accepted as part of the AOL documentation, the emphasis was clearly on direct measures of student learning outcomes. AOL remains an important component of the 2013 standards, and the new standards give institutions additional flexibility to use indirect measures as part of their assessment process (AACSB, 2013).

Schools seeking to implement the AOL standards have faced many challenges since 2003. When the 2003 standards were introduced, the initial focus of accredited schools and schools seeking accreditation was on developing degree program learning goals and setting up an assessment process. At most schools the idea of direct assessment of student learning was new, and faculty training was needed. In a 2004 survey of deans at AACSB accredited schools and schools seeking accreditation, more than half of respondents reported that they were either worried or very worried about faculty knowledge about assessment (Martell, 2007).

In an effort to educate faculty and administrators on the AOL process, AACSB began offering assessment seminars as well as an annual assessment conference. Faculty attending these training sessions gained a better understanding of the AOL process and AACSB expectations and became well versed in concepts such a rubrics, curriculum maps, and "closing the loop." At the Richards College, many of the administrators and faculty that would play a key role in the assessment process (including the dean, associate and assistant deans, and many members of the Undergraduate and Graduate Program

Committees which oversees assessment) attended these training programs, providing needed human capital to build the initial College assessment program. Providing faculty training also helped manage faculty resistance to assessment, which is another commonly mentioned concern in surveys on AOL (Martell, 2007; Pringle and Michel, 2007). As faculty became educated about AOL, they generally were more supportive of the assessment process and more willing to be an active participant in continuous improvement efforts. These faculty were also helpful in educating other faculty about the purpose and requirements of assessment.

As the data on student outcomes was collected, the focus of AOL efforts shifted from developing assessment instruments to using assessment data to close the loop. Many of the assessments in the Richards College are course-embedded measures, so the closing the loop process generally starts with the faculty teaching the course. Generally after the data is collected, all faculty teaching the course review the results and make suggestions for improvements in curriculum, pedagogy, and/or evaluation. The suggested improvements are submitted as part of an assessment summary for review by the Undergraduate or Graduate Programs Committee, which consists of representatives from each department in the college. The committee can add additional comments or suggestions for improvements, which are then sent back to the faculty teaching the class, so the improvements can be implemented in the classroom. In the early stages of assessment, the focus of the improvements was often on modifying the assessment instrument and rubrics as faculty gained greater experience with designing assessment instruments. Unfortunately, in some cases, faculty members become more focused on designing the perfect assessment instrument rather than on improving student learning. One challenge faced as the assessment program matured was getting faculty to change their focus to emphasize pedagogy and curriculum improvements.

Survey results suggest that the time demands of assessment have been a concern at many business schools (Martell, 2007; Garrison and Rexeisen, 2014), and this has also been a concern in the Richards College. In response to the now mature AOL process and time concerns from the faculty, the Richards College has moved all the undergraduate assessments to a two-year cycle. With this system, the College is able to close the loop for each objective at least twice in every 5-year cycle as expected by AACSB and ensure consistent, long-term buy-in of faculty.

The two-year assessment cycle has been very successful for the Richards College. Faculty feel the assessment load is more manageable, and the quality of closing the loop process is higher as faculty are willing to spend more time carefully reviewing the assessment results and developing more meaningful course and program improvements. The MBA assessment has not been moved to a two-year cycle due in part to the multi-campus nature of this program

One key distinction between AACSB and SACSCOC expectations for AOL is in the definition of program, and thus the level of evaluation. AACSB requires development of learning goals and objectives for "each degree program, not for separate majors or concentrations within a degree" (AACSB, 2012), with regular assessment of progress toward them and evidence of continuous improvement. SACSCOC, however, requires outcome statements, assessment and evidence of improvement at the individual major level for all academic programs.

One of the College LGs is that students will possess a basic knowledge of accounting, economics, finance, the legal environment of business, management, management information systems, and marketing. To assess this goal, faculty developed a senior exam, given in the capstone course prior to graduation. The ten questions per discipline provide evidence for the AACSB AOL process on how all BBA majors are performing. As part of the SACSCOC AOL process, each discipline is able to parse out its majors and use the same data for the individual major assessment. For example, the management department receives data on how management majors perform on the management questions on the field exam, and management faculty then use this information to show assessment activities and continuous improvement at the major level.

Thus, the Richards College has been able to build synergy in some of its assessment efforts. In addition, the College's early experience with assessment has been used as an example for other colleges on campus as they have developed their own assessment programs for SACSCOC.

The Role of Technology

Over the years, the nature of managing the accreditation processes has changed drastically. Every industry has moved toward more data collection, analysis, and reporting, and accreditation is no different. As Khoury, Bucci, and Sanders (2011/2012) succinctly stated, the "days of record keeping by paper have gone the path of the telegraph and typewriter."

The Richards College uses a licensed electronic system for collecting and reporting faculty activities. This system has served the college well as it manages faculty credentialing. However, the University has yet to adopt a third party vendor to manage faculty credentials. The current process consists of new faculty member submitting transcripts, the transcripts being evaluated for compliance with SACSCOC requirements, and if a justification is needed, the department chairs submitting that justification to support the decision for a specific teaching assignment. Due to the manual nature of this process, it becomes difficult to verify on a semester by semester basis that faculty across the university are teaching courses they are qualified to teach based on their credentialing. Within the college of business it is much easier to check teaching assignments as the faculty credentials are kept within a system that integrates teaching assignments and areas of expertise. This is one area where greater synergy is possible between specialized and regional accreditation efforts, but it has not yet been captured.

Attempts at the University level to develop a single system for reporting assessment data across all colleges, programs, and departments have yet to be successful. A number of third party vendors have been explored, but no program has been identified that fits the needs of all specialized accrediting entities across campus in addition to the requirements of SACSCOC. One attempt to build a single system included the Information Technology staff developing an in-house system for collecting and reporting assessment data across the University. After several years of experimentation and multiple attempts to build consensus across campus, the system was not widely accepted nor were components of the system meeting the needs of SACSOC or the many specialized accreditation bodies of differing academic units. This problem has yet to find a technical solution.

What seems to work best, so far, for both SACSCOC and AACSB assessment reporting is basic technology that faculty and staff are familiar with and comfortable using. Faculty complete assessment or assurance of learning reports using a Microsoft Word template and submit these to the Director of Assessment. These reports are reviewed by the appropriate committees (undergraduate and graduate) and finalized between the faculty and the director. Numerical performance reports on Learning Objectives are kept in an EXCEL spreadsheet to create the reports necessary for the AACSB. At the University level, these same reports are collected in Word format and the data reported on an EXCEL spreadsheet for SACSCOC.

Although this approach to collecting assessment and faculty data seems rudimentary, the real value of the process is its simplicity. Faculty and departments prepare reports that include both quantitative data and narrative. These reports are shared through the committee structure and in turn are the basis for preparing reports for outside entities. This process seems to be most inclusive, simple, and successful, despite the unsophisticated nature of the technology being employed.

CONCLUSION

The complex web of regional and specialized accreditation processes can be overwhelming for universities and colleges. If not managed well, these processes can drain resources away from the educational mission. However, as taxpayers, tuition payers, and other stakeholders involved in the process of higher education continue to call for greater transparency, accountability and increased return on investment (Cowan, 2014), the role of accreditation will continue to evolve and likely become more cumbersome (Wolff, 2014). Both regional and specialized accreditations play a role in this developing saga.

The unique role of regional accreditation in allowing institutions to access Title IV financial aid funding from the US Department of Education provides a significant justification for institutions to comply with regional accreditation principles. Additionally, as competition for students increases between

business schools and colleges, the support structure and symbol of maintaining AACSB accreditation will continue to increase in value. Indeed, the role of regional and specialized accreditation will become more important as the market for students tightens and calls for transparency and added value.

As many colleges or schools of business are housed within regionally accredited universities, administrators and faculty must be adept at both keeping administrative processes focused on maintaining AACSB continuous improvement efforts and simultaneously maintaining compliance with regional accrediting principles. This balancing act can be difficult, but, as this article notes, there are ample opportunities for synergy between these efforts.

Synergy can be built in many areas of the institution. Both regional and specialized accreditation efforts require strategic management or planning and the assessment or assurance of learning. Also, these processes require some level of technology to facilitate their conception, integration, and implementation. The intent of this article is to provide one example of how synergy can be and has been captured within one institution. This article also identifies areas that have yet to be explored and synergy that has yet to be captured. Despite future room for growth, efforts so far have led to a decrease in the duplication, an increase in a shared respect for the unique roles of regional and specialized accreditation, and ample opportunities for robust discussion.

REFERENCES

AACSB (2012). Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation, January 31, 2012 update. Retrieved from http://www.aacsb.edu/~/media/AACSB/Docs/Accreditation/Standards/2003%20Standards/2012-business-accreditation-standards-update.ashx.

AACSB. (2013). AACSB Assurance of Learning Standards: An Interpretation AACSB White Paper No. 3. Retrieved from http://www.aacsb.edu/~/media/AACSB/Publications/white-papers/wp-assurance-of-learning-standards.ashx.

AACSB. (2016a). Retrieved from http://www.aacsb.edu/.

AACSB. (2016b). Retrieved from Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation, January 31, 2016 update.

Brink, K. and Smith, C.A. (2012). A Comparison of AACSB, ACBSP, and IACBE Accredited U.S. Business Programs: An Institutional Resource Perspective. *Business Education & Accreditation*, 4 (2), 1-15.

Cowan, K. (2014). Higher Education's Higher Accountability. American Council on Higher Education. Retrieved from http://www.acenet.edu/the-presidency/columns-and-features/Pages/Higher-Education's-Higher-Accountability.aspx.

Federal Student Aid a Department of the United States Department of Education (2016). Annual Report FY15. Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/2015report/fsa-report.pdf.

Garrison, M.J., and Rexeisen, R.J. (2014). Faculty Ownership of the Assurance of Learning Process: Determinants of Faculty Engagement and Continuing Challenges. *Journal of Education for Business*, 89, 84-89.

Khoury, S., Bucci, D., and Sanders, J. (2011/2012). Automated Tracking of Faculty Credentials: A Comparison of Two Systems. *Journal of Management & Engineering Integration*, 4 (Winter), 42-51.

Martell, K. (2007). Assessing Student Learning: Are Business Schools Making the Grade? *Journal of Education for Business*, 82 (March/April), 189-195.

Pringle, C. and Michel, M. (2007). Assessment Practices in AACSB-Accredited Business Schools. *Journal of Education for Business*, 82 (March/April), 202-211.

SACSCOC (2014). 2015 Annual Report and Proceedings. Retrieved from http://www.sacscoc.org/2015%20annual%20report/index.html.

SACSCOC (2016). Retrieved from http://www.sacscoc.org/.

United States Department of Education (2016a). Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation.html#Overview.

United States Department of Education (2016b). Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg6.html.

United States Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education (2016). Retrieved from http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/.

Wolff, R.A. (2014). What's right with regional accreditation (and how we can make it even better). American Council on Higher Education. Retrieved from http://www.acenet.edu/the-presidency/columns-and-features/Pages/Exploding-Myths.aspx

CORRESPONDING AUTHOUR:

Jon Anderson, Ph.D.
Department of Management - RCOB
Miller Hall
1601 Maple Street
Carrollton, GA 30118
Phone: 678-839-6472