

Isenberg School of Management

A School of Management offering Bachelor of Business Administration (B.B.A.) degrees in Accounting, Finance and Operations Management, Management, and Marketing; B.S. degrees in Hospitality and Tourism Management and Sport Management; the M.S. in Accounting (M.S.A.); M.S. degrees in Hospitality and Tourism Management and Sport Management; the Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.); the Professional Master of Business Administration (P.M.B.A.); and Ph.D. degrees in Management and Sport Management.

■ The Review Process

This review was conducted as the Fifth-Year Maintenance Review by the School's accrediting body, AACSB International. Reviewers were:

Business Programs:

Sara Freedman, chair (Mississippi State University)

Daniel Himarios (University of Texas, Arlington)

Accounting Programs:

Frances Ayres, chair (University of Oklahoma)

Ann Pushklin (West Virginia University)

■ Main Issues

As part of its accreditation cycle with AACSB, International, the Isenberg School of Management (ISOM) participated in a five-year maintenance review during 2005-06. Two teams visited the campus, one focused on business programs and the other specifically on Accounting. All programs in the School were reviewed with the exception of those in Hospitality and Tourism Management, which undergoes a separate disciplinary accreditation on a different cycle.

- In preparation for the visit the ISOM submitted a report describing significant changes in the School since the last full accreditation review, and providing detailed information demonstrating compliance with the AACSB accrediting standards. ISOM reported having made “tremendous strides” since the last accreditation review, including higher revenues from continuing education programs and gifts, the construction of a state-of-the-art classroom wing, updated computer equipment and the addition of ten new, tenure-track faculty members. Two applied management programs — Sport Management and Hospitality and Tourism Management — have been integrated into ISOM after transferring from another College. The School reported curriculum improvements at all levels, and diversity initiatives that have resulted in “huge strides in the minority composition of our undergraduate and masters programs,” with slower but measurable progress in the Ph.D. program.
- ISOM also described the process and outcomes of its strategic planning process, from which emerged an overarching goal of achieving top 50 or greater ranking by 2008. The School's analysis suggested that one of the primary distinctions between ISOM and top 50 business schools is size. To address this factor ISOM targeted growth of 800 undergraduates and 20 faculty, and is seeking to achieve this goal through the University's comprehensive faculty hiring process.

- A major focus of the ISOM report and the AACSB review was student outcomes assessment and application of assessment data to program improvement. ISOM reported a strong focus on assessment and outcome measurement, and that “the processes and measurements used to assess learning outcomes have become increasingly formal and systematic in recent years.” Each of the degree programs within ISOM have articulated learning goals and use a variety of methods to measure achievement of those objectives.

Undergraduate Program. At the undergraduate level, the curriculum is designed to foster the development of knowledge and skills in several critical areas:

- Creative and critical thinking, analysis, reasoning, questioning and quantitative skills.
- Ethical, legal, and socially responsible behavior by focusing on the interaction of business with society.
- Writing, speaking, and interpersonal communication skills.
- Information literacy through research skills and the use of technology.
- Understanding of cross-cultural issues and global issues and sensitivity to diversity and other cultures.
- Self-direction, leadership, teamwork and collaboration skills.
- Development of discipline-specific knowledge as well as an interdisciplinary view of business in society.

The Curriculum Committee has further delineated specific learning objectives and outcomes for these skills, and an annual review of the goals and specific objectives is conducted with the faculty as a whole. Based on this review and the observations from the various outcome measurements collected, the desired learning outcomes are revised on an annual basis.

The School’s Evaluation of Learning Outcomes Process, in place since Spring 2002, collects data from multiple sources:

- Analysis of syllabi and other course materials for match with desired learning objectives.
- Review of course evaluations for student perceptions about learning outcomes and achievement.
- Evaluation of overall learning outcome perceptions using a senior exit survey.
- Measurement and observation of learning outcomes utilizing extensive student portfolio analysis and focus groups.
- Collection and analysis of structured constituent feedback (e.g., recruiters, alums).

Because the School recognizes that student feedback and perceptions provide only partial insight into the achievement of learning outcomes, the centerpiece of its evaluation process involves a portfolio analysis of all work done by a sample of students in all of their courses. This process involves students in the collection and analysis of course-related work that is independently reviewed and evaluated by faculty teams. ISOM reports that this analysis has stimulated wide conversation about curriculum goals and has resulted in significant changes to the undergraduate curriculum and goals.

An annual progress report of the Evaluations of Learning Outcomes Process is distributed to the faculty, the School’s Business Advisory Council, and other involved constituents. The process is continually reviewed and revised, and specific segments of the undergraduate curriculum are identified each year to be the primary area of focus for in-depth analysis.

Graduate Programs. Desired learning outcomes for the MBA were developed in 2002, and the capstone MBA Practicum Experience was created as both a vehicle for putting desired skills into practice and for measuring the program's effectiveness in developing these skills. The MBA curriculum is designed to provide all full-time students with the same set of core knowledge and skills during the first year. Given the small program size, students take courses together in a lock-step, modular fashion. Each module focuses on developing specific skills and technical competencies, and each student is evaluated within each module using a variety of traditional assessment techniques. In addition to course-based evaluation of learning outcomes, the MBA Practicum Experience provides a formal comprehensive vehicle for assessing the program's success at developing desired learning outcomes. In the practicum, teams of students work throughout the semester on in-depth, real-world business problems with stipulated goals and desired learning outcomes for the project. A committee of faculty evaluates the end-product of each project. A similar process, focusing on the major student internship experience, exists for the M.S. degree in Sport Management. Outcomes assessment at the doctoral level is more individualized.

- The ISOM report also placed major emphasis on financial strategies necessary to support its plans. The most significant financial issue cited was the need for physical expansion of the School, a challenge that “renders any other financial questions insignificant by comparison.” The School reported that the new addition, opened in 2002, is already full as a consequence of rapid growth in enrollment and the integration of Sport Management faculty, staff, and programs into the ISOM building. The School now plans another addition for which funding is being sought, and indicates that any significant increase in the number of faculty and enrollment will depend on adding the space needed to accommodate the increase. The School reported “enormous growth” in revenue from continuing education programs that is used to support its regular programs but, in light of potential changes to the University's system for allocating such revenues, indicates that it will “withhold further investment in net new faculty positions until space and longer term agreements on the security of funding sources have been secured.”

■ Results of the Review

The AACSB team concluded that ISOM “has attained the level of quality expected for reaffirmation of accreditation,” and noted that “the School has made significant progress” since its last review. The team emphasized several effective practices underlying this conclusion: increased fundraising and revenue-generation programs; a “collegial and supportive” organizational culture; increased expectations for and support of research; a “significant program for assurance of learning for each of its degrees;” and successful integration of the material in the M.B.A. program. With respect to the Accounting programs, the team made special reference to the “strong culture of mutual respect;” the “excellent” and well-integrated writing program; an innovative faculty with a strong commitment to teaching; and a strong relationship with the external community.

On January 5, 2006, ISOM was informed that its AACSB accreditation had been extended for six years, with the next maintenance review to occur in 2010-11.