

Research Finds AACSB Accreditation Very Beneficial for Schools and Their Stakeholders

In a global research initiative by AACSB and Clarion Research, final results have found that the process and long-term effects of AACSB Accreditation are positive for business programs, faculty/staff, students, and employers. The research methodology included both qualitative and quantitative analyses of interviews with 20 business school leaders from North America, South America, Europe, Western Asia, Asia, and Oceania; surveyed 234 AACSB-accredited and 71 in-process institutions worldwide; and performed subgroup and statistical testing.

Major Research Findings

Internal Benefits for Schools

Mission and Strategy

One portion of the the qualitative interview process asked business school deans about the internal benefits of obtaining AACSB Business Accreditation. Schools reported that the models and methods of the accreditation process were beneficial in creating strategic plans that achieved missions. Over time, deans felt that the maintenance of AACSB Accreditation helped them to benchmark against other institutions and further improve strategic objectives. The quantitative analysis verified this feedback further. For instance, a sample of 211 institutions worldwide that were “familiar with the AACSB Accreditation Process,” responded that the most important benefits of the process were that (1) it brought focus and discipline to the goal of improving quality and (2) it helped clarify and strategically focus mission/vision and supporting strategic plans. Also on the list of the most important benefits, ranking at number four, was that the AACSB Accreditation Process provided an organized and logical framework for tracking progress and supporting internal operations.

External Image

Outside of mission and strategy, deans reported many benefits of AACSB Accreditation on the external image of a business school. For example, of 305 AACSB-accredited and in-process institutions worldwide, 99 percent reported that AACSB Accreditation established credibility among other business schools, 97 percent found that it enhanced their school’s external image, 95 percent stated that it was an emblem that demonstrated the quality of their programs over others, and 95 percent responded that it indicated their quality was higher than non-AACSB-accredited schools.

Faculty Culture and Quality

AACSB Accreditation also has positive impacts on faculty quality, recruitment, retention, and culture. For instance, 91 percent of 305 institutions reported that holding AACSB Accreditation improved their ability to recruit and retain quality faculty, and 88 percent responded that it enabled their school to increase

hiring standards and ultimately select higher quality applicants. Schools also found that holding AACSB Accreditation enhanced the professional and academic credentials of their faculty and staff (90 percent).

Concerning faculty culture, of the same 305 institutions, 96 percent of deans reported that AACSB Accreditation was a “badge of pride” for their school and a validation of their programs. This sense of pride was found as a morale enhancer, as 90 percent of deans found that AACSB Accreditation fostered an improved internal culture among faculty and staff.

External Benefits for Stakeholders

The positive outcomes of AACSB Accreditation on students were visible throughout the data analyses. For starters, 91 percent of 305 schools reported that AACSB Accreditation allowed them to effectively compete with other schools for quality students—providing current students with better quality peers. Further questioning found that not only were applicants (undergraduate and graduate) of better quality, but there was an overall increase in the number of students applying. For institutions that were focused on international recruiting, 74 percent of 234 accredited schools found that holding AACSB Accreditation resulted in an increase in the number of quality international applicants (as measured by test scores and GPAs). Schools elaborated that the increased applications followed with increased retention and graduation rates, as well as overall increases in graduating student GPAs. Additionally, 60 percent of the same group of accredited schools reported an increase in undergraduates continuing on to a master’s degree at their school.

AACSB Accreditation also has shown many benefits for students in relation to post-graduation employment. For example, 89 percent of 305 schools reported that AACSB Accreditation helped produce higher caliber, better educated graduates who are more desirable to prospective employers. AACSB Accreditation also encouraged employers to recruit and offer attractive salaries. For instance, 83 percent of 234 accredited schools experienced an increase in recruiters/employers interested in their graduates, and 69 percent of these schools said their graduates were being offered higher, more competitive salaries. Additionally, schools reported that they were aware of companies that only recruit from AACSB-accredited institutions, and were able to name several major global organizations.

In conclusion, the AACSB International research study supported and identified many positive outcomes of the AACSB Accreditation process and the long-term maintenance of AACSB Business Accreditation. The study’s data collection was done in a manner that will allow AACSB International to continue to monitor the value of its accreditation, creating historical information and perspectives. All of which will help to ensure that AACSB Accreditation standards meet today’s business needs and continue to create and maintain quality business programs.

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