A Vision for Management Education
Public Engagement Session at the 2014 AACSB Sustainability Conference
“The Role of Management Leadership in Addressing Societal Challenges”

During the AACSB Sustainability Conference held in Atlanta, Georgia from June 22-24, 2014, a pre-conference bonus session was delivered as the first public engagement opportunity regarding the Committee on Issues in Management Education (CIME) Visioning Initiative. The session was led by Robert T. Sumichrast, dean of the Pamplin College of Business, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and CIME member. Thirty-five individuals attended the session, titled, “The Role of Management Leadership in Addressing Societal Challenges.”

The session was intended to support CIME’s effort to engage a variety of management and management education stakeholders in discussion of visions for management in society and for management education. Although there have already been numerous reports about the future of management education, this initiative is unique in that its starting point is an effort to better understand evolving global societal needs from business.

Attendees at the Sustainability Conference engaged in an interactive exercise focusing on two major questions:

1. **What are the most important grand challenges that management**
   a. **has (partially) solved, or**
   b. **should address in the next 50 years?**

2. **What should be changed in the business school to help future management address one or more of the grand challenges, in the context of the educational experiences offered and/or research/knowledge created?**

   Regarding the first question, a number of grand challenges, already addressed or that should be addressed by management, were identified and shared:

   - Allocation of resources for the promotion of clean energy
   - Allocation of resources to provide aid and business opportunities in underdeveloped areas
   - LEAN manufacturing
   - Need for creative problem solving in non win-win situations
   - Establishment of carbon credits
   - Developing and harnessing technology for social good
   - Sharing services as a sustainable effort through collaborative economies
   - Management and/or elimination of waste, e.g., through good design
   - Implementation of fair wages, including those of CEOs
   - Better product design, e.g., interchangeable design or updateable parts
   - Prolonging product life cycles
• Reaching compatibility between shareholders’ wealth maximization and sustainability
• Creating a sense of urgency regarding sustainability/global economy and citizenship, e.g., triple bottom line
• Ability to define and articulate what constitutes a ‘social problem’

Attendees also engaged in a robust discussion regarding how business schools can address such challenges through educational experiences offered to students, as well as through research activities:

• Create greater emphasis on social entrepreneurship and awareness of social problems in curricula, e.g., within field consulting projects, as well as other educational experiences
• Break down disciplinary silos across the university campus
• Promote service learning projects with faculty mentorship throughout the core curriculum
• Use a project-based approach within sustainability courses
• Engage the business community, e.g., student field trips to companies with exemplary models/practices; have students work with companies in developing sustainable business plans
• Offer business certifications in sustainability
• Introduce a business plan project where half of the class is required to incorporate sustainability into the business plan, and the other half is not required to do so. Students will then compare differences in their work.
• Create campus affinity groups/ student clubs focused on sustainability
• Instill notions of global citizenship within students
• Create major and/or minor programs focused on management’s role in addressing societal challenges
• Encourage or require that MBA students sit on not-for-profit boards
• Push for AACSB mandates and/or professional examinations to include sustainability/social impact focus
• Modify rewards systems for research on such topics, such as paradigm shifts on underlying economic theory; correlation on cause-effect between business activities and social problems; measuring social costs and benefits
• Encourage collaborative research with students
• Ensure that sustainability journals/cross disciplinary research are valued and on the “preferred list”

Attendees were reminded of their contributions to the discussion throughout the conference and during subsequent sessions. The session served as only the first of several in a series engagement opportunities. CIME continues to explore management’s role in helping to address societal challenges, which will comprise an important element for illuminating a path forward for management education and business schools worldwide.