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# Accounting Administrator Perceptions of Impediments to Seeking AACSB Accounting Accreditation

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# **Accounting Administrator Perceptions of Impediments to Seeking AACSB Accounting Accreditation**

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## **Abstract**

As of April, 2012, only 168 U.S. collegiate accounting programs had attained and maintained AACSB accounting accreditation. Our objective was to determine why more U.S. collegiate accounting programs have chosen not to pursue AACSB accounting accreditation by identifying accreditation-related issues that are perceived to reduce interest in seeking and/or ability to attain it.

Surveys were returned by 103 of the 303 accounting program administrators at U.S. educational institutions with AACSB business (but not accounting) accreditation. On average, the 86 respondents from units not pursuing accounting accreditation neither agreed nor disagreed attainment of accounting accreditation would be valued by their accounting program's internal constituencies or would enhance their program's reputation. Further, these respondents generally perceive their accounting program meets AACSB accounting pre-conditions and would have the ability to meet most accounting accreditation standards if they chose to pursue accounting accreditation. The issues of most significance are resource-related – securing the necessary resources to achieve their mission and action items, and to meet AACSB standards on faculty sufficiency. Overall, the respondents' lack of interest in accounting accreditation reportedly has less to do with the inability to meet most accreditation standards and more to do with a lack of perceived value in accounting accreditation to warrant commitment of necessary additional resources.

## **Introduction**

While discussed as early as the 1950s, an accounting accreditation program was not created until 1978 when the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (now the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International; hereafter, the "AACSB") approved such. Accounting accreditation standards were adopted in 1980 and accreditation of collegiate accounting programs began with the accreditation of eighteen accounting programs in 1982 (Gaharan et al., 2007).

The idea of accounting accreditation was initially well-received. Brown and Balke (1983) reported that 84 percent of the accounting chairs at AACSB-accredited business schools responding to their survey expressed intent to seek accounting accreditation. As of April, 2012, however, only 178 accounting programs world-wide (27 percent of the 648 AACSB business accredited institutions) had attained and maintained accounting accreditation; one hundred sixty-eight of these accounting programs are located in the United States (U.S.). Why have more U.S. accounting programs not chosen to pursue accounting accreditation? The objectives of this paper are to answer this question by determining whether accounting accreditation is valued, and by identifying AACSB accounting accreditation-related issues that are perceived to reduce interest in seeking and/or the ability to attain AACSB accounting accreditation through a survey of U.S. accounting program administrators.

## The Evolution of Accounting Accreditation

### *The Purpose of Educational Accreditation*

The basic purpose of any educational accreditation is to provide a means for professionals, potential students, recruiters, employers of graduates, and prospective faculty and administrators to identify quality educational programs or institutions that have met certain pre-determined standards established and recognized by a peer group (i.e., the accrediting body), and to raise the overall quality of education by requiring that educational programs and institutions achieve a minimum standard of excellence. Additionally, accreditation can serve as a basis for certification or licensure for professional programs (MacKenzie, 1964; Henderson & Jordan, 1990).

More specifically the advantages of accreditation, as cited in prior research, are: 1) faculty and administrators are encouraged to design effective curricula and raise academic standards; 2) faculty qualifications and development are determined and evolve over time; 3) accreditation requirements may protect faculty from undue internal or external pressures to modify curriculum; 4) students and recruiters have assurance that the educational program or institution has met minimum standards appropriate to the established mission; 5) accreditation can provide faculty with the opportunity to establish and enforce student admission and retention policies; 6) financial support for accredited schools and programs increases; 7) educational institutions may choose to accept student transfer credits only from accredited colleges and universities; 8) students' graduate with somewhat better job placement opportunities; and 9) employers and licensing bodies are assured of a standard of achievement (Allyn, 1966; Gaharin, 2007; Hardin & Stocks, 1995; Henderson & Jordan, 1990; Kim et al., 1996; Lindsay & Campbell, 2003; Miles et al., 2004; Selden, 1956; Selden & Porter, 1977; Sinning & Dykxhoom, 2001).

### *The Development of Accounting Accreditation*

In the 1970s, the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) issued a resolution to develop quality professional schools and programs of accounting, and to participate in the accreditation of five-year graduate accounting programs. The American Association of Accountants (AAA) issued its own report at that time encouraging the accreditation of four-year accounting programs, graduate accounting programs, and MBA programs with an accounting concentration (Langenderfer, 1987).

The AACSB opposed the separate accreditation of programs and schools of accounting, deeming it unnecessary (Langenderfer, 1987). Despite this, in September 1977, the AICPA and AAA agreed to sponsor an accounting education accreditation agency, the Accounting Accreditation Council (AAC), which would set accreditation standards for accounting programs in consultation with the AACSB (Langenderfer, 1987). The AACSB reacted by appointing a subcommittee to address the separate accreditation of accounting programs, and to ensure the power of separate accreditation rested with the AACSB. The first formal AACSB accounting accreditation standards were issued in 1980 (Langenderfer, 1987).

In 1991, the AACSB dramatically revised the accounting accreditation standards to a mission-based approach to recognize the variety of existing accounting and business programs, and to provide flexibility in curriculum development and resource deployment (Bailey & Bentz, 1991; Kren et al., 1993). Subsequently, the AACSB issued revised accounting accreditation standards in 2001, 2004 (the most significant of these revisions), 2005, 2007, 2008, and 2009 to reflect increased emphasis on ethical concerns, global issues, the impact of technology, and political, environmental and social concerns (AACSB, 2013; Bitter et al., 1999; Gaharan et al., 2007; Henderson & Jordan, 1990; Miles et al., 2004; Pastore, 1989; Sinning & Dykxhoom, 2001).<sup>1</sup>

## Prior Research on Accounting Accreditation

### *Accreditation Research Under the 1980 Accounting Accreditation Standards*

With the initiation of separate accounting accreditation and with each change in the accounting accreditation standards, accounting academics predicted that more accounting programs would become separately accredited. Balke and Brown (1985) surveyed accounting chairs of AACSB business accredited schools regarding their intention to seek separate accounting accreditation for their baccalaureate degree program with an accounting concentration, MBA program with a

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<sup>1</sup> New *Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Accounting Accreditation*, a significant revision, were issued in 2013. Standards addressing impact and accounting-related information technology were added.

concentration in accounting, and masters in accounting program. Eighty-three percent of the 116 respondents planned to seek separate accounting accreditation. Reasons given for seeking separate accounting accreditation were: 1) the prestige of having the credential, 2) to achieve an established standard level of excellence, 3) to aid in recruiting quality faculty and students, 4) to use as leverage to secure resources, 5) to indicate to recruiters the quality of the accounting program, and 6) to compete successfully with other accounting programs. The chairs, however, did identify some reasons for not seeking separate accounting accreditation: 1) the process was perceived as time consuming and expensive, 2) there could be difficulty in meeting the Ph.D. program staffing requirements, 3) the commitment of resources needed to seek and maintain accreditation was too high, 4) and the standards did not differ enough from the AACSB business school standards to be worth the effort of seeking separate accounting accreditation (Balke & Brown, 1985).

By 1989, only 10 percent (72) of eligible accounting programs had separate accreditation (Gaharan et al., 2007; Pastore, 1989). Henderson and Jordan (1990) surveyed deans and accounting professors at AACSB business accredited and non-business accredited schools regarding their opinions of the advantages and disadvantages of business accreditation. The statements in the survey to deans were different than the statements to the accounting professors. Respondents were encouraged to write comments they felt reflected both the positive and negative aspects of business accreditation. Although the study did not specifically address separate accounting accreditation, the disadvantages of business accreditation noted by the respondents may apply to separate accounting accreditation. The 228 deans indicated that accreditation improved the curriculum and common body of knowledge, brought a level of prestige, and improved faculty, funding, students, and research. The 637 accounting professors noted the same advantages. The deans felt cost, the inflexibility of the standards, too much emphasis on research, and the time required for the processes were disadvantages of accreditation. Some felt, however, that the cost of accreditation was justified as it improves faculty classroom performance, and it gives the appearance of quality to attract better students. Accounting professors perceived the disadvantages of accreditation were over-emphasis on research, less time spent with students, rigid or irrelevant accreditation standards, the time required for the process, the cost, and over-emphasis on faculty having a terminal degree (Henderson & Jordan, 1990).

#### ***Accreditation Research Under the Mission-Driven Accounting Accreditation Standards***

One of the primary purposes of separate accounting accreditation is to assure that academics develop and maintain high-quality accounting programs. The original standards from 1980 were prescriptive and rigid and, therefore, were thought to limit innovation. The revised 1991 standards were mission-based, requiring faculty and administrators to develop a mission statement with objectives related to students, faculty, and instructional resources. The standards maintained some minimum resource requirements, such as those relating to faculty and their qualifications (Bitter et al., 1999; Gaharan et al., 2007; Sinning & Dykxhoorn, 2001).

Collegiate business schools, consistent with their mission, determine the relative emphasis to be placed on faculty teaching and intellectual contributions, and the types of intellectual contributions (including publications) that are to be emphasized. Many (including deans at both accredited and non-business accredited schools) believed that the mission-based accreditation standards would result in an increased number of business accredited institutions, particularly schools that emphasize teaching over research (Yunker, 1998; Jantzen, 2000).

Kren, Tatum and Phillips (1993) surveyed accounting administrators at AACSB accredited business schools to determine if accounting accreditation standards are perceived to contribute to maintaining quality accounting education. Additionally, the authors sought the administrators' attitudes toward the costs and benefits associated with accounting accreditation. At the time of the study, only 29 percent of accounting programs in AACSB business accredited schools held separate accounting accreditation. Approximately half (54) of the 114 survey respondents were from schools with separate accounting accreditation. Two-thirds of the 60 respondents from non-accounting accredited schools indicated their school was planning to apply for the separate accounting accreditation. Both the separately accounting accredited and the non-accounting accredited respondents felt the four potential objectives of separate accounting accreditation presented in the survey were appropriate: 1) establish and maintain minimum-quality standards, 2) aide prospective students in selecting accounting programs, 3) assist faculty in selecting academic accounting programs where they would prefer to seek employment, and 4) aid recruiters in assessing the quality of potential student hires. The non-accounting accredited program administrators felt that separate accreditation was only moderately desirable. These individuals indicated there were three reasons why separate accounting accreditation was not desirable: 1) compliance with the separate accreditation administrative requirements was so burdensome that accreditation was not worth the

effort, 2) separate accounting accreditation was redundant, and 3) accounting standards cannot be constructed to deal with all the objectives of diverse accounting programs (Kren et al., 1993).

Bitter and co-authors (1999) surveyed accounting program administrators at both accounting accredited and non-accounting accredited programs on the value of separate accounting accreditation. There were two versions of the survey, with one sent to administrators of accounting accredited programs and the other sent to administrators of the non-accounting accredited programs. A total of 161 responses were received, with 90 of the responses from administrators at non-accounting accredited programs. Administrators of non-accounting accredited programs believed that separate accounting accreditation was valued more by the accounting faculty than by administration and business faculty, and that separate accreditation enhanced an accounting program's reputation with peers, but not students or employers. These accounting administrators believed that AACSB accounting accreditation was more difficult to achieve than the business accreditation. Reasons cited for not seeking separate accounting accreditation were the amount of faculty and administrative time devoted to the process and other monetary costs. Thirty-nine percent believed the costs exceeded the benefits of separate accreditation. Twenty-nine percent reported that they did not meet then current accounting accreditation standards (Bitter et al., 1999).

Roller et al. (2003) surveyed deans and chairs of business accredited<sup>2</sup> and non-business accredited schools to determine what they believed the benefits of specialized business accreditation might be. There were 122 surveys returned, with 30 responses from non-business accredited programs. The attitudes towards both the advantages and disadvantages of business accreditation are similar to the attitudes of accounting administrators in surveys requesting impressions of separate accounting accreditation. Respondents indicated that having business accreditation benefited the recruitment process for faculty, the ability to bargain for additional resources, and for marketing the program. Ten of the non-business accredited respondents indicated they were not seeking business accreditation. Reasons for not pursuing separate business accreditation included cost, time required for the process, and no pressure from the stakeholders to do so. Additionally, non-AACSB accredited respondents saw the emphasis on research excellence as interfering with excellence in the classroom and in advising.

By 2005, 32 percent of the AACSB business accredited institutions had separate accounting accreditation and, by 2007, 30 percent held separate accounting accreditation (Gaharan et al., 2007; Arlinghaus, 2007). This could indicate that schools were taking a more considered look at the incremental benefits of separate accreditation

Pringle and Michel (2007) surveyed business deans at AACSB business accredited schools. The study was aimed at documenting assessment methods required under the 2005 accreditation standards. Although not specifically aimed at schools with separate accounting accreditation, some of the findings may offer insight as to why some accounting programs do not pursue separate accounting accreditation. Over half of the 138 respondents indicated the cost of assessment was greater than \$10,000. Costs cited included training workshops, faculty release time, assessment committee meetings, and software costs. Further, respondents noted faculty resistance to assessment for the following reasons: 1) it used class time, 2) teaching and grading became more complex, 3) faculty were unsure how to conduct assessment, and 4) faculty feared that the assessment process results might be used in performance evaluations.

In a similar study of the types of assessment used for accreditation and concerns with assessment, Martell (2007) surveyed deans of AACSB business accredited schools in 2004 (179 respondents) and again in 2006 (154 respondents). The author found that more than three-quarters of the respondents had spent \$5,000 or more on assessment. Martell's findings related to the costs of assessment were comparable to Pringle and Michel (2007). In addition to cost, Martell noted one third of the respondents cited faculty resistance to the assessment process, and two thirds cited the time required for the process.

Gaharan et al. (2007) surveyed administrators of accounting departments with separate accounting accreditation and those seeking the separate accounting accreditation. The authors sought to identify the benefits and challenges of separate accounting

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<sup>2</sup> The study surveyed institutions with business accreditation from the AACSB, the Association of Collegiate Business School and Programs (ACBSP), and the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE).

accreditation. Approximately half of the 71 respondents had a research focus and half had teaching missions. The survey asked accounting administrators to rate 18 possible outcomes resulting from accounting accreditation or candidacy for accounting accreditation. Four open ended questions requested information on assessment methods, major challenges with accreditation, and the maintenance of professional qualifications and practical experience. The challenges noted for accounting accreditation were the time required for the process, the amount of paperwork to be prepared, no reduction in faculty teaching loads, no increase in graduate assistants, limited increase in funding for existing faculty (usually for travel and technology), an increased expectation of faculty intellectual contributions, increased service requirements, difficulty meeting the practical experience standard, and the difficulty of developing and implementing assessment methods. The respondents indicated the benefits to be recruiting better quality students and faculty, improvement of the curriculum, review of the accounting program mission, identification of stakeholders, improved promotion/tenure and performance evaluation guidelines, more interaction of faculty with professionals and the advisory board, and easier job placement of students.

Bitter (2014) surveyed administrators of AACSB accounting accredited programs as to their "beliefs" about 15 perceived benefits of accounting accreditation. The author found a consensus view that accounting accreditation is valued by both internal (senior administrators, the business dean, and the accounting faculty) and external (stakeholder) constituencies, and that relinquishing accreditation would be damaging to the accounting program's image. Further, the respondents generally believed that compliance with accounting accreditation standards had positively contributed to the quality of the accounting program. In particular, there was a general belief by the 96 respondents that accounting accreditation standards had a positive influence on the accounting program's assurance of learning program, deployment of academically qualified faculty, development of mission-based learning goals, accounting strategic planning and management, innovation in and continuous improvement of the accounting program, the alignment of program activities with the accounting unit's mission, faculty production of mission-driven (i.e., mission-consistent) intellectual contributions, the unit's ability to hire and retain qualified accounting faculty, the availability of sufficient resources to achieve the unit's mission, support for faculty professional development, and better job placement of students.

Of particular interest are the significant differences Bitter (2014) noted between respondents from institutions with "smaller" versus "larger" accounting faculties.<sup>3</sup> Respondents from accounting programs with "smaller" faculties felt more strongly that their accounting faculty valued their accounting accreditation relative to those from accounting programs with a "larger" faculty. Compared to respondents from accounting programs with "larger" accounting faculties, these respondents felt more strongly that accreditation standards had a positive influence on the accounting assurance of learning program and on mission-based accounting learning goals, and compliance with accounting accreditation standards has positively contributed to the quality of their accounting program.

Additionally, respondents from accounting programs with a "smaller" faculty felt more strongly that accounting accreditation positively influenced innovation in and continuous improvement of their accounting program, the unit's ability to hire and retain qualified accounting faculty, faculty production of mission-driven scholarship and intellectual contributions, support for faculty professional development, job placement of students, and the extent of faculty interaction with the profession.

### ***Summary of Research on Accounting/Business Accreditation***

All the research studies cited involved surveys to deans, business or accounting administrators, or accounting faculty concerning their opinions or beliefs on the disadvantages or advantages of professional accreditation of collegiate business or accounting programs. Two of the studies were conducted prior to the mission-driven accreditation standards, and five were conducted after the mission-driven accreditation standards were required. Of the nine studies, four were aimed at business accreditation and five were targeted at accounting accreditation. The business accreditation surveys cited disadvantages and advantages of accreditation that were the same as those indicated in the accounting accreditation studies. See the summary of disadvantages and advantages cited in prior research in Exhibit 1.

The two most common disadvantages indicated in eight of the studies were the 1) financial cost, and 2) the time involved to complete the accreditation process. Other items perceived as off-putting, albeit anecdotal, were 3) the variety and volume of resources committed to the process, 4) the faculty research emphasis or expectation, 5) faculty resistance to the process, 6) concern that the standards (mission-driven or otherwise) do not handle the diversity in business and

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<sup>3</sup> The median size of the author's (2014) respondents' full-time accounting faculties was 13. As such, for purposes of analysis, Bitter defined "smaller" ("larger") faculties as those staffed by 13 or fewer (14 or more) faculty.

accounting programs, 7) the challenge of understanding, creating, and evaluating the assessment of learning, 8) faculty meeting practical experience, 9) increased service for faculty, and 10) that separate accounting accreditation seemed redundant if the business program was accredited. The advantages cited, again subjective, were accreditation 1) maintains or improves the quality of curriculum, 2) gives a program the ability to compete for quality or improve existing faculty, 3) and students, 4) signals quality of students to employers, 5) provides a level of prestige with peers and stakeholders, 6) allows the program to compete for increased funding and other resources, 7) encourages faculty involvement with professionals and advisory councils, 8) may improve faculty research opportunities, 9) encourages regular review of the program mission and goals, and 10) other self assessment, and 11) establishes written guidelines for promotion and tenure, and annual evaluations.

### Purpose of the Study

There was significant growth in the number of U.S. business schools attaining separate AACSB accounting accreditation between 1982, when the first 18 accounting programs were accredited, and 2000, when 149 accounting programs were accredited (Sinning & Dykxhoorn, 2001). There was also growth in the proportion of AACSB business accredited U.S. business schools with separate accounting accreditation during this period. Sinning & Dykxhoorn (2001) reported that in 2000, 40 percent of AACSB business accredited U.S. business schools also were separately accounting accredited. Since 2000, however, growth in the number of separately accredited U.S. accounting programs has slowed and the proportion of AACSB accredited U.S. business schools with separate accounting accreditation has declined from its peak level, despite the movement to mission-based accreditation standards. According to the AACSB's web site ([www.aacsb.edu](http://www.aacsb.edu)), as of April, 2012, 168 of the 488 AACSB business accredited U.S. business schools (34 percent) also were separately accounting accredited.<sup>4</sup>

While not the primary focus of their studies, Balke and Brown (1985), Kren et al. (1993), and Bitter et al. (1999) all examined the reasons why accounting programs may choose not to pursue separate accounting accreditation. The Balke and Brown (1985) study pre-dated the adoption of mission-based accreditation standards. The two other studies are rather dated and their findings were rather general. More recently, Gaharan et al. (2007) studied the benefits and problems faced in the accounting accreditation process. The study, however, surveyed accounting programs holding or seeking accounting accreditation.

The purpose of this study is to contemporarily determine 1) the perceived value of separate accounting accreditation and 2) accounting accreditation-related issues that negatively influence an accounting program's interest in seeking/ability to attain<sup>5</sup> accounting accreditation according to accounting administrators at non-accounting accredited programs at AACSB business accredited U.S. (hereafter, NON-ATG) business schools. Is it that accounting programs do not or cannot comply with all the standards necessary to earn separate accounting accreditation? Or is it that accounting programs are capable of meeting accounting accreditation standards, but simply opt not to because of lack of perceived value by internal or external constituencies and/or because it is perceived that accounting accreditation does not provide enough incremental benefit beyond AACSB business accreditation? Or do reasons vary, as Bitter et al. (1999) found? A secondary purpose is to determine whether the perceptions and beliefs of accounting administrators differ across NON-ATG accounting programs.

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<sup>4</sup> The proportion of AACSB business accredited U.S. business schools with separate accounting accreditation as reported in prior research: 29 percent (78 of 266 business schools) in 1990 (Kren et al., 1993); 37 percent (122 of 326 business schools) in 1996-1997 (Bitter et al., 1999); 40 percent (149 of 370 business schools) in 2000 (Sinning & Dykxhoorn, 2001), and 32 percent (167 of 515 business schools) in 2004 (Gaharan et al., 2007). From the time our survey was conducted in 2012 to January, 2015, the number of U.S. accounting accredited accounting programs increased by three to 171 and the proportion declined slightly to 33 percent (171 of 512 business schools).

<sup>5</sup> While "interest in seeking" accounting accreditation and "ability to attain" accounting accreditation are two different issues, they both relate to the same outcome – a school not seeking accounting accreditation. We are interested in learning which accreditation issues, if any, hinder an accounting program's choice to seek accreditation.

Unlike prior research, our study focuses specifically on: 1) whether the constituents of NON-ATG units are perceived to value accounting accreditation, 2) whether accounting accreditation is believed by NON-ATG administrators to provide incremental value beyond business accreditation, and 3) whether select AACSB accounting accreditation *standards* are believed to negatively impact a NON-ATG unit's interest in seeking/ability to attain accounting accreditation.

### **Research Questions**

RQ 1: Which institutional stakeholders of NON-ATG accounting programs (or units), if any, are perceived by accounting administrators to value accounting accreditation?

RQ 2: Do accounting administrators of NON-ATG units believe that accounting accreditation provides incremental value beyond business accreditation?

RQ 3: Which accounting accreditation standards negatively impact a NON-ATG unit's interest in seeking/ability to attain accounting accreditation?

Perceptions and beliefs of accounting administrators may be influenced by certain characteristics of their institution, their business school and/or their accounting program. For example, Gaharan et al. (2007) found some differences in the responses of administrators of accounting programs with research missions and those with teaching missions. Bitter (2014) found some differences in the responses of administrators of accounting programs based on accounting faculty size, institutional type (public or private), and emphasis of the accounting unit's mission. As such, our study seeks to identify differences, if any, resulting from an accounting unit's mission, the type of institution (public or private) in which the accounting unit operates, and the size of the accounting faculty, as well as the existence of an accounting doctoral program and an institution's Carnegie classification.

RQ 4: Do certain institutional characteristics impact the perceptions of and beliefs about accounting accreditation of administrators at NON-ATG units?

### **Research Methodology**

#### ***Subjects***

A two page survey<sup>6</sup> was mailed to the accounting program administrator (or, if one was not identifiable, to the business dean) at each of 303 U.S. NON-ATG accounting programs.<sup>7</sup> To encourage response, subjects were provided a return-reply envelope, were promised anonymity, and were offered an executive summary of the results at their request. Initial non-respondents were mailed a second request three months later.

#### ***Research Instrument***

The survey, which is provided in the Appendix, contained two sections, the first of which contained 19 "belief" statements related to accounting accreditation. Respondents were instructed to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each statement using a five point Likert-type scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The first four statements were intended to identify which educational institution constituencies, if any, were perceived to value accounting accreditation. Similar to Bitter et al. (1999) and Bitter (2014), the first three statements addressed the respondent's perception of the value various internal educational institution constituents place on attainment of accounting accreditation. Statement four, also adopted from Bitter et al. (1999), addressed the perceived impact of

<sup>6</sup> The survey was exempted from review by the Human Participants Institutional Review Board at the first author's University based on criteria established by the Board.

<sup>7</sup> Of the 488 U.S. business schools with AACSB business accreditation as of April, 2012, one hundred sixty-eight (168) of those also held AACSB accounting accreditation and an additional 17 of them had no identifiable accounting program at any level (undergraduate or graduate). Thus, the mailing consisted of 303 NON-ATG business schools with an accounting program offered at the baccalaureate, masters, and/or doctoral level(s).



achievement of accounting accreditation on external constituencies (i.e., whether attainment of accounting accreditation would potentially enhance the unit's reputation with its stakeholders). Motivated by Balke and Brown (1985) and Kren et al. (1993), statement five seeks to determine whether respondents believe accounting accreditation would provide incremental value to their accounting program, beyond business accreditation.

The remaining 14 statements addressed the extent to which respondents believe AACSB accounting accreditation-related issues have had a negative impact on their interest in seeking/ability to attain accounting accreditation. These statements were developed based upon our review of both accounting accreditation standards and select prior research.

The second section of the survey captured data on the number of years the respondent's accounting program had been AACSB business accredited, whether the respondent's accounting program had once been AACSB accounting accredited, whether the respondent's accounting program was currently pursuing or intended to pursue AACSB accounting accreditation in the next five years, the geographic location of the respondent's educational institution, the type of educational institution (public or private), the primary mission of the respondent's accounting program (teaching, research, or both), the educational institution's Carnegie classification, characteristics and credentials of the unit's accounting faculty (highest degree earned, faculty rank, and licensure/certification), the accounting degree programs offered by the business school, and the structure of the accounting unit (e.g., department).

## Results and Discussion

### *Characteristics of Respondents*

Responses were received from 103 administrators, yielding a response rate of 34 percent. Seventeen of the 103 respondents indicated their accounting program was currently seeking accounting accreditation or intends to seek accounting accreditation in the next five years (hereafter identified as "SEEK"). We include these responses in our analysis because they are, in fact, from individuals at business accredited U.S. business schools that do not possess accounting accreditation. We believe it is interesting to contrast the perceptions of those at accounting programs that are seeking/plan to seek accounting accreditation versus those that are not/do not (hereafter identified as "NO-SEEK"). The obvious expectation is that these two respondent groups will have different perceptions regarding the value of accounting accreditation and beliefs related to the factors that have (had) a negative impact on interest in seeking/ability to attain separate accounting accreditation, but the extent of these accounting programs differences is an open question to be examined. As such, for purposes of most analysis, we separate the two groups of respondents.

The general profile of the institution of the NO-SEEK respondents was as follows: a public institution (65 percent) located in the mid-Atlantic (21 percent) or West (21 percent) region of the American Accounting Association. Fifty-five percent of respondents' business schools have maintained business accreditation for more than 15 years. Four percent of respondents' accounting programs previously held AACSB accounting accreditation. Fifty-four percent of respondents indicated their accounting program's primary mission is teaching, while 38 percent indicated their accounting program's primary mission is both teaching and research. Seventy-eight percent of respondents reported their institution was classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a "Masters" university or as a "Baccalaureate" university.

Most of these NO-SEEK respondents' accounting programs utilize a "departmental" structure (75 percent). Ninety-five percent of the respondent's programs offer bachelor degrees in accounting, 40 percent offer professional master's degrees in accounting, nine percent offer a master of taxation, 34 percent offer an MBA with an accounting concentration, and 11 percent offer a Ph.D. or D.B.A. degree in accounting. See Table 1.

Review of the response frequencies indicate that SEEK accounting programs are more likely to have programs with accounting-focused masters programs (e.g., master of accountancy, master of taxation), to be a public educational institution, to have an accounting unit mission that is both teaching and research, and to be Carnegie classified as a Baccalaureate educational institution than NO-SEEK accounting programs. Comparison of our respondents at NO-SEEK accounting programs to the respondents to Bitter's (2014) survey of accounting chairs at AACSB accounting accredited accounting programs suggests that accounting accredited accounting programs are more likely to be Carnegie classified as a research university (65 percent of Bitter's respondents versus only 22 percent of respondents

to our survey), more likely to offer a master of accounting and/or master of taxation program (85 percent and 26 percent, respectively, versus 40 percent and nine percent, respectively), and more likely to offer a Ph.D. or D.B.A. in the accounting program (32 percent versus 11 percent).

For the NO-SEEK group, the average accounting unit employed approximately nine full-time members, 71 percent of whom hold a Ph.D. or D.B.A., and 63 percent of whom are Certified Public Accountants (CPA). Of the respondents providing information on the licensure and certification of their unit's faculty, 98 percent employed at least one CPA and 52 percent employed at least one Certified Management Accountant (CMA). Review of the data suggests that SEEK accounting programs, on average, have a lower proportion of faculty with a Ph.D. or D.B.A. than NO-SEEK accounting programs (66 percent versus 71 percent), but are more likely to have a higher proportion of full-time faculty who are CPAs (72 percent versus 63 percent). The finding that SEEK accounting programs, on average, have a lower proportion of accounting faculty with terminal degrees than NO-SEEK accounting programs is counter-intuitive to us, given accounting accreditation requirements for faculty sufficiency and intellectual contributions. Comparison of the faculty data we collected from the respondents at NO-SEEK accounting programs to data collected by Bitter (2014) suggests accounting units at accounting accredited accounting programs, on average, have a larger accounting faculty than do our NO-SEEK accounting programs (approximately 15 faculty members versus nine faculty members, respectively). See Table 2.

### ***Perceived Value of Accounting Accreditation***

The first three survey statements related to the perceived value of accounting accreditation to the accounting program's internal constituents. Respondents from NO-SEEK accounting programs, on average, neither agreed nor disagreed as to whether senior administrators (3.14), the business dean (3.26), or the accounting faculty (2.92) value attainment of accounting accreditation. Interestingly, accounting faculty are the ones who are perceived to value accounting accreditation the least.

On the contrary (and not surprisingly), respondents from SEEK accounting programs strongly believe their senior administrators (4.00<sup>8</sup>), business deans (4.59<sup>8</sup>), and accounting faculty (4.35<sup>8</sup>) value attainment of accounting accreditation. Accounting programs currently seeking or planning to seek accounting accreditation appear to have strong support to do so from all levels within the educational institution.

Respondents from SEEK accounting programs, on average, generally agreed attainment of accounting accreditation would enhance the unit's reputation with its stakeholders, while respondents from NO-SEEK accounting programs neither agreed nor disagreed (4.29<sup>8</sup> for SEEK versus 3.10 for NO-SEEK). Finally, respondents from SEEK accounting programs felt strongly that accounting accreditation did provide incremental value, while respondents from NO-SEEK accounting programs again neither agreed nor disagreed (4.06<sup>8</sup> for SEEK versus 2.95 for NO-SEEK).

In summary, there were significant differences between the mean responses of respondents from SEEK versus NO-SEEK accounting programs regarding the value of accounting accreditation. With regard to RQ 1 and RQ 2, respondents at NO-SEEK accounting programs generally did not perceive attainment of accounting accreditation is valued by anyone – senior administrators, business deans, accounting faculty, or external stakeholders – or that accounting accreditation would provide incremental value beyond business accreditation. These findings are partially inconsistent with those of Bitter et al. (1999) who found that the majority of responding accounting administrators of non-accounting accredited accounting programs perceived their accounting faculty and their peers valued accounting accreditation, but their university's administration and business faculty did not. Our findings, however, are consistent with the findings of Roller et al. (2003) who found that some business schools had not sought AACSB accreditation because there had been no pressure from stakeholders to do so. Our results could also be interpreted as being consistent with the findings of Balke and Brown (1985), who found that some accounting chair respondents at AACSB business accredited schools questioned whether accounting accreditation standards were “different” enough to justify separate accreditation and the findings of Kren et al. (1993), who found that some accounting chair respondents at AACSB business accredited schools felt accounting accreditation was redundant. See Table 3.

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<sup>8</sup> Mean is statistically greater than 3.0, the mid-point of the scale (“neutral”).

***Accounting Accreditation-Related Issues Believed to Negatively Influence Interest in Seeking/Ability to Attain Accounting Accreditation***

Statements one through three relate to pre-conditions that must be satisfied in order for an accounting program to seek accounting accreditation. Respondents from NO-SEEK accounting programs, on average, disagreed that these pre-conditions negatively influenced their interest in seeking/ability to attain accounting accreditation. Thus, it seems that, on average, these respondents believe their unit would meet the conditions necessary to seek accounting accreditation if their institution desired to seek accounting accreditation.

Statements four and five relate to the requirement that units seeking accounting accreditation must specify action items that demonstrate continuous improvement and have access to sufficient resources to achieve these actions items and the accounting mission. Respondents from NO-SEEK accounting programs, on average, neither agreed nor disagreed that specifying actions items was an issue, but did agree that the availability of sufficient resources to achieve the accounting unit's mission and actions items was a concern.

Statements six through eight, and eleven relate to the faculty sufficiency and qualifications requirements of accounting accreditation standards. Contrary to prior research<sup>9</sup>, respondents from NO-SEEK accounting programs, on average, did not believe requirements related to faculty sufficiency (i.e., required levels of staffing by "academically-qualified" and "participating" faculty) or to the required portfolio of faculty intellectual contributions negatively impacted their interest in seeking/ability to obtain accounting accreditation, although respondents did agree that deploying qualified faculty to all instructional programs at all locations was a concern.

Statement nine relates to the requirement that accounting graduate job placement and career success be documented. Statements ten, twelve, and thirteen relate to the professional credentials of the accounting faculty, their on-going interaction with the accounting profession, and their relevant practical experience. Statement fourteen relates to the required establishment of learning goals and measurement of learning outcomes for accounting programs. Respondents from NO-SEEK accounting programs, on average, neither agreed nor disagreed that any of these accreditation standards were problematic.

In summary, respondents from NO-SEEK accounting programs, on average, generally did not believe most AACSB accounting accreditation-related issues have had a negative impact on their accounting program's interest in seeking/ability to attain accounting accreditation.<sup>10 11</sup> Mean responses suggest respondents only agreed with two of the fourteen belief statements – that harnessing sufficient resources to achieve the accounting program's mission and action items, and having sufficient faculty available to deploy to all instructional programs and locations were concerns. While

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<sup>9</sup> Balke and Brown (1985) report their respondents identified "difficulty in meeting Ph.D. staffing requirements" as a problem associated with separate accounting accreditation.

<sup>10</sup> An alternative explanation posed by an anonymous reviewer of an earlier version of this paper is that NO-SEEK respondents, on average, believe the accounting accreditation standards are generally not a deterrent since the decision has already been made not to seek accounting accreditation and the standards, therefore, do not matter. This explanation cannot be dismissed, as clearly it is impossible to know whether a respondent based his or her responses to the statements in the second section of the survey on their ex-ante decision not to seek accounting accreditation. However, we believe the alternative explanation is not likely for two reasons: 1) Our cover letter accompanying the survey clearly stated that we were interested in understanding "the specific reasons" why more AACSB accredited U.S. business schools had not sought accounting accreditation; and 2) immediately preceding the 14 statements in the survey, we instructed respondents to indicate the extent of their agreement as to whether "The following AACSB accounting accreditation-related issues have had a NEGATIVE influence on your interest in seeking/ability to attain accounting accreditation." As such, we believe it is more likely that the respondents' answers were based on their beliefs about the accounting accreditation standards than based on their institution's current decision not to seek accounting accreditation.

<sup>11</sup> Not surprisingly, because the SEEK respondents are seeking or intend to seek accounting accreditation, the mean responses of these respondents to all 14 belief statements were three or below and were lower than the mean response of NO-SEEK respondents (although only two mean responses were *statistically significantly* lower).

mean responses to these two statements were statistically greater than the mid-point of the scale (“neutral”), neither were particularly strong (both mean responses were below 3.5, the mid-point between “agree” and “neutral”).<sup>12</sup> The findings are somewhat consistent with those of Bitter et al. (1999), where only 21 percent of respondents from NON-ATG accounting programs indicated that their unit currently did not meet accounting accreditation standards.

With regard for RQ 3, these findings, taken as a whole, suggest the reason more accounting programs are not seeking accounting accreditation, as noted in the previous section, has more to do with internal and external constituents not highly valuing accounting accreditation than the inability to meet most accreditation standards, although it cannot be determined with certainty whether that is because the respondents believe AACSB accounting accreditation itself is not perceived to provide incremental “value” in general (regardless of cost) or because the lack of perceived value of accounting accreditation to the business school and accounting program is *driven by* resource issues (i.e., institutionally, attaining accounting accreditation is cost-prohibitive).<sup>10 12</sup> Either of these explanations could be argued as consistent with the findings of Kren et al. (1993), whose respondents from NON-ATG accounting programs felt that compliance with accounting accreditation standards was burdensome and not worth the effort.

### ***Additional Analysis of Respondent Perceptions***

While the results summarized above generally suggest that, on average, NO-SEEK accounting programs do (or could) meet most accounting accreditation standard, but choose not to seek accounting accreditation, prior research suggests that this may not be true of all NO-SEEK accounting programs. Perhaps certain accounting accreditation standards are, in fact, believed to be a barrier to a subset of NO-SEEK accounting programs to seeking and attaining accounting accreditation. For example, accounting programs with teaching missions may have more trouble meeting standards related to faculty intellectual contributions. Public educational institutions, many of whom may have suffered cuts in state funding in recent years, may lack sufficient resources to achieve their mission or to deploy participating, academically-qualified faculty across programs and locations. As previously noted, Gaharan et al. (2007) noted differences in the benefits and challenges experienced by accounting accredited schools (and those in candidacy) with primarily teaching missions versus those with primarily research missions. Bitter (2014) noted differences in the beliefs of respondents from public and private educational institutions, from accounting units with “small” and “large” accounting faculties, and from accounting units with teaching and research missions.

To evaluate this possibility, logit regressions were run on the responses to each of the 19 statements (the dependent variables) to determine if NO-SEEK respondents’ beliefs were impacted by accounting faculty size,<sup>13</sup> accounting unit mission, and institutional type (public or private) (the independent variables).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> An alternative explanation identified by one of the reviewers is that these two concerns may have driven respondent’s beliefs about the value of AACSB accounting accreditation. As the reviewer noted, without sufficient faculty and financial resources a school cannot achieve accounting accreditation. The reviewer believes this reality may have led the respondents to indicating the perceived value of accounting accreditation is low because their institution cannot achieve it. Certainly this alternative explanation for the statistically insignificant mean responses to the five “accounting accreditation value” statements is plausible. However, the initial five questions in the survey were intended to gauge respondent’s perception regarding whether accounting accreditation itself was *valued* by various constituents, independent of whether lack of resources or other factors may prohibit its attainment. Our focus was on the perceived value of separate accounting accreditation (in and of itself) and not on whether the costs of accreditation exceed the benefits (i.e., that the institution does not value accounting accreditation because it cannot achieve it due to resources issues). Further, as previously noted, while the mean responses to these two “resource” statements were statistically significantly above 3.0 (“neutral”), they were not particularly strong (means less than 3.5 on a 5 point scale), casting further doubt that these factors “drove” the responses to the five “value” statements.

<sup>13</sup> The median size of respondents’ full-time accounting faculties (based on a count of “faculty rank” variables) was eight. For purposes of analysis, “small” faculties are those staffed by seven or fewer faculty; “large” faculties are those staffed by eight or more faculty. Presumably, small faculties service smaller accounting program enrollments.

<sup>14</sup> Existence of an accounting doctoral program and institutional Carnegie classification were also included as independent variables. Neither variable, however, was significant in any of the 19 Logit regressions.

### **“Small” versus “Large” Accounting Faculties**

The most significant differences were noted between NO-SEEK respondents from accounting programs with “small” versus “large” accounting faculties.<sup>15</sup> Compared to respondents from accounting programs with “large” accounting faculties, respondents from accounting programs with “small” accounting faculties were more likely to agree that accreditation standards related to staffing with academically-qualified (AQ) faculty at the required level ( $p=.029$ ); documentation of student job placement and graduate career success ( $p=.012$ );<sup>16</sup> generation of a portfolio of intellectual contributions that include discipline-based scholarship, contributions to practice, and learning/pedagogy by the accounting faculty as a whole ( $p=.013$ ); and maintenance of a portfolio of relevant practical experience by the accounting faculty ( $p=.037$ )<sup>16</sup> had a negative influence on their interest in seeking/ability to attain accounting accreditation.

On average, “small” faculties at NO-SEEK accounting programs consist of 5.47 members, of which 3.72 members (68 percent) hold a Ph.D. or D.B.A., whereas, on average, “large” faculties consist of 11.76 members, of which 8.59 members (73 percent) hold a Ph.D. or D.B.A. These units with “small” faculties not only have fewer full-time members, but have a lower proportion of faculty with a Ph.D. or D.B.A. compared with units from “large” faculties, which at least partially explains our findings relative to AQ staffing, generation of a portfolio of intellectual contributions, and maintenance of a portfolio of relevant professional experience – it can be challenging for a handful of doctorally-qualified faculty to accomplish everything.

The findings for NO-SEEK respondents from units with “small” accounting faculties (but not “large” accounting faculties) are generally consistent with those of Gaharan et al. (2007), whose respondents (from accounting accredited accounting programs and those in candidacy) acknowledged that attainment of accounting accreditation results in a “moderate to considerable increase in [faculty] intellectual contributions (17)” and that “major challenges” faced by accounting programs accredited or seeking accreditation include intellectual contributions (identified by 24 percent of respondents) and the relevant practical experience standard (identified by 10 percent of respondents). See Table 4.

### **Accounting Units at Public versus Private Institutions**

NO-SEEK respondents from accounting units at public universities felt more strongly that AACSB accounting accreditation would enhance their unit’s reputation with their unit’s stakeholders ( $p=.012$ ) and attainment of AACSB accounting accreditation would add value beyond business accreditation ( $p=.031$ )<sup>16</sup> than did NO-SEEK respondents from accounting units at private universities, who, on average, disagreed with both statements. Compared to respondents from private universities, respondents from public universities were more likely to agree that accreditation standards related to maintenance of a portfolio of relevant practical experience by the accounting faculty ( $p=.007$ )<sup>16</sup> had a negative influence on their interest in seeking/ability to attain accounting accreditation. See Table 4.

### **Accounting Units with Teaching Missions versus Research Missions versus Mixed Missions**

NO-SEEK respondents from business schools with an accounting unit with a teaching mission felt more strongly that their accounting faculty would value accounting accreditation ( $p=.025$ )<sup>17</sup> and AACSB accounting accreditation would enhance their unit’s reputation with its stakeholders ( $p=.023$ ) than those from business schools with accounting units with research and mixed (i.e., teaching and research) missions. Compared to NO-SEEK respondents from accounting units with research and mixed missions, NO-SEEK respondents from accounting units with teaching missions were more likely to believe that accreditation standards related to maintenance of a portfolio of relevant practical experience by the accounting faculty ( $p=.037$ )<sup>17</sup> had a negative influence on their interest in seeking/ability to attain accounting accreditation. See Table 4.

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<sup>15</sup> The impact of faculty size on respondent perceptions is consistent with Bitter (2013), who found a number of differences in the perceptions of respondents from AACSB accredited accounting units with “small” (13 or fewer) versus “large” (14 or more) accounting faculties. If Bitter’s (2014) faculty size cut point was used in our analysis, 75 accounting units would have had “small” faculties and 10 accounting units would have had “large” faculties.

<sup>16</sup> The mean response of NO-SEEK respondents with “small” accounting faculties was above, but not statistically significantly different from 3 (“neutral”).

<sup>17</sup> The mean response, however, was not statistically significantly different from 3 (“neutral”).

## Summary of Additional Analyses

### *Perceived Value of Accounting Accreditation*

Recall that, overall, accounting administrators at NO-SEEK accounting programs do not perceive their senior administration, deans, or accounting faculty (internal constituencies) value accounting accreditation or that accounting accreditation would enhance their unit's reputation or add value beyond business accreditation. Additional analysis, however, suggests that respondents from public universities and from units with a teaching-oriented mission both believe accounting accreditation would enhance their unit's reputation with stakeholders (even though internal constituencies are not perceived to value separate accounting accreditation), while respondents from private universities and from units with research-oriented and mixed missions do not. These results are interesting for two reasons. First, the results suggest that accounting accreditation may enhance the reputation of a sub-set of NO-SEEK accounting programs with their (external) stakeholders. Second, despite this, there is a perceived lack of value by internal constituencies that seems to carry more weight, resulting in the decision not to pursue accounting accreditation.

### *Perceived Negative Influence of Accounting Accreditation Standards*

The most significant differences among NO-SEEK respondents were based on the size of the accounting faculty. Generally, respondents from units with "small" accounting faculties found accounting accreditation standards to be more of a barrier to seeking and attaining accounting accreditation than those from units with "large" accounting faculties, particularly relative to staffing of courses with "academically qualified" faculty at the required level, generating a faculty portfolio of intellectual contributions in all three areas, and the maintaining of a portfolio of professional experience by the faculty. For certain sub-groups of accounting programs, possibly these barriers (as previously acknowledged), which would likely require additional resources to address, influence the perceptions of internal constituencies (and the responding unit chair) of the value of accounting accreditation, even though we intended the "value" of AACSB accounting accreditation to be considered in isolation, without regard to whether an institution decided not to pursue accounting accreditation due to resource issues.

## Conclusions

The number of AACSB accounting accredited U.S. accounting programs has increased from 18 in 1982 to 168 (178 world-wide) in 2012; however, the growth rate has slowed rather significantly and the proportion of AACSB business accredited U.S. business schools that also hold accounting accreditation has declined from 40 percent in 2000 to 34 percent in 2012. Through a survey of accounting administrators at AACSB business accredited U.S. business schools without separate accounting accreditation, we endeavored to determine whether stakeholders at non-accounting accredited U.S. accounting programs value accounting accreditation and whether the accounting accreditation standards had a negative effect on the interest these accounting programs have in seeking or the ability of these accounting programs to obtain accounting accreditation. Of the 103 respondents, 17 were from accounting programs that were currently seeking or planned to seek AACSB accounting accreditation in the next five years (SEEK accounting programs). On average, the remaining 86 respondents (from NO-SEEK accounting programs) did not believe attainment of accounting accreditation would be valued by their educational institution's senior administration, dean or faculty and would not enhance the unit's reputation with its stakeholders or add value beyond AACSB business accreditation. Further analysis, however, found respondents from public NO-SEEK universities and from accounting units with a teaching mission perceived that accounting accreditation would enhance their unit's reputation with its (external) stakeholders. Respondents from NO-SEEK accounting programs perceive they met (then existing) pre-conditions to seek accounting accreditation and would have the ability to meet most accounting accreditation standards if they chose to pursue accounting accreditation, although the two most challenging issues are resource-related – securing the necessary resources to achieve their mission and strategic plan, and to meet the AACSB standards for faculty sufficiency for all programs at all locations. Additionally, further analysis of responses from those at NO-SEEK accounting programs found that respondents from accounting units with "small" accounting faculties perceive accounting accreditation standards for staffing of courses with "academically qualified" faculty at the required level, faculty intellectual contributions in all three areas (discipline-based research, contributions to practice, and pedagogical research), and the maintenance of a portfolio of professional experience by the faculty as negatively impacting their interest in

seeking/ability to attain accounting accreditation. As such, it appears the accounting programs who are making the choice not to seek accounting accreditation are doing so not only because they do not believe their stakeholders value accounting accreditation and because they believe accounting accreditation would not provide their unit/institution with incremental value beyond AACSB business accreditation, but also because, in the case of units with “small” accounting faculties, they do not have sufficient “academically qualified” accounting faculty to meet certain faculty-related accreditation standards (e.g., faculty sufficiency, portfolio of professional experience).

Prior research documented a historically strong interest in accounting accreditation and recent research (e.g., Bitter, 2014) indicates schools that possess AACSB accounting accreditation perceive value in being accredited. Yet growth in the number of new accounting programs achieving accounting accreditation has slowed and the proportion of business accredited business schools that are also accounting accredited declined between 2000 and 2012. Of the 103 respondents to our survey, only 17 (17 percent) have indicated they are currently seeking accounting accreditation or plan to seek it within the next five years. Considering this, it would seem that if significant growth in the number of accounting accredited schools is to occur, it does not appear the growth will be driven by U.S. accounting programs, at least not from U.S. accounting programs that are already AACSB business accredited. For most NO-SEEK accounting programs, the current lack of interest in accounting accreditation does not appear to be primarily a “standards” issue, but rather a “value” issue – there is apparently not enough perceived value in accounting accreditation to warrant the additional time and other resources necessary to pursue it, regardless of whether the necessary resources can be acquired.

The perceptions of these respondents regarding accounting accreditation may or may not be truly accurate. However, to many, perception is reality. As such, the concluding suggestions of Bitter (2014) seemingly remain valid - the AACSB should further educate AACSB accredited business schools with unaccredited accounting programs on the benefits of accounting accreditation,<sup>18</sup> actively recruit accounting programs that would likely qualify for accounting accreditation (including non-U.S. business schools with accounting programs), establish formal dialogue about the perceptions and concerns of non-accounting accredited programs, and continue to consider ways to improve accounting accreditation standards and the accreditation process, perhaps with further consideration of changes that lead to reducing the cost of compliance and completing the process.

Limitations of this study are acknowledged. First, the survey attempted to capture the perceptions of accounting administrators at AACSB business accredited U.S. accounting programs that do not hold accounting accreditation. Respondent perceptions of the value of accounting accreditation to accounting faculty, deans, senior administrators, and constituents may not be accurate. Respondent beliefs about the negative impact of accounting accreditation standards on the choice to seek/ability to attain accounting accreditation may not be shared by other accounting faculty. Second, the results cannot be generalized to non-U.S. AACSB business accredited business schools. Third, institutional demographics were self-reported by respondents and cannot be verified since the survey was conducted anonymously. Fourth, while the overall response rate was reasonable, representatives from 100 institutions chose not to participate. Whether the results may have differed had these accounting administrators participated is unknown.

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<sup>18</sup> The AACSB’s 2013 annual accreditation conference, for example, did offer a session that included discussion of the value of accounting accreditation.

## Appendix

### Survey to the Accounting Program Administrator at U.S. Non-Accounting Accredited Schools

I. Please circle the number that corresponds to the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
1. Your university's senior administration would value attainment of AACSB accounting accreditation	1	2	3	4	5
2. Your dean would value attainment of AACSB accounting accreditation	1	2	3	4	5
3. Your accounting faculty would value attainment of AACSB accounting accreditation	1	2	3	4	5
4. AACSB accounting accreditation would enhance your unit's reputation with its stakeholders	1	2	3	4	5
5. Attainment of AACSB accounting accreditation would add value beyond your business accreditation	1	2	3	4	5

**The following AACSB accounting accreditation-related issues have had a NEGATIVE influence on your interest in seeking/ability to attain accounting accreditation...**

1. ALL accounting programs delivered by your accounting unit must be reviewed for accreditation simultaneously	1	2	3	4	5
2. your institution must demonstrate mission-consistent diversity in the accounting program(s)	1	2	3	4	5
3. ALL of your accounting programs must evidence continued viability (produce a sufficient number of graduates)	1	2	3	4	5
4. your accounting program(s) must specify action items that represent continuous improvement efforts	1	2	3	4	5
5. sufficient resources are available for your accounting programs(s) to achieve its mission and action items	1	2	3	4	5
6. sufficient faculty are available to be deployed to ALL instructional programs and locations	1	2	3	4	5
7. the accounting program(s) are staffed at the required level (50%) of "academically-qualified" (AQ) faculty	1	2	3	4	5
8. the accounting program(s) are staffed at the required level (>60%) of "participating" faculty	1	2	3	4	5
9. the job placement and career success of your accounting graduates are (can be) documented	1	2	3	4	5
10. the accounting faculty possess sufficient professional accounting credentials/certifications	1	2	3	4	5
11. the accounting faculty make intellectual contributions in discipline-based scholarship AND contributions to practice AND learning/pedagogy	1	2	3	4	5
12. the accounting faculty demonstrates sufficient on-going interaction with the accounting profession	1	2	3	4	5
13. the accounting faculty maintains a portfolio of relevant practical experience in business/accounting	1	2	3	4	5
14. the accounting program(s) establish learning goals and directly measure learning outcomes	1	2	3	4	5



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**II. Please respond to the following about your institution and accounting unit.**

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1. For how many years has your institution maintained business accreditation?  
 less than 5 years       5-15 years       more than 15 years
2. Has your school previously held AACSB accounting accreditation?  
 Yes       No
3. Is your school currently seeking or does your school intend to seek (in the next five years) accounting accreditation?  
 Yes       No
4. AAA region in which your institution is located:  
 Mid-Atlantic       Midwest       Northeast       Ohio  
 Southeast       Southwest       Western
5. Type of institution:  
 Public       Private
6. Primary mission of the accounting unit:  
 Teaching-based       Research-based       Both (equally)
7. Institution's Carnegie "Basic" Classification (check one):  
 Research University (RU)\*       Doctoral/Research (DRU)  
 Master's (L/M/S)       Baccalaureate (A&S/Diverse/Assoc.)  
\* doctoral institutions with "high" or "very high" research activity
8. Number of full-time accounting faculty whose highest degree is a...  
 PhD/DBA       JD/LLM       Master's       Other
9. Number of full-time accounting faculty holding the rank of...  
 Professor       Associate Professor       Assistant Professor  
 Clinical       Lecturer/Instructor       Other
10. Number of full-time accounting faculty possessing a...  
 CPA license       CMA certification       Other certification
11. Accounting-related degree programs offered (check all that apply)  
 Bachelor       Master in Accounting (e.g., MAcc, MSA, MPA)  
 Master of Tax       MBA-Accounting Concentration       PhD/DBA
12. Structure of your institution's accounting unit:  
 Department       School (within College of Business)  
 Separate School       Other (describe: \_\_\_\_\_)

**OUR SINCEREST THANKS FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION**

If you would like an executive summary of our findings,  
please enclose a business card or e-mail me at mbitter@stetson.edu

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**Exhibit 1**  
**Disadvantages of AACSB Accreditation Noted in Prior Research**

Author	Balke & Brown 1985	Henderson & Jordon 1990	Kren et al. 1993	Bitter et al. 1999	Roller et al. 2003	Pringle & Michel 2007	Martell 2007	Gaharan et al. 2007	Bitter 2014
Survey	116 AA at BC Intent AI	228 D & 637AF at BC & BN	114 AA at BC. 54 AC. 60 AN. 41 intent AI	161 AA at 71 AC & 90 AN	122 D & BA at 92 BC & 30 BN	138 D at BC	D at BC 179 (04) 154 (06)	71 AA at AC & AI	96 AA at AC
Cost of process	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Time involved	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Amount of resources committed to the process	Yes		Yes			Yes		Yes	
Research emphasis/ expectation		Yes			Yes			Yes	
Faculty resistance					Yes	Yes	Yes		
Standards do not handle diverse programs	Yes	Yes	Yes						
Challenge of Assessment of Learning						Yes		Yes	
Meeting practical experience								Yes	Yes
Increased faculty service								Yes	
Redundant if business accredited	Yes		Yes						

*Note.* AA = Accounting Administrator; AF=Accounting Faculty; BA=Business Administrator; D=Dean; BC = Business Accreditation; AC = Separate Accounting Accreditation; BN = Business Not Accredited; AN = Accounting Not Accredited; BI = Business Intent to Accredit; AI =Accounting Intent to Accredit

**Advantages of AACSB Accreditation Noted in Prior Research**

Author	Balke & Brown 1985	Henderson & Jordon 1990	Kren et al. 1993	Bitter et al. 1999	Roller et al. 2003	Pringle & Michel 2007	Martell 2007	Gaharan et al. 2007	Bitter 2014
Improve & maintain curriculum quality (level of excellence)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Compete for quality or improve faculty	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes			Yes	Yes
Compete for quality or improve students	Yes	Yes	Yes					Yes	
Signal student quality to employers	Yes		Yes		Yes			Yes	Yes
Prestige with peers & stakeholders	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes				Yes
Increase funding & other resources	Yes	Yes			Yes			Yes	Yes
Involvement with professionals & advisory council			Yes		Yes			Yes	Yes
Improve faculty research opportunities		Yes			Yes				Yes
Review & revise mission & goals								Yes	Yes
Perform self-assessment								Yes	Yes
Establish guidelines for promotion & tenure, & annual evaluation								Yes	

**Table 1**  
**Characteristics of Survey Respondents and Their Units and Institutions**

	SEEK		NO-SEEK	
	N=	%	N=	%
Surveys Mailed	303			
Number of Respondents	103	34%	17	86
Years Business Accredited				
Less than 5 years			1	6%
5-15 years			5	29%
More than 15 years			11	65%
Previously Holding Accounting Accreditation			1	6%
Geographical location (AAA region)				
Mid-Atlantic region			4	23%
Midwest region			2	12%
Northeast region			1	6%
Ohio region			2	12%
Southeast region			2	12%
Southwest region			4	23%
Western region			2	12%
Institutional Type				
Public			14	82%
Private			3	18%
Primary Mission of Accounting Unit				
Teaching-based			8	47%
Research-based			0	0%
Both teaching and research			9	53%
Institution's Carnegie Classification				
Research University			0	0%
Doctoral/Research			3	18%
Master's (L/M/S)			1	6%
Baccalaureate			13	76%
Accounting-related Degree Programs Offered				
Bachelor			17	100%
Master in Accounting			11	65%
Master of Tax			4	24%
MBA - Accounting Concentration			3	18%
Ph.D./D.B.A.			0	0%
Structure of Accounting Unit				
Department			14	82%
School (within a College)			1	6%
Separate School			1	6%
Other			1	6%

*Note.* SEEK – respondents indicating their institution is seeking or plans to seek (within 5 years) accounting accreditation; NO-SEEK – respondents not seeking or planning to seek (within 5 years) accounting accreditation

**Table 2**  
**Characteristics of Faculty at Respondents' Institutions**

	SEEK	NO-SEEK
Mean Number of Faculty by Rank		
Professor	3.41	2.90
Associate Professor	1.65	2.07
Assistant Professor	2.12	2.10
Clinical Professor	.29	.45
Lecturer	1.41	1.62
Other Rank	.06	.01
Mean Number of Faculty by Highest Degree		
Ph.D./D.B.A.	6.24	6.35
Juris Doctor/LLM	1.06	.75
Master's Degree	1.82	1.53
Other Degree	.12	.24
Accounting Faculty Size		
Mean By Count of Faculty Rank	8.94	9.15
Range	(3 – 17)	(1 – 25)
Mean By Count of Highest Degree	9.24	8.87
Range	(3 – 17)	(3 – 25)
Mean Percentage of Faculty with Ph.D./D.B.A.	66.05%	71.23%
Range	(25%-89%)	(25%-100%)
Mean Percentage of Faculty with a CPA License	72.43%	63.11%
Range	(22% - 100%)	(0%-100%)
Percentage of Institutions with One or More Faculty CPAs on Staff	100%	98% (99%) <sup>a</sup>
Percentage of Institutions with One or More Faculty CMAs on Staff	41%	52%
Percentage of Institutions with One or More Faculty with Other Certifications	35%	39% (40%) <sup>a</sup>

*Note.* SEEK – respondents indicating their institution is seeking or plans to seek (within 5 years) accounting accreditation; NO-SEEK – respondents not seeking or planning to seek (within 5 years) accounting accreditation

<sup>a</sup> Percentage in parentheses calculated using only data from those respondents providing data on the certifications held by their faculty.

**Table 3**  
**Beliefs About Accounting Accreditation Means and Standard Deviations**

	SEEK		NO-SEEK		
	Mean	p-value <sup>1</sup>	Mean	p-value <sup>1</sup>	p-value <sup>2</sup>
1. Your university's senior administration would value attainment of AACSB accounting accreditation	4.00	.000	3.14	ns	.002
2. Your dean would value attainment of AACSB accounting accreditation	4.59	.000	3.26	ns	.000
3. Your accounting faculty would value attainment of AACSB accounting accreditation	4.35	.000	2.92	ns	.000
4. AACSB accounting accreditation would enhance your unit's reputation with its stakeholders	4.29	.000	3.10	ns	.000
5. Attainment of AACSB accounting accreditation would add value beyond your business accreditation	4.06	.000	2.95	ns	.000
<b>The following AACSB accounting accreditation-related issues have had a NEGATIVE influence on your interest in seeking/ability to attain accounting accreditation...</b>					
1. ALL accounting programs delivered by your accounting unit must be reviewed for accreditation simultaneously	2.29	ns	2.73	.037	ns
2. your institution must demonstrate mission-consistent diversity in the accounting program(s)	2.00	.003	2.71	.013	.013
3. ALL of your accounting programs must evidence continued viability (produce a sufficient number of graduates)	2.29	.041	2.65	.008	ns
4. your accounting program(s) must specify action items that represent continuous improvement efforts	2.35	ns	2.81	ns	ns
5. sufficient resources are available for your accounting programs(s) to achieve its mission and action items	2.94	ns	3.36	.012	ns
6. sufficient faculty are available to be deployed to ALL instructional programs and locations	3.00	ns	3.35	.014	ns
7. the accounting program(s) are staffed at the required level (50%) of "academically-qualified" (AQ) faculty	2.82	ns	3.16	ns	ns
8. the accounting program(s) are staffed at the required level (>60%) of "participating" faculty	2.35	ns	2.93	ns	ns
9. the job placement and career success of your accounting graduates are (can be) documented	2.59	ns	2.92	ns	ns



**Table 3 (continued)****Beliefs About Accounting Accreditation Means and Standard Deviations**

	SEEK		NO-SEEK		
	Mean	p-value <sup>1</sup>	Mean	p-value <sup>1</sup>	p-value <sup>2</sup>
10. the accounting faculty possess sufficient professional accounting credentials/certifications	2.47	ns	2.89	ns	ns
11. the accounting faculty make intellectual contributions in discipline-based scholarship AND contributions to practice AND learning/pedagogy	2.76	ns	3.18	ns	ns
12. the accounting faculty demonstrates sufficient on-going interaction with the accounting profession	2.29	.029	2.92	ns	.039
13. the accounting faculty maintains a portfolio of relevant practical experience in business/accounting	2.82	ns	3.02	ns	ns
14. the accounting program(s) establish learning goals and directly measure learning outcomes	2.35	ns	2.89	ns	ns

*Note.* SEEK – respondents indicating their institution is seeking or plans to seek (within 5 years) accounting accreditation; NO-SEEK – respondents not seeking or planning to seek (within 5 years) accounting accreditation

<sup>1</sup> Significance of difference between mean and scale mid-point of three (“neutral”) (two-tailed t-test)

<sup>2</sup> Significance of difference between SEEK mean and NO-SEEK mean (two-tailed test)

ns – mean difference not statistically significant

**Table 4**  
**Mean Beliefs About Accounting Accreditation (NO-SEEK Only)**  
**By Accounting Faculty Size, Institution Type, and Unit Mission**

	Faculty Size			Institution			Mission			
	Small	Large	p-value <sup>1</sup>	Public	Private	p-value <sup>1</sup>	Teach	Research	Both	p-value <sup>2</sup>
Number of respondents	38	46		55	30		46	7	33	
1. Your university's senior administration would value attainment of AACSB accounting accreditation	3.00	3.22	ns	3.13	3.17	ns	3.09	2.29	3.39 <sup>3</sup>	ns
2. Your dean would value attainment of AACSB accounting accreditation	3.27	3.22	ns	3.15	3.47 <sup>3</sup>	ns	3.20	2.29	3.56 <sup>3</sup>	ns
3. Your accounting faculty would value attainment of AACSB accounting accreditation	2.84	2.93	ns	3.09	2.60 <sup>3</sup>	ns	3.18	2.71	2.61 <sup>3</sup>	.025
4. AACSB accounting accreditation would enhance your unit's reputation with its stakeholders	2.97	3.15	ns	3.37 <sup>3</sup>	2.60 <sup>3</sup>	.012	3.43 <sup>3</sup>	2.71	2.73	.023
5. Attainment of AACSB accounting accreditation would add value beyond your business accreditation	2.92	2.93	ns	3.19	2.53 <sup>3</sup>	.031	3.27	2.57	2.61	ns

**Table 4 (continued)**  
**Mean Beliefs About Accounting Accreditation (NO-SEEK Only)**  
**By Accounting Faculty Size, Institution Type, and Unit Mission**

	Faculty Size			Institution			Mission			
	Small	Large	p-value <sup>1</sup>	Public	Private	p-value <sup>1</sup>	Teach	Research	Both	p-value <sup>2</sup>
<p><b>The following AACSB accounting accreditation-related issues have had a NEGATIVE influence on your interest in seeking/ability to attain accounting accreditation...</b></p>										
1. ALL accounting programs delivered by your accounting unit must be reviewed for accreditation simultaneously	2.58 <sup>3</sup>	2.80	ns	2.76	2.67	ns	2.51 <sup>3</sup>	3.14	2.94	ns
2. your institution must demonstrate mission-consistent diversity in the accounting program(s)	2.70	2.67 <sup>3</sup>	ns	2.84	2.48 <sup>3</sup>	ns	2.71	3.00	2.66	ns
3. ALL of your accounting programs must evidence continued viability (produce a sufficient number of graduates)	2.79	2.50 <sup>3</sup>	ns	2.78	2.40 <sup>3</sup>	.045	2.51 <sup>3</sup>	3.14	2.73	ns
4. your accounting program(s) must specify action items that represent continuous improvement efforts	2.78	2.80	ns	2.85	2.73	ns	2.84	2.86	2.76	ns
5. sufficient resources are available for your accounting programs(s) to achieve its mission and action items	3.18	3.50 <sup>3</sup>	ns	3.42 <sup>3</sup>	3.27	ns	3.56 <sup>3</sup>	2.43	3.30	ns
6. sufficient faculty are available to be deployed to ALL instructional programs and locations	3.34	3.35	ns	3.40 <sup>3</sup>	3.27	ns	3.49 <sup>3</sup>	2.71	3.30	ns
7. the accounting program(s) are staffed at the required level (50%) of “academically-qualified” (AQ) faculty	3.54 <sup>3</sup>	2.80	.029	3.19	3.10	ns	3.33	3.43	2.84	ns

**Table 4 (continued)**  
**Mean Beliefs About Accounting Accreditation (NO-SEEK Only)**  
**By Accounting Faculty Size, Institution Type, and Unit Mission**

	Faculty Size			Institution			Mission			
	Small	Large	p-value <sup>1</sup>	Public	Private	p-value <sup>1</sup>	Teach	Research	Both	p-value <sup>2</sup>
8. the accounting program(s) are staffed at the required level (>60%) of “participating” faculty	3.03	2.80	ns	3.02	2.77	ns	3.00	3.57	2.69	ns
9. the job placement and career success of your accounting graduates are (can be) documented	3.16	2.70	.012	2.95	2.87	ns	2.84	3.43	2.91	ns
10. the accounting faculty possess sufficient professional accounting credentials/certifications	3.08	2.72	ns	2.95	2.79	ns	2.89	2.71	2.94	ns
11. the accounting faculty make intellectual contributions in discipline-based scholarship AND contributions to practice AND learning/pedagogy	3.58 <sup>3</sup>	2.80	.013	3.29	2.97	ns	3.38	2.71	3.00	ns
12. the accounting faculty demonstrates sufficient on-going interaction with the accounting profession	3.16	2.70	ns	2.87	3.00	ns	2.84	2.43	3.12	ns
13. the accounting faculty maintains a portfolio of relevant practical experience in business/accounting	3.21	2.87	.037	3.16	2.77	.007	2.96	2.71	3.18	.037
14. the accounting program(s) establish learning goals and directly measure learning outcomes	2.92	2.87	ns	2.93	2.83	ns	2.78	2.86	3.06	ns

<sup>1</sup> Significance of independent variable per LOGIT regression ( $p < .05$ )

<sup>2</sup> Significance of teaching mission variable per LOGIT regression ( $p < .05$ )

<sup>3</sup> Significance of difference between mean and scale mid-point of three (“neutral”) (two-tailed t-test)