The College of Business has a goal of attaining AACSB Accreditation. Below is a fact sheet about AACSB and the Accreditation process. Questions should be directed to Amy Milligan, Assistant Dean for Curriculum, Accreditation & Student Services: amy.milligan@stonybrook.edu

What is Accreditation?

Accreditation is a voluntary, non-governmental process that includes a rigorous external review of a school’s ability to provide the highest quality programs. The accreditation process is a comprehensive review of a school’s mission, faculty qualifications, and curricula, and the process includes self-evaluations, peer-reviews, committee reviews, and the development of in-depth strategic plans. Accreditation ensures that students are learning material most relevant to their field of study, preparing them to be effective leaders upon graduation.

Types of Accreditation

Institutional Accreditation

Institutional accreditation is an overall review of the entire university, and for Stony Brook, this is done by a regional accrediting body: Middle States Commission on Higher Education. As a regional accrediting body, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (“Middle States”) examines each of its member institutions on a 10-year cycle to help promote educational excellence and ensure compliance with its outlined standards of quality. Stony Brook University received its initial accreditation from Middle States in 1957. Our Middle States membership demonstrates our commitment to self-assessment and to providing a comprehensive world-class education, which inspires lifelong learning.

Specialized Accreditation

Once institutional accreditation is earned, universities can take accreditation a step further and seek ‘specialized’ or ‘professional’ accreditations for each of their disciplines. Specialized reviews are done by non-governmental, private agencies that are knowledgeable about a particular field of study. For example, a College of Medicine can apply for specialized accreditations that specifically review its medical programs.

Specialized accreditation communicates to other schools, potential employers, and the general public that the university’s degree programs in a particular field have passed a rigorous review, and that students are learning all they need to know about that area of study. Specialized accreditation also must be maintained.

Specialized accreditation can affect the ability of students/graduates to find employment, transfer classes between universities, and pursue additional degrees at other institutions. However, not all specialized accreditations are alike. Some are recognized only within its home country, while others are recognized worldwide. There are specialized accreditations that only evaluate community/vocational colleges and two-year programs, and those that include undergraduate, master’s, and doctorate degree programs.

What is AACSB Accreditation?

For nearly 100 years, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSB) has set the standards for business education.

Established in 1916, AACSB is a global, nonprofit membership organization of educational institutions, businesses, and other entities devoted to the advancement of management education. In 1919, AACSB adopted a set of accreditation standards with the primary objective of improving collegiate business education. The organization defines accreditation as “a voluntary, non-governmental process that includes an external review of a school’s ability to provide quality programs.”
Universities do not need AACSB business school accreditation to offer business programs. Of the more than 13,000 schools worldwide that offer business programs, only 672 hold AACSB Accreditation. AACSB accreditation is mission based. This means that the accreditation process evaluates whether the business program meets the mission the college sets for itself. So business programs are not equivalent when they are accredited by AACSB. Teaching schools do not have the same expectations of faculty and students as do comprehensive research universities, such as Stony Brook. Accreditation does indicate that the school has achieved the level of quality, rigor, and relevance it sets for itself. It takes a strong commitment by a business school to earn and maintain AACSB accreditation especially if the school aims to go beyond minimum standards in research and practice, generating new business knowledge and educating students in leading edge skills businesses want from college graduates today. This is Stony Brook's goal.

Why is the Stony Brook University College of Business seeking AACSB Accreditation?

The College of Business was established at Stony Brook in 2004. As we continue to grow and make our mark, we want to ensure to our students, alumni, employers, and campus community that the education we are delivering is of the utmost quality and adheres to strict standards set forth by accreditation. This provides assurance that a degree program meets high standards for academic excellence. AACSB Accreditation Standards are used as the basis to evaluate a business school's mission, operations, faculty qualifications and contributions, programs, and other critical areas.

The Accreditation Process

Throughout the accreditation process and during the mandatory five-year reviews, AACSB makes certain that the program is teaching a complete and relevant set of business skills that align with the practical requirements of the current business environment.

When AACSB evaluates a business school, it looks at its mission, operations, faculty qualifications and contributions, programs, and other areas that are important to students and the operation of the school. The process is a multi-year process and the time it takes varies by institution.

Steps in the Accreditation Process

1. An institution must be a member of AACSB International in order to apply for accreditation.

2. The applicant school submits an Eligibility Application (for business and/or accounting accreditation) as an indication of interest to enter the AACSB Accreditation Process. A school may apply for business and accounting accreditation simultaneously, or for accounting accreditation following the achievement of business accreditation.

3. Eligibility Applications can be submitted at any time during the year. Following a preliminary review by accreditation staff, and if found complete and appropriate, the application is forwarded to the first regular scheduled Initial Accreditation Committee (IAC) meeting for consideration by the full committee.

4. When the application is approved, a volunteer business school administrator (such as a dean) is assigned to the applicant school as a mentor to assist with the development of an Initial Self Evaluation Report (iSER). This assigned mentor must avoid any appearance of conflict of interest. At this time, an AACSB Accreditation Staff Liaison also is assigned. This staff liaison serves as the primary contact person within AACSB for the school for all accreditation-related questions.

5. The applicant school will receive an official letter from AACSB informing the institution that its Eligibility Application has been approved and that a mentor has been assigned. An invoice will be sent to the school and must be paid in full within one month of receipt.

6. The assigned mentor works with the applicant school to determine its current alignment with the accreditation standards and assist with the development of an iSER. If the mentor finds that there is no reasonable expectation that the school can align itself with the accreditation standards in the maximum allotted time, he/she will so advise and recommend that the school withdrawals.

7. In the iSER the school evaluates itself on how it aligns with the 15 business standards (and/or 9 accounting standards). For each standard the school should not only evaluate its current situation related to the standards but also document if it feels that it is in alignment with the standard or if additional action is needed to achieve alignment. Along with the iSER the school will submit a Gap Analysis, indicating for each standard if the school is in alignment or not, if not, the school will indicate the actions that need to be completed, who is responsible for what, the financial resources needed and timeline until completion. Along with the iSER and Gap Analysis the school submits completed Tables 2-1, 15-1, and 15-2 (Tables A2-1, A9-1, and A9-2 for accounting accreditation) and its strategic plan.
8. A school is allowed two years for the development of the iSER; however, the expectation is that most schools will develop this report within a year after acceptance of the Eligibility Application.

9. The IAC reviews the iSER. This review will lead to one of the following outcomes:
   a. Acceptance of the iSER with a recommendation that the school develop a Final Self-Evaluation Report following an invitation to apply for an Initial Accreditation Visit.
   b. The iSER is accepted with a recommendation that the school enter the action implementation phase. The school is asked to submit updates to the iSER to inform the committee of its progress toward alignment with the standards (a three-year implementation period is permitted). The mentor then continues to work with the school until it is invited to submit an application for Initial Accreditation (for business and/or accounting). Initial Accreditation must be achieved five years following the acceptance of the iSER by the IAC.
   c. The plan is accepted, however, further development of the alignment plan is needed. A revise and resubmit recommendation is made to the applicant school.
   d. The iSER is not accepted, as it is determined that the applicant school will not be able to align itself with the AACSB Accreditation Standards within the maximum time allowed to complete the Accreditation process.

10. Approximately, two years in advance of the anticipated accreditation review visit, a Peer Review Team chair (not the full team) is appointed. Chair appointments must avoid any appearance of conflict of interest. The chair guides the school as it develops its Final Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and works with the school to develop the schedule for the visit.

11. The IAC appoints the additional members of the Peer Review Team. The team reviews the SER, as well as prepares and sends a pre-visit letter to the school following review and approval by the IAC.

12. The visit takes place, and the Peer Review Team delivers a visit report to the applicant school, which includes recommendations for accreditation, deferral, or no accreditation. The report and recommendations are forwarded to the IAC for concurrence.

13. Recommendations or denials for accreditation are ratified by the IAC. Recommendations are forwarded to the AACSB Board of Directors for ratification.

**Where is Stony Brook in the AACSB Accreditation Process?**

The College of Business has made significant progress towards accreditation, having submitted our Initial Self-Evaluation Report (iSER) and two subsequent progress reports with the most recent submitted in September 2018. We are currently awaiting review of the progress report by the Initial Accreditation Committee (IAC), this will determine what the next steps are in the process for the COB. Referencing the above, we are on step 9c as we continue to move through the process.

**What will it mean for a current student or graduate until AACSB Accreditation is attained?**

AACSB Accreditation will most certainly improve the reputation and prestige of Stony Brook University’s College of Business. While we are in the process of attaining accreditation, current and prospective students, as well as employers, can be assured that the University and College have always been committed to the delivery of high quality business education, both in classroom and experiential learning situations. Alumni and employers already know the high value of a business degree from Stony Brook, and we continue to have prominent, sought-after organizations recruit and hire our graduates.