I. Introduction

In June 1998, the baccalaureate and master’s degree programs in business offered by California State University, Chico were placed on continuing review status for a period of up to three years.

In its report on the February 1998 campus visit for reaffirmation of accreditation, the peer review team indicated that the College of Business had not met the standard for overall high quality. It indicated that a recently adopted strategic plan provided an insufficient lapse of time to measure or to track outcomes. The team cited some serious issues involving faculty composition and development. It stated that the faculty had a very large proportion of its full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty that did not meet the academic qualifications standard, an issue exacerbated by a significant faculty component which the team found has contributed little or nothing in the way of intellectual contributions. Further, the team concluded that the school’s “diversified research portfolio” gave little guidance and direction to faculty research efforts. Finally, the peer review team concluded that in many cases, the faculty were not instructionally current.

The college was asked by the peer review team and the Business Accreditation Committee to submit annual reports each October addressing: (1) progress toward achieving annual goals; (2) the use of outcome measures to foster continuous improvement; (3) continued faculty development processes and specific outcomes achieved.

It was requested that these reports should include, but not be limited to, faculty development activities, intellectual contributions, faculty outside activities, and overall faculty qualifications. Also, evidence was requested to demonstrate that cross-functional courses at the graduate level are offered and that course requirements for graduate students are offered and taken by all students at each of two campuses offering the MBA.
Visits to the campus were made by the continuing review team chair in August 1998 and August 1999 to advise the school with regard to the expectations and requirements of the continuing review and to evaluate the college’s progress toward addressing the concerns raised by the peer review team and the BAC. In September 2000 the two members of the continuing review team visited the campus to assess whether the school has met the requirements of the continuing review and whether it has satisfactorily met the business accreditation standards.

II. Statement of Team Recommendation

A. It is the judgment of the continuing review team that California State University, Chico has satisfactorily addressed the concerns identified in the February 1998 peer review team report and in the June 1998 letter of concurrence from the Business Accreditation Committee. Based upon its September 2000 campus visit and its review of the school’s October 2000 Continuing Review Report, the continuing review team judges that the school now meets AACSB standards for business accreditation. It is clear that an environment for continuous improvement is present and the faculty, administration and staff of the College of Business have the ability to achieve desired outcomes consistent with AACSB standards. It is therefore the recommendation of the continuing review team that business accreditation for California State University, Chico be reaffirmed.

B. This recommendation reflects the opinion of the continuing review team only. It will be reviewed for concurrence or remanded to the team by the Business Accreditation Committee. The role of the accreditation committee is to ensure consistent application of the AACSB standards and processes across peer review teams.

Concurrence by the Business Accreditation Committee and ratification by the Board of Directors are required prior to the confirmation of reaffirmation of accreditation. Following ratification by the Board of Directors, the institution will be notified. The institution must wait for this official notification before making any announcement of the accreditation decision. A listing of institutions achieving initial accreditation and reaffirmation of accreditation is provided by AACSB to its members and to the public.

III. Identification of Areas That Must Be Addressed Before Reaffirmation of Business Accreditation:

None.
IV. Relevant Facts and Assessment of Strengths and Weaknesses that Support the Team’s Accreditation Recommendation

The continuing review team is impressed with the improvements that have taken place at the College of Business of California State University, Chico since the peer review team visit in February 1988. Under the leadership of interim dean, Marc Siegall (1998-1999) and new dean Heikki Rinne (1999-2000), the faculty has satisfactorily addressed all key areas of concern identified in the peer review team report. Significant and ongoing improvements have taken place. There has been a strong commitment on the part of the faculty and administration of the college and the university to meet AACSB accreditation standards. Appropriate financial and other support has been received to achieve college goals and objectives. Processes are in place and are operating to improve faculty staffing, faculty development and faculty scholarship. Overall, the College of Business is clearly a better college than it was prior to continuing review.

During the continuing review period, an extensive project management chart was used to provide focus and direction to the tasks required for the attainment of overall high quality and reaffirmation of accreditation. Among the changes that successfully took place were modification of the mission statement to more effectively depict the school and its aspirations, the introduction of a clear definition of appropriate faculty intellectual contributions and reward systems linked to this definition and the school’s mission, a new faculty development plan for the college, an appropriate outside activity policy, and effective assessment and continuous improvement processes.

Some of the specific outcomes of the school’s continuous improvement efforts include the following. The off-campus MBA program in Redding, California has been discontinued. Full time faculty now teach over 82 percent of credit hours and all teaching fields now exceed the minimum of 60 percent credit hours taught by full time faculty. Virtually all tenured and tenure-track faculty have engaged in some intellectual contribution activity during the past five years. Total annual intellectual contributions have increased from about 70 in 1995-1996 to 140 in 1999-2000. The faculty has produced an average of about 10 intellectual contributions per person over the past five years. Over 75 percent of the faculty has engaged in journal publication, and the total annual number of refereed journal articles increased from 18 in 1995-1996 to 51 in 1999-2000. The vast majority of full-time faculty, over 75 percent, are now academically qualified.

One unanticipated concern drew the attention of the continuing review team during its visit in September 2000 when it was learned that semester credit hours for the Fall 2000 semester increased approximately 15 percent over the previous fall, while available full time faculty declined slightly due to unexpected late
resignations and other reasons. During the visit the team requested that the school include in its October 2000 Continuing Review Report a plan to address these enrollment and staffing developments.

From its review of the school’s October 2000 Report, the team feels comfortable that the college and the institution are implementing adequate steps to address the staffing concerns that have recently emerged. In the report is outlined an enrollment management plan that includes increased course scheduling oversight by the dean’s office and accelerated recruitment and hiring plans.

V. Commendations of Strengths, Innovations, and Unique Features

1. The school has been responsive in addressing the concerns of the 1998 peer review team and the Business Accreditation Committee.

2. The leadership of Dr. Marc Siegall, as interim dean from August 1998 until August 1999 and in his subsequent role as associate dean of the College of Business has provided significant support for the faculty and for the new dean, Dr. Heikki Rinne, as reaffirmation efforts have been pursued.

3. The faculty are to be commended for their efforts to respond to the areas identified by the peer review team and the Business Accreditation Committee to be addressed before reaffirmation of accreditation.

4. In particular, the continuing review team notes the progress made by the faculty in the production of intellectual contributions and the enhancement of academic qualifications.

5. Virtually all tenured and tenure-track faculty have engaged in some level of intellectual contribution activity during the past 5-years, from 1995 to 2000.

6. A strong majority of the faculty are now academically qualified.

VI. Opportunities for Improvement Relevant to the Team’s Accreditation Recommendation

1. Immediate efforts need to be made to successfully fill existing tenure-track vacancies with academically qualified faculty.

2. The plan developed in August-September 2000 to address significant increases in business enrollments in the Fall 2000 semester should be implemented to address the staffing and other issues resulting from this increase.
3. The dean’s office should assume greater responsibility for coordinating course offerings, class sizes and scheduling of undergraduate and graduate business courses.

4. The faculty should continue to engage in continuous improvement activities designed to enhance (a) the quantity and quality of intellectual contributions and (b) appropriate faculty qualifications.

VII. Consultative Feedback to Achieve or Enhance Overall High Quality and the Expectation of Continuous Improvement Not Considered Relevant to the Team’s Accreditation Recommendation Stated Above

None.

VIII. Summary of Continuing Review Visit

A. Team Members

Allan D. Spritzer, Team Chair
College of Business
East Tennessee State University
Johnson City, Tennessee

Otis Thomas, Business Member
Earl G. Graves School of Business and Management
Morgan State University
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B. Visit Dates

September 10-12, 2000