

Campaign AACSB Response Phase

From: Diane Swanson, Kansas State University, and Bill Frederick, University of Pittsburgh (Founders, Campaign AACSB)

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We have received many requests for an update on *Campaign AACSB*. As many of you know, we were prompted to start this campaign in the fall of 2002 as news of corporate scandals erupted in the media. At that time, AACSB, the agency that accredits business degree programs, was drafting new standards. During this window of opportunity, Professor Duane Windsor of Rice University wrote an Open letter to AACSB in which he gave compelling reasons why that agency should require a standalone ethics course as a condition of accreditation. (Such course is often labeled "business and society," "corporate citizenship," "social issues in management," or equivalent nomenclatures.)

Subsequently, more than 200 professors and practitioners endorsed Professor Windsor's letter, as did two professional associations (The Washington, DC-based Ethics Resource Center officers and Social Issues in Management Division of the Academy of Management). Since most endorsers copied AACSB officials, that agency received a flood of petitions in support of a standalone ethics course. Even so, AACSB officials summarily dismissed the call that at least one ethics course be required as a condition of accreditation, although they eventually adopted Professor Windsor's suggestion to highlight ethics resources on AACSB'S website.

Indeed, the resistance has been telling. We will not repeat the well-worn (and newly inventive) arguments in defense of sidestepping ethics coursework. We will note that these arguments seem more desperate and out of date against the backdrop of unprecedented corporate scandals, increased public distrust of business, and a virtual sea change in corporate governance.

We have carefully archived *Campaign AACSB*. If you would like to read a detailed history of this effort, including specific responses from AACSB officials, see "The Buck Stops Here: Why Universities Must Reclaim Business Ethics Education" in *The Journal of Academic Ethics* (Vol. 2, Issue 1: 43-61) by Diane Swanson. (To request a copy of this article, write to Diane Swanson, swanson@ksu.edu).

What we want to underscore in this update is that we are now in the *Response Phase* of *Campaign AACSB*. That is, we have been responding to various invitations to speak about the campaign in public forums, including media interviews. This past summer, for example, Diane Swanson and Duane Windsor spoke on the role of business ethics education at the AACSB International Teaching Ethics Conference in Boulder, advocating that a required stand alone course in ethics is needed as a foundation for integrating ethics across other coursework. According to a survey given after these presentations, the majority of conference attendees agreed.

The *Task Force on Business Ethics Education*, born out of *Campaign AACSB*, is responding to the need to document ethics coverage in business school curricula. Members of this Task Force, Professors Tammy MacLean and Barrie Litzky in affiliation with the *Business Ethics Education Initiative* at Kansas State University are surveying the top 50 business schools (as ranked by *Business Week*) for such coverage.

Drs. MacLean and Litzky are disseminating their research through various publications and presentations and as members of the Social Issues in Management Curriculum Development Committee. *USA Today Magazine* reported the results from their initial (and smaller) sampling of business schools in March 2004 (<http://www.cba.k-state.edu/departments/ethics/docs/usatodayarticle.pdf>).

For a complete summary of this preliminary report, go to the Business Ethics Education Initiative website at Kansas State University (<http://www.cba.k-state.edu/departments/ethics/docs/TaskForceSummaryJune03.pdf>).

In the wake of *Campaign AACSB*, we have also responded to several requests from university representatives to evaluate standards for delivering ethics education. Additionally, many scholars and practitioners have requested permission to cite campaign material in written work and public speeches. We will continue to disseminate material from the *Campaign AACSB* archive to interested parties, including press agents.

We provided Bloomberg Press with such information for a March 2004 article on business ethics education by Liz Willen (<http://www.cba.k-state.edu/departments/ethics/docs/bloombergpress.htm>). According to this article, only one-third of accredited schools require an ethics course as a condition of accreditation, a statistic which AACSB confirmed.

For those of you who are new to this discussion, you can find Professor Windsor's letter on the following websites: Social Issues in Management (<http://www.pitt.edu/~rorst6/sim/Endorse.doc>) and International Association for Business and Society (<http://www.iabs.net>).

For other Campaign materials, go to the Business Ethics Education Initiative website at Kansas State University (<http://www.cba.k-state.edu/departments/ethics/index.htm>).

If you want to add your name to the list of Campaign endorsers, contact Diane Swanson (swanson@ksu.edu).

Although our updates may not be frequent, please know that *Campaign AACSB* continues in *Response Phase*. The interest in business ethics education is not likely to wane anytime soon, and we will continue to respond to various opportunities to communicate campaign goals to all interested parties.

Sincerely,
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