



May 20, 2022

Todd Shawver, Dean
Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania
400 E 2nd Street
Sutliff Hall 373
Bloomsburg, PA 17815

Re: Decision regarding AACSB Accreditation of Bloomsburg University following integration
Via Email

Dear Dean Shawver,

This letter follows our call of May 12, 2022, summarizes our understanding of the situation, and provides our official decision as to the accreditation status of Bloomsburg University and next steps.

Situation

As a result of a state-wide consolidation, effective July 1, 2022 Bloomsburg University (AACSB-accredited) is being consolidated with Lock Haven and Mansfield (neither AACSB-accredited) under a newly titled “Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania,” which itself will be accredited by Middle States. Each of the three campuses of Bloomsburg, Lock Haven and Mansfield will continue to function as equal campuses. The diploma will identify the campus from which the student is affiliated. The leadership structure of the integrated system will include one dean of business who will oversee business programs on all three campuses. The university will work on a new strategic plan during 2022-23 and the consolidated business unit will create its new strategic plan during 2023-24.

Question

What are the implications for Bloomsburg’s AACSB accreditation status as a result of integrating with two non-AACSB-accredited institutions?

Authoritative Guidance

The integration is considered a substantive change and is subject to this key assumption as stated in the [AACSB Substantive Change policy](#):

- AACSB International accreditation cannot be “acquired” as part of a subsequent event that involves a merger or acquisition and can only be conveyed to a surviving institution resulting from such events following appropriate self-assessment and AACSB peer review processes and ratification by the AACSB Board of Directors.

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Decision

To form our decision, we consulted with the chairs of both the AACSB Continuous Improvement Committee as well as the AACSB Initial Accreditation Committee to ensure a consensus decision. The appropriate path with respect to AACSB accreditation is for Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania to undergo an initial accreditation visit, whereby the consolidated new entity will follow appropriate self-assessment and undergo AACSB peer review and finally ratification by the AACSB Board of Directors. During the time leading up to the initial accreditation visit, Bloomsburg University will retain its AACSB accreditation for this campus only. As a condition of allowing Bloomsburg to retain its AACSB accreditation in the interim, we require language on the Bloomsburg business website that clearly distinguishes the AACSB-accredited Bloomsburg business degrees from Lock Haven and Mansfield business degrees, which will not be considered AACSB accredited as they have not yet been subject to AACSB peer review.

The initial accreditation visit is a standard-by-standard review of the consolidated entity. Of particular interest is the strategic plan, faculty sufficiency and faculty qualifications, assurance of learning, and the level of scholarship produced and sustained by the consolidated entity. If successful, the surviving entity, Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania, will be considered AACSB accredited and AACSB accreditation will extend equally to business degrees conferred by any of the three campuses that comprise Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania. If initial accreditation is not successful, AACSB accreditation for Bloomsburg University will expire and Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania will not be AACSB accredited. If the initial visit results in a deferral, Bloomsburg will retain their accreditation until the final initial accreditation decision is made.

Logistics

Bloomsburg's CIR visit was previously set for 2024-25. Instead of a CIR visit for Bloomsburg, an initial accreditation visit for Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania will be scheduled for 2024-25. This allows the school time to write a self evaluation ("SER") report for 2023-24 reflective of the consolidated entity. We will further confer with you to identify the most experienced team for your unique circumstances as well as set a date for the visit. A mentor will not be appointed since Bloomsburg has ample years of experience as an AACSB-accredited institution. Your staff liaison, Rachel Dixon-Zudar, stands ready to assist you through this process. The school will not need to provide an eligibility application, iSER, or progress reports to the Initial Accreditation Committee as typical initial schools do. After your team is appointed, of course we would recommend frequent, close communication with the team chair. We also highly recommend a pre-visit by the chair.

Fees

Bloomsburg University will continue to remit the normal annual dues of \$5,950 during the interim period. During the year of the initial accreditation visit, Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania will be responsible for the \$15,000 fee associated with having an initial accreditation visit.

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Conclusion

Please let me know if any of this is unclear or if you have further questions. I believe this is a fair and equitable solution that provides some security to Bloomsburg, who has worked hard for its AACSB accreditation, and simultaneously, the solution remains true to the ideals and integrity of process for accreditation and our members.

Sincerely,

Stephanie M. Bryant

Stephanie M. Bryant, PhD
Executive Vice President and Global Chief Accreditation Officer