

The Pathways Commission: On the Path to Success?

Jalal Soroosh

Loyola University Maryland

JP Krahel

Loyola University Maryland

Abstract

In 2010, the American Accounting Association (AAA) and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) organized the Pathways Commission to study the environment of accounting in higher education and discuss “educational pathways to engage and retain the strongest possible community of students, academics, practitioners, and other knowledgeable leaders in the practice and study of accounting” (Behn et al., 2012). Alternative pathways to the Ph.D., the role of teaching in faculty evaluations, and the value of practitioner-oriented research are among the many issues addressed by the Commission in an effort to strengthen linkages between academics, practitioners, and accounting students. The objective of this research is to determine the practicality of implementing the proposed recommendations of the Pathways Commission. Since accounting faculty will be key players in the success of the Commission’s recommendations, we have surveyed faculty members from a wide range of institutions on their views regarding both the appropriateness of the Commission’s recommendations and whether they can be practically implemented. This study finds that while most faculty are in favor of most recommendations, optimism regarding their implementation is limited.

Keywords: Pathways Commission, accounting education, faculty evaluation

Introduction

In response to the U.S. Treasury Advisory Committee on the Auditing Profession (ACAP, 2008) Report of 2008, the American Accounting Association (AAA) and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) organized the Pathways Commission in 2010. Its mission was to study the environment of accounting in higher education and make recommendations “for educational pathways to engage and retain the strongest possible community of students, academics, practitioners, and other knowledgeable leaders in the practice and study of accounting” (Behn, Ezzell, Murphy, Rayburn, Smith, and Strawser, 2012). This is not the first time that accounting academics have taken steps to improve the structure of the profession and the quality of the accounting education it provides. Table 1 lists committees and commissions established to study accounting education and to provide suggestions and recommendations for its improvement.

Focusing on the integration of practice, education, and research, the Pathways Commission Report contains a set of recommendations and accompanying objectives as a map toward a streamlined, synthesized, and more productive accounting education environment. A detailed list of these items is presented in Appendix A.

The objective of this research is to determine the practicality of implementing the proposed recommendations by the Pathways Commission. Alternative pathways to the Ph.D., the role of teaching in faculty evaluations, and the value of practitioner-oriented research are among the many issues addressed by the Commission in an effort to strengthen linkages between academics, practitioners, and accounting students. Since accounting faculty will be key players in the success of the Commission’s recommendations, we have surveyed faculty members from a wide range of

institutions about both the appropriateness of the Commission's recommendations and whether they can be practically implemented.

The following section discusses the background of the establishment of the Pathways Commission. We will then discuss the Commission's recommendations and the underlying objectives in light of the comments given by the participants in this study. This study provides an indication of the likelihood of success of the Commission's recommendations.

Literature Review

The History of Accounting Education Change Commissions

Black (2012) provides a comprehensive review of the historical context of various accounting education proposals, the environments in which they were developed, and the issues they attempted to resolve. The 1980s saw significant discussion and criticism of accounting education in the United States (Sundem and Williams, 1991). The issues with accounting education at that time were similar to contemporaneous issues. First, students were being given a narrowly-focused education that did not prepare them for a changing business world (Sundem and Williams, 1991). Second, accounting educators were blamed for not attracting sufficiently high quality students into the accounting profession (Williams, 1991). In response to these criticisms, the American Accounting Association (AAA) established the Bedford Committee to study the future structure, content, and scope of accounting education. The Bedford Committee released its report in 1986, including 28 recommendations to be implemented in three stages by 2000 (Bedford et al., 1986). Around the same time, the managing partners of the then-Big 8 accounting firms released "Perspective on Education: Capabilities for Success in Accounting Education," (Arthur Andersen & Co. et al., 1989) a report recommending changes in accounting education to prepare graduates entering the profession. The Big 8 were specifically critical of the accounting education format and the differences between the accounting curriculum and real world practices. The report identified a lack of practical experience in the classrooms as one of the problems facing accounting education and recommended the establishment of a committee including representatives from diverse stakeholders (e.g. AICPA, AAA, FEI, NASBA, AACSB, IMA, and accounting firms) to find a solution (Black, 2012).

In April 1989, with financial support provided by the Big 8, the AAA's Executive Committee authorized the President and the President-Elect of the Association to establish the Accounting Education Change Commission (Muller and Simmons, 1989). The AECC was established to act as a catalyst for change. The Commission identified five goals (Williams, 1991):

1. Identify the objectives of education for accountants.
2. Foster an environment of improvement in accounting education.
3. Promote implementing accounting education improvements.
4. Reduce impediments to improvements in accounting education.
5. Measure improvements in accounting education.

Similar to the Pathways Commission, the AECC was not established with preconceived notions regarding ultimate solutions or best practices for accountants entering into the profession, instead endorsing a multifaceted approach (Muller and Simmons, 1989). The AECC's effort was initially successful in providing grants and incentives for several schools to experiment with revised accounting curricula, particularly at the principles level.

Despite these efforts, there was no evidence that the AECC solved the problems facing accounting education. Indeed, almost a decade later, Albrecht (2000) identified similar issues with accounting education. The Pathways Commission suggests that the incomplete success of the recommendations made by the previous Commissions was due to a lack of clear identification of the potential environmental, social, cultural, and professional impediments to implementing those recommendations (Behn et al., 2012).

Pathways Commission

The impetus for the Pathways Commission was the 2008 ACAP report (Black, 2012). The Commission was organized in 2010 to fulfill a charge that was “expansive in its scope and open to much interpretation” (Behn, 2012). The Commission established a supply chain structure and collected feedback from a variety of stakeholders over 18 months.

In developing their recommendations, the Pathways Commission drew input from many stakeholders, including the AACSB. Jan Williams represented the AACSB on the Commission’s Supply Chains task force. Given that both business and accounting education are influenced by AACSB standards (Black, 2012), it is not surprising that the Pathways Commission recommendations align with AACSB standards, particularly those developed in 2013 and updated in 2016. Indeed, in its deliberations and discussions of various items, the Commission has been mindful of AACSB standards and its recommendations are anchored in those standards. For example, the Commission’s Action Item 4.2.5 calls for engagement with the AACSB in curricular innovation and implementation processes. Recommendation 2, advocating for doctoral education via flexible pedagogies, aligns with the AACSB Bridge Program and Accounting Standards A4, A8, and A9, faculty qualification and professional engagement standards. In Recommendation 6, regarding data collection, the Commission calls for coordination among organizations such as the AICPA, AAA, NASBA and AACSB to collect, analyze, and disseminate information about current and future markets for accounting professionals and accounting faculty.

Table 2 features comparisons between Pathways Commission recommendations and AACSB standards for accounting programs. Based on these similarities, it is not unreasonable to assume that preparation for and implementation of Pathways Commission recommendations can dovetail with a school’s preparations for AACSB accreditation or reaccreditation.

In July 2012, the Pathways Commission Report was issued and contains seven recommendations, twenty one objectives, and over fifty action items. The Commission also recognized that, due to various existing impediments, some of their recommendations might not be adequately addressed in the near future. This study is an attempt to provide an indication of the practicality of the Commission’s recommendations. We will review the recommendations and the objectives outlined in the report in light of the participants’ responses and comments.

Methodology and Results

The survey employed in this study collected faculty opinions on the Commission’s objectives and recommendations and, where appropriate, the respondent’s perception of his or her institution’s preparedness to support the implementation of an individual item. Respondents were also asked to provide rank, title, professional and/or academic credentials, institutional information, and basic demographic information. Open-ended comments were also solicited to allow for optional expansion upon a respondent’s opinions.

An online survey developed using Qualtrics was sent to 3,458 accounting faculty found in the Hasselback Directory. Two-hundred and thirty six e-mails were returned due to invalid e-mail addresses or automatic responses. From the remaining 3,222 valid addresses, we received 295 responses, of which 64 were incomplete, leading to a final, valid response count of 231 (7.2 percent). Full survey results are available upon request.

Demographics

A review of the respondents’ demographic information indicates a diverse population with regard to rank, gender, school type, and the degrees offered. By rank, respondents vary from lecturers to full professors and chairs, with a majority of respondents holding tenured positions. There are 129 males and 97 females, with five choosing not to provide gender data. One-hundred and seventy six hold Ph.D.s, 10 hold DBAs, 51 hold MBAs, and 136 are CPA certified. As to employing institutions, 203 offer a BS, 154 offer an MBA (108 of these offer an accounting

concentration), and 70 grant Ph.D. degrees. One-hundred and sixty one are fully public and 66 are fully private, and 129 are accredited by AACSB.¹

Findings

The objective of this research is to predict the success of the Pathways Commission recommendations based on accounting faculty perceptions of those recommendations and institutional ability and willingness to work toward accomplishing them. We will discuss our findings in light of each recommendation and its underlying objectives.

While each recommendation has its own specific characteristics, one observation holds universally true: respondents' aggregated opinion of the recommendation itself is more positive than their opinion regarding institutional preparedness (see Figure 1).

Recommendation 1: Integrate Accounting Research, Education, and Practice

“Over the last several years, we have moved away from strong connections to the profession in favor of a greater focus on research. In my view, that transition is largely attributable to our AACSB accreditation.”

Recommendation 1 and its four objectives address disconnects between accounting education, research, and practice. The Commission suggests that accounting research is not used or appreciated in accounting practice because it does not address the problems practitioners face. One reason for this disconnect is the lack of available, relevant data for accounting researchers to use. The integration of practice, and practitioners, into accounting research “will help to increase the level of useful, quality research that will help to advance the profession” (Behn, 2012). Recommendation 1 is meant to strengthen the linkage between the three legs underlying the accounting profession. Laughlin (2011) argues that if these three components are not brought together, “we run the risk of losing the societally-sanctioned status of being seen as a profession with all the associated privileges and respect.”

As shown in Table 3, our research indicates that accounting faculty have mixed feelings about the practicality of this recommendation and its underlying objectives. Although they generally support the recommendation (mean: 4.99 out of 6); they do not consider their respective institutions to be able to translate this theory into practice (mean: 3.75 out of 6).

The Commission has associated six impediments with this recommendation: the relationship between university rankings and journal rankings, inaccessibility of client and firm data to researchers, time and resource constraints, lack of encouragement for professionals interested in academia, few mechanisms for academics to maintain awareness of practical issues, and restrictive accreditation standards (Behn, 2012, 30-31). Several of these concerns were confirmed by respondent comments. These comments can be summarized as follows: The AACSB, universities, high profile journals, and practitioners must take coordinated steps to improve the environment for practice-oriented research activities. AACSB standards need to provide a stronger recognition for practical research and integration of practice into accounting education. Universities, in turn, need to revise their policies with regard to practical research as an important component of tenure and promotion decisions. Top tier journals should be willing to recognize and publish practical research. Finally, practitioners need to be willing to work with academics by providing data for research and avenues for collaboration, including opportunities for faculty to gain practical experience by getting involved in real cases or engagements.

Recommendation 2: Flexible Pedagogies and Doctoral Pathways

“I don't think most schools will be open to alternative Ph.Ds. or doctorates. I have an alternative degree and am treated like a second class citizen.”

¹ To encourage frank and honest discussion, we promised respondents that they would remain anonymous. This anonymity, coupled with the fact that the survey was sent out in a single wave (Sivo, Saunders, Chang, and Jiang 2006), means that we cannot account for multiple respondents representing the same school, and also prevents us from administering meaningful post hoc nonresponse tests. We acknowledge this as a limitation of the study.

The Wall Street Journal (Gullapalli, 2004; Alsop, 2007), the AACSB (2003), and the AAA/APLG (Kachelmeier, Madeo, Plumlee, Pratt, and Krull, 2005) all suggest that there is a shortage of qualified accounting Ph.D.s. needed to help build the learned profession suggested in Recommendation 1. The AACSB report considered Ph.D.s in all business areas including accounting and estimated the shortage of Ph.D.s at about 2,500 by 2003. Plumlee, Kachelmeier, Madeo, Pratt, and Krull (2006) indicated that on the average, the overall supply of new accounting faculty met about 50 percent of the demand for 2005-2008. Plumlee and Reckers (2014) found that 70 percent of accounting administrators believe their programs have been harmed by a lack of Ph.D.s. To remedy this shortage, the committee made several recommendations which were in line with Recommendation 2 and its underlying objectives identified by the Pathways commission. Brink, Glasscock, and Wier (2012), following the Plumlee Committee's (Plumlee et al. 2006) recommendations, further studied the success of such recommendations and offered additional steps the profession can take to increase the quantity and quality of Ph.D. candidates.

As Brink et al. (2012) noted, Ph.D. granting schools have had to reduce the number of accepted doctoral candidates because fewer faculty members are qualified to advise the candidates. This creates a feed-forward vicious cycle, eventually leading to a severe shortage of accounting Ph.D.s that may damage the profession.

Recommendation 2 and its two underlying objectives address this problem and respond to the existing issue identified by Brink et al. (2012). Our findings, however, indicate that this recommendation and its objectives face considerable obstacles. With an average of 4.11 out of 6, accounting faculty seem only mildly enthusiastic about this recommendation. Faculty opinions regarding school readiness are far lower (2.40 out of 6), indicating a very small chance of success for this recommendation. Our findings indicate that the traditional path toward earning a Ph.D. – course work and dissertation – is seen as the only effective path. We found the same low support for the two objectives accompanying this recommendation, as shown in Table 4.

Table 5 shows several significant differences between certain self-identified groups within our survey results. Compared with their peers at non-Ph.D.-granting institutions, faculty at schools that grant doctorates held a significantly lower personal opinion of Recommendation 2, as did Ph.D.-qualified faculty when compared to non-Ph.D.-qualified faculty. When compared to tenure-track faculty, lecturers held a much higher opinion of Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 3: Respect and Reward Teaching

“I believe that my institution values teaching, but accreditation demands focus the institution on research as the operational priority.”

Quality teaching is a component of almost every higher education institution's mission and goals. Various accrediting bodies consider teaching effectiveness as a factor in accreditation, but the way teaching is treated and evaluated shows that either teaching is not as important as research or we lack an effective mechanism to properly measure and reward it.

The Pathways Commission is not the first to recommend an enhanced emphasis on teaching quality. In 1990, the AECC (1990) emphasized the importance of teaching in accounting and laid down what it believed to be the characteristics of effective teaching in Position Statement No. 1. It then issued Position Statement No. 5 (AECC, 1993), stating that “effective teaching should be a primary consideration in tenure, promotion, and merit evaluation.” (Mathews, 1994). Mathews (1994) further argues that “reward structures in universities would need to be amended to encourage greater attention to teaching and curriculum.”

A review of accounting literature indicates that there has been little progress since the AECC era in objectively and reliably measuring and rewarding quality teaching. The Commission asserts that the problem “may be a result of the lack of value placed on teaching at the university level.” Almer, Bertolini, and Higgs (2013) argue that success in academics is defined in terms of research productivity, which in turn may be related to salary.

Hughes and Pate (2013) offer a balanced scorecard approach to evaluate teaching. Teaching portfolios have also been suggested as a tool for assessing effective teaching (Seldin, Miller, and Seldin, 2010; Haldane, 2014). Nevertheless, the only common and broadly accepted measure for teaching is still student evaluation (Seldin et al., 2010). Anecdotal evidence as well as comments by the Commission indicate that student evaluation is the tool being used by many university administrators when deciding on promotion, tenure, and annual raises. Many comments from the participants in our study indicate that effective teachers without high profile research are given less preference than ineffective teachers with high quality publications, even in teaching institutions. Several respondents attribute the imbalance to accreditation standards.

As such, there are two issues that need to be resolved. First, the process of teacher evaluation must be reevaluated. Second, teaching must be given increased prominence when evaluating overall faculty performance. Action item 3.2.1, “Document teaching portfolios and evaluate them as part of the annual review process with peer-review processes similar to those used to evaluate research,” provides one practical solution. The suggestion’s practicality must be further investigated, as must several related action items recommended by the Commission.

Survey participants were generally in agreement with Recommendation 3 and its underlying objectives. This recommendation generated a very high 44 comments by our participants, with many agreeing that teaching is important and should be a part of faculty evaluation. With an average opinion of 5.24 out of 6, it is among the most highly supported recommendations. As with previous recommendations, faculty opinion of institutional preparedness was markedly lower (3.78 out of 6; see Table 6).

Faculty at Ph.D.-granting institutions held significantly lower opinions of both Recommendation 3 and their institutions’ preparedness to implement it (see Table 7). The difference in opinions on institutional preparedness is an unsurprising result, given the necessarily increased attention paid to research at doctoral granting institutions. The difference in personal opinions may be due to a self-selection bias. Those professors who prioritize research over teaching in their personal career goals will likely gravitate toward research-focused institutions.

Regardless of cause, Ph.D. granting institutions employ faculty with significantly lower opinions of an increased emphasis on teaching.

Recommendation 4: Create A Robust And Shareable Curriculum

“Lip service but little or no money to make it happen.”

The accounting curriculum has been studied extensively over the past 50 years (Trueblood, 1963; Bedford et al., 1986; AECC, 1989, see Muller et., 1989; Pathway Commission, 2012). Prior literature (Lawson, Blocher, Brewer, Cokins, Sorensen, Stout, Sundem, Wolcott, and Wouters, 2014) and previous committees and task forces indicate that attempts to develop a well-rounded curriculum have been inadequate to prepare students for a learned profession.

Recommendation 4 addresses a pedagogical model to be applied to all accounting programs that will address issues raised by practitioners and academics. The current accounting curriculum primarily prepares students for entry-level positions, not for a long-term career. Further, accounting students are prepared for public accounting and auditing, not for careers in other organizational structures (Lawson et al., 2014).

This recommendation includes three objectives and fifteen action items. Although the participants in the study appear to be in agreement with the recommendation (4.96 out of 6), they were not confident in institutional ability (3.61 out of 6; see Table 8). The participants communicated various reasons for this perceived lack of support, including constraints on work time and a lack of institutional funding and leadership. We observed a similar disparity between their agreement and their schools’ readiness to deal with the individual objectives outlined under this recommendation.

Recommendation 5: Attract Diverse Entrants to the Profession

“I am opposed to diversity for diversity's sake. We should encourage it if it truly brings something to the study and practice of accounting.”

The need for accounting graduates is expected to expand by about 16 percent from 2010 to 2020 (Violette and Chene, 2012). The profession, cognizant of this issue, has made efforts to increase recruitment into the accounting major, with reasonably positive results. In 2011-2012, over 240,000 students were enrolled in accounting, up six percent from 2009-2010 (Plumlee and Reckers, 2014). However, obstacles to the process remain. Plumlee and Reckers (2014) suggest that a shortage of Ph.D.s. has resulted in schools reducing the number of students admitted, decreasing the number of electives offered, and/or increasing class sizes, all of which may negatively impact student recruitment and retention. Our research also confirms this problem. Although our participants agreed with the intention of this recommendation (5.19 out of 6), their optimism dropped (3.73 out of 6; see Table 9) regarding institutional preparedness. The same disparity exists between their personal views of the underlying objectives for this recommendation and their schools' ability to be able to do anything about it. Objective 5.3, “Increase student access to master's programs,” is one notable exception to the general trend of severe pessimism regarding institutional preparedness.

Those schools that already offer an MBA had markedly more positive opinions regarding Objective 5.3. They were also more positive regarding their institutions' preparedness to achieve this objective (see Table 10).

Recommendation 6: Enable Analysis of Markets For Accounting Professionals And Faculty

“We are flooded with requests for data on these issues. AACSB survey, surveys from the AAA, AICPA, others. We need coordination for data requests and we need to quit reinventing the wheel with each survey asking for the same basic data.”

The dissemination of information is vital to attracting top minds into the accounting profession, regardless of any specific career track. While technology has made it simpler to acquire information on career paths, salary information, requirements, etc., the profession's ability to push out this information has been thus far limited. The opinions of this survey's participants were mixed, with a positive opinion of the objective itself (4.7 out of 6) but a less positive perspective on institutions' capacity and willingness to support the objective (3.4 out of 6; see Table 11). Many commenters noted that the AICPA, AACSB, and AAA are already engaged in outreach, making it redundant for a single institution to engage in its own efforts.

Recommendation 7 addresses the periodic nature of past educational change efforts and its only recommendation involves streamlining future efforts into a continuous process. Given its lack of institution- or faculty member-level significance, Recommendation 7 was not addressed in this survey.

Limitations and Conclusion

One major limitation of this study is its response rate of seven percent. As mentioned above, given the anonymity promised to respondents to encourage candor, it is difficult to tease out nonresponse bias. The study is also limited by its focus on only one class of individual, ignoring deans, students, employers, and other stakeholders who might have both influence and a differing aggregate opinion on the merits and potential of the Commission's recommendations.

Successful implementation of the Pathways recommendations will be a multilateral effort requiring support from a broad variety of stakeholders: university administrators, standard setters, employers, students, and professional bodies. The significance of the faculty tasked with actual delivery of accounting learning material, however, cannot be understated. This study is an attempt to gauge and summarize the opinions of faculty on the benefits and feasibility of these recommendations. While faculty view these recommendations with varying degrees of positivity,

their aggregated opinions regarding the practical implementation of this guidance at their particular institutions were, without exception, more pessimistic. Unsurprisingly, this pessimism holds true for the respondents' aggregated opinions regarding the totality of the Commission's efforts (see Table 12).

This may stem from a combination of prior experience, pessimistic assessment of institutional resources, or a negative perception of organizational bureaucracy, but regardless of its source, this pessimism represents a serious barrier to the achievement of the Pathways Commission's objectives.

Whether further incentivization by governing bodies will serve to motivate institutions to support and conform to these initiatives is beyond the scope of this paper. We hope that future research can be done to uncover the determinants of this institutional pessimism more formally, and to better take advantage of the relatively more favorable perspective of faculty on the inherent merits of the Commission's recommendations.

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APPENDIX A: PATHWAYS COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS AND OBJECTIVES

- Recommendation 1: Build a learned profession for the future by purposeful integration of accounting research, education, and practice for students, accounting practitioners, and educators.
 - Objective 1.1: Integrate professionally oriented faculty more fully into significant aspects of accounting education, programs, and research.
 - Objective 1.2: Focus more academic research on relevant practice issues.
 - Objective 1.3: Enhance the value of practitioner-educator exchanges.
 - Objective 1.4: Integrate accounting research into accounting courses and programs.
- Recommendation 2: Develop mechanisms to meet future demand for faculty by unlocking doctoral education via flexible pedagogies in existing programs and by exploring alternative pathways to terminal degrees that align with institutional missions and accounting education and research goals.
 - Objective 2.1: Allow flexible content and structure for doctoral programs.
 - Objective 2.2: Develop multiple pathways to terminal degrees in accounting.
- Recommendation 3: Reform accounting education so that teaching is respected and rewarded as a critical component in achieving each institution's mission.
 - Objective 3.1: Increase reward, recognition, and support for high-quality teaching.
 - Objective 3.2: Better connect faculty annual review, promotion, and tenure processes to the quality of teaching.
 - Objective 3.3: Improve how universities value the importance of teaching.
- Recommendation 4: Develop curriculum models, engaging learning resources, and mechanisms for easily sharing them as well as enhancing faculty development opportunities in support of sustaining a robust curriculum.
 - Objective 4.1: Engage the accounting community to define the body of knowledge that is the foundation for accounting's curricula of the future.
 - Objective 4.2: Implement curricular models for the future.
 - Objective 4.3: Develop guiding principles and support for a range of faculty development opportunities through varied career paths and cycles.
- Recommendation 5: Improve the ability to attract high-potential, diverse entrants into the profession.
 - Objective 5.1: Enhance perceptions of the study of accounting and career opportunities in accounting.
 - Objective 5.2: Transform the first course in accounting.
 - Objective 5.3: Increase student access to master's programs.
 - Objective 5.4: Develop financial aid literacy programs.
 - Objective 5.5: Encourage a separate and more focused study of the impediments to better diversity within the profession.
- Recommendation 6: Create mechanisms for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information about the current and future markets for accounting professionals and accounting faculty.
 - Objective 6.1: Establish a national committee on information needs.
 - Objective 6.2: Project future supply, demand, and competencies for accounting professionals.
 - Objective 6.3: Project future supply and demand for all accounting faculty in higher education.
 - Objective 6.4: Enhance the benefits of high school accounting education.
- Recommendation 7: Convert thought to action by establishing an implementation process to address these and future recommendations by creating structures and mechanisms to transition accounting change efforts from episodic events to a more continuous, sustainable process.
 - Objective 7.1: Initiate a process that can sustain future accounting educational change efforts.

Table 1: Major accounting education committees. (Adapted from Black, 2012.)

| | |
|------|---|
| 1922 | Committee on Standardization of Accounting Education |
| 1954 | AAA Standards Rating Committee |
| 1956 | AAA Task Committee on Standards of Accounting Instruction |
| 1956 | Perry Commission |
| 1957 | Bailey Special Committee |
| 1959 | Pierson and Gordon & Howell Reports |
| 1963 | Beamer Committee |
| 1976 | Albers Commission |
| 1986 | Bedford Committee |
| 1987 | Treadway Commission |
| 1989 | Big 8 Managing Partners |
| 1990 | Accounting Education Change Commission |
| 2000 | Sponsors Task Force |
| 2012 | Pathways Commission |

Table 2: Comparison of Commission recommendations and AACSB accounting standards.

| Pathways Commission Recommendations | AACSB Accounting Standards |
|---|--|
| <p>Rec. 1 – integration of accounting research, education, and practice....</p> <p>“...strong linkages between research and practice, practice and education, and education and research are key to sustaining an intellectually recognized profession.”</p> | <p>A2- ... high quality research that impact the theory, practice, and teaching of accounting ...</p> |
| <p>Rec. 2 – doctoral education via flexible pedagogies....</p> <p>“flexibility, attention to quality, and exploration of new pathways [to terminal degree] will be essential to maintaining the relevance and delivery of high-quality accounting education and sustaining vital accounting research.”</p> | <p>A8 - sufficient number of individuals with professional accounting credentials, qualifications, certifications, and professional experience...</p> <p>A9 - sufficient number of individuals with professional accounting credentials, qualifications, certifications, and professional experience...</p> <p>A4 - The accounting academic unit maintains and deploys a faculty sufficient to ensure quality outcomes across the range of degree programs it offers and to achieve other components of its mission.</p> <p>AACSB Bridge program</p> |
| <p>Rec. 3 – Enhancing the respect and reward for teaching</p> <p>“Without finding a better balance in recognizing faculty contributions [teaching and research] the academy will not be able to effectively meet the challenges and opportunities of the future— in higher education or the accounting profession.”</p> | <p>A3 - The accounting academic unit has financial strategies to provide resources appropriate to, and sufficient for, achieving its mission and action items. The accounting academic unit has realistic financial strategies to provide, sustain, and improve quality accounting education. The financial model must support high-quality degree programs for all teaching and learning delivery modes.</p> |
| <p>Rec. 4 – Curriculum development ...</p> <p>“Vital accounting programs, courses, and learning environments need systematic attention to foundations for curriculum and pedagogy and opportunities for renewal for accounting educators.”</p> | <p>A5 - The accounting academic unit uses well-documented, systematic processes for determining and revising degree program learning goals; designing, delivering, and improving degree program curricula to achieve learning goals; and demonstrating that degree program learning goals have been met.</p> <p>A6 - Curriculum content is appropriate to professional expectations and requirements for each accounting degree program and the related learning goals.</p> |

Table 3: Recommendation 1 results.

| | Opinion (out of 6) | Institutional preparedness (out of 6) |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| Recommendation 1: Build a learned profession for the future by purposeful integration of accounting research, education, and practice for students, accounting practitioners, and educators. | 4.99 | 3.76 |
| Objective 1.1: Integrate professionally oriented faculty more fully into significant aspects of accounting education, programs, and research. | 4.73 | 3.53 |
| Objective 1.2: Focus more academic research on relevant practice issues. | 4.88 | 3.47 |
| Objective 1.3: Enhance the value of practitioner-educator exchanges. | 4.99 | 3.75 |
| Objective 1.4: Integrate accounting research into accounting courses and programs. | 4.33 | 3.76 |

Table 4: Recommendation 2 results.

| | Opinion (out of 6) | Institutional preparedness (out of 6) |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| Recommendation 2: Develop mechanisms to meet future demand for faculty by unlocking doctoral education via flexible pedagogies in existing programs and by exploring alternative pathways to terminal degrees that align with institutional missions and accounting education and research goals | 4.11 | 2.40 |
| Objective 2.1: Allow flexible content and structure for doctoral programs. | 4.10 | 2.51 |
| Objective 2.2: Develop multiple pathways to terminal degrees in accounting. | 3.99 | 2.30 |

Table 5: Significant inter-group differences in Recommendation 2 results.

| Ph.D.- granting/non- Ph.D. granting | Ph.D. holders/non- Ph.D. holders (out of 6) | Lecturers/non-lecturers (out of 6) |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| 3.72/4.26 | 3.88/4.71 | 4.92/4.04 |

Table 6: Recommendation 3 results.

| | Opinion (out of 6) | Institutional preparedness (out of 6) |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| Recommendation 3: Reform accounting education so that teaching is respected and rewarded as a critical component in achieving each institution's mission | 5.24 | 3.78 |
| Objective 3.1: Increase reward, recognition, and support for high-quality teaching. | 5.19 | 3.35 |
| Objective 3.2: Better connect faculty annual review, promotion, and tenure processes to the quality of teaching. | 4.93 | 3.28 |
| Objective 3.3: Improve how universities value the importance of teaching | 5.13 | 3.39 |

Table 7: Significant inter-group differences in Recommendation 3 results.

| Recommendation 3 | Ph.D.-granting (out of 6) | Non-Ph.D.-granting (out of 6) |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Personal opinion | 4.89 | 5.38 |
| Institutional preparedness | 3.278 | 4.00 |

Table 8: Recommendation 4 results.

| | Opinion (out of 6) | Institutional preparedness (out of 6) |
|---|-----------------------|---|
| Recommendation 4: Develop curriculum models, engaging learning resources, and mechanisms for easily sharing them as well as enhancing faculty development opportunities in support of sustaining a robust curriculum. | 4.96 | 3.61 |
| Objective 4.1: Engage the accounting community to define the body of knowledge that is the foundation for accounting's curricula of the future. | 4.74 | 3.70 |
| Objective 4.2: Implement curricular models for the future. | 4.53 | 3.56 |
| Objective 4.3: Develop guiding principles and support for a range of faculty development opportunities through varied career paths and cycles. | 4.80 | 3.22 |

Table 9: Recommendation 5 results.

| | Opinion (out of 6) | Institutional preparedness (out of 6) |
|--|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Recommendation 5: Improve the ability to attract high-potential, diverse entrants into the profession. | 5.19 | 3.73 |
| Objective 5.1: Enhance perceptions of the study of accounting and career opportunities in accounting. | 5.28 | 4.10 |
| Objective 5.2: Transform the first course in accounting. | 4.13 | 3.27 |
| Objective 5.3: Increase student access to master's programs | 4.33 | 4.04 |
| Objective 5.4: Develop financial aid literacy programs. | 4.19 | 3.22 |
| Objective 5.5: Encourage a separate and more focused study of the impediments to better diversity within the profession. | 3.77 | 3.13 |

Table 10: Significant inter-group differences in Recommendation 5 results.

| Objective 5.3 | MBA-granting institutions (out of 6) | Non-MBA-granting institutions (out of 6) |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Personal opinion | 4.54 | 3.98 |
| Institutional preparedness | 4.42 | 3.39 |

Table 11: Recommendation 6 results.

| | Opinion (out of 6) | Institutional preparedness (out of 6) |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| Recommendation 6: Create mechanisms for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information about the current and future markets for accounting professionals and accounting faculty. | 4.67 | 3.38 |
| Objective 6.1: Establish a national committee on information needs. | 3.50 | N/A |
| Objective 6.2: Project future supply, demand, and competencies for accounting professionals. | 4.58 | |
| Objective 6.3: Project future supply and demand for all accounting faculty in higher education. | 4.73 | |
| Objective 6.4: Enhance the benefits of high school accounting education. | 4.07 | 2.80 |

Table 12: Overall opinion results.

| | |
|--|------|
| I am in favor of the Commission's efforts (out of 6) | 4.72 |
| The accounting profession will be successful in implementing the Commission's recommendations and accomplishing its objectives. (out of 6) | 3.21 |

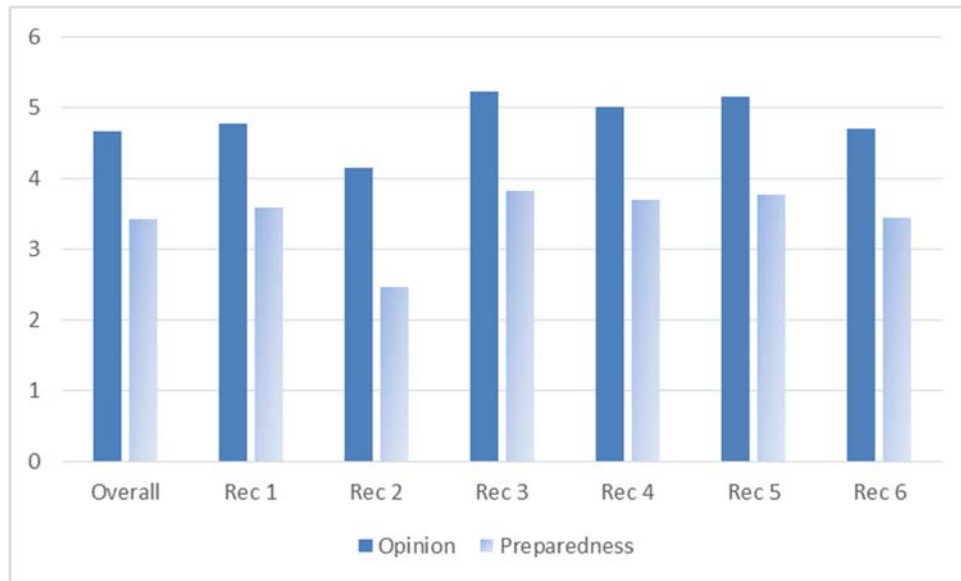


Figure 1: Overall responses to Pathways Commission recommendations.