

DOES AACSB ACCREDITATION IMPACT ENROLLMENT?

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to determine if the newly received AACSB accreditation impacted enrollment of the Lewis College of Business, Marshall University. A questionnaire was used to survey all new or transfer students and a 27.5% response was received.

INTRODUCTION

Marshall University's Lewis College of Business began as the School of Business in 1969. Prior to this event it had been the Business Department located inside the College of Arts and Sciences (University Catalog 1969). In 1973, the School of Business was reorganized and named the College of Business and Applied Science University (Catalog 1973). Under a new Dean, accreditation by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business became a goal after a vote of the faculty. A former President of the AACSB was invited to meet with the faculty and set forth the standards that needed to be achieved to accomplish the accreditation. Those standards were quality of faculty, intellectual contributions, and facilities. Time passed with continuing efforts to meet AACSB standards. In 1977 the college paid its first dues to the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business to signal an interest in becoming accredited by that body. In 1978, the College of Business became a single unit when the title Applied Science was dropped (University Catalog 1978). In 1997, the college became the Elizabeth McDowell Lewis College of Business (University Catalog 1995).

In 1980, a new building was occupied by the college and the question of the lack of facilities had been answered. The number of faculty with terminal degrees in field continued to be a problem as well as the lack of intellectual contributions. Due to the absence of financial support to meet market conditions, the college continued to struggle in progressing toward its goal of accreditation by AACSB. Finally, in April of 1997, that goal was achieved.

In the fall of 1997, Marshall University's Lewis College of Business had an increase in enrollment of fourteen percent (14%) the first enrollment period following the announcement of achieving the AACSB accreditation. This increase occurred while high school graduate numbers were decreasing in the state (High School 1992).

METHODOLOGY

Did the AACSB accreditation have any impact upon this increase? Were there other factors in the minds of the enrollee that contributed more to the choice? Was the long sought goal worth the effort? This study was developed in an attempt to answer these questions.

A list of 345 newly enrolled students to the Lewis College of Business was obtained from the university's computer center. A one-page questionnaire (see Appendix I) was developed and mailed to these students. The questionnaire sought information from three areas: 1) the student's origins (transfer from within Marshall, transfer from another college, etc.), 2) the reason for enrollment in the Lewis College of Business (tuition was cheaper, family, etc.), and 3) general information, (G.P.A, etc.). A daily record of returns was recorded, beginning with the first return received on April 10, 1998. Of the 345 mailings, 89 were returned during a one-month response period, yielding a return rate of 25.7%. Data analysis began on May 11, 1998. Some data bias may exist due to the short one month response period. Too, no follow-up mailings were made.

ANALYSIS

In responses to the questionnaire section relating to origin, thirty-three (33) community or two year colleges were represented. Five (5) were from West Virginia, with Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College listed eighteen (18) times. Of the thirty-two (32) four year colleges and universities noted, nine (9) were from West Virginia with West Virginia University and West Virginia State College each being listed eight (8) times. Of the out-of-state institutions listed, the University of Kentucky was named most often, listed five (5) times. The total number of institutions listed was forty-five (45). (See Appendix II.)

The second section of the questionnaire sought to determine the respondent's reason for transfer to the Lewis College of Business. This area listed eleven (11) reasons including the category, "Other (specify)". During analyses, this section was divided into three areas, (a) Academics, (b) Size, Location, Price, and (c) other factors. The respondents could list in rank order as many of the ten suggested reasons as perceived. In the first category, Academics, those listing accreditation as the first choice numbered twenty-eight (28) , while twenty (20) listed academic reputation of Marshall as the first reason. Thus, a total of forty-eight (48) selected academics first. Thirty-nine (39) of these respondents listing academics had grade point averages better than two point six (2.6), with ten (10) , had better than a three point five (3.5) average. These grades were self reported but not verified since the survey allowed for anonymous responses.

Other frequently listed reasons in the size, location, and price section, were national ranking as one of the best values (buys) sixteen (16) times; tuition was cheaper, ten (10) times; Marshall's size, eight (8) times; and Marshall's location, eighteen (18) times.

Other factors included friends attended, eleven (11); moved to area, eleven (11); parents were graduates, three (3); Football program, (10); and others changed majors, health care management, to play baseball.

Top Reasons for Selecting Marshall University Lewis College of Business

(In order)

Accreditation
Academic Reputation
Location
Best Buy
Friends Attended
Moved to area

CONCLUSIONS

Based upon this study it would appear that being fully accredited including AACSB accreditation and the academic reputation of Marshall University were the leading reasons for transferring to the Lewis College of Business, followed by the national ranking as one of the best values, along with location. It appeared that achieving AACSB accreditation was important to students selecting an institution of higher education for their studies.

REFERENCES

“High School Graduates Projections by States 1992-2009” (1993). Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.

Marshall University Undergraduate Catalog (1969). School of Business 166.

Marshall University Undergraduate Catalog (1973). College of Business and Applied Science 67.

Marshall University Undergraduate Catalog (1978). College of Business 10.

Marshall University Undergraduate Catalog (1995). Elizabeth McDowell Lewis College of Business 78.

**APPENDIX II
DATA**

College previously attended

Community or 2 year college

Allegheny Community College	1
Ashland Community College	1
Clinton Community College	1
Delaware State College	1
ITT Technical Institution	1
Lexington Community College	1
Marshall Community + Tech College	1
Parkersburg Community College	1
Pensacola Junior College	1
Potomac State College	1
Southern WVA Community +Tech College	18
Tidewater Community College	1
West Virginia at Parkersburg	4
Total	33

Four year college/universities

Alice Lloyd College	1	Wheeling Jesuit College	1
Appalachian Bible College	1	York College	1
Capital University	1	Fairmont State College	1
		Total	51
Glenville State College	1		
Iowa State University	1		
Kent State University	1	From another college	
Kentucky Christian College	1	at Marshall	5
Miami (Ohio) University	1		
Ohio University Athens	1		
Ohio University Southern Campus	2		
Ohio University	2		
Richland College	1		
Shepard College	1		
Southern Polytechnic State University	1		
Thomas Moore College	1		
Univ. of NC -Charlotte	1		
University of Virginia	1		
University of Rio Grande	1		
University of Charleston	1		
University of S. Carolina	1		
University of Kentucky	5		
University of Pittsburgh	1		
University of Houston	1		
University of West Florida	1		
Wesleyan College	1		
West Virginia Tech	1		
West Virginia State College	8		
West Virginia University	8		

APPENDIX III

Tally of Respondents / Reason for transfer and number above 2.6 GPA (Selected as number one)

Academics

LCOB is fully accredited	28
Academic reputation of Marshall	20
2.6-3.0	24
3.1-3.4	5
over 3.5	10

Size, Location, Price

National Ranking as one of the best value (buys)	16
Tuition was cheaper	10
Marshall's size	8
Marshall's location	18
2.6-3.0	23
3.1-3.4	5
over 3.5	9

Other factors

Friends attended	12
Parents were graduates	3
Football Program	10
Moved to area	11
Other	21
2.6-3.0	12
3.1-3.4	6
over 3.5	9