



March 2, 2020

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Dear Dean Williams:

It is my pleasure to inform you that the peer review team recommendation to extend accreditation for the degree programs in business offered by University of Southern Maine is concurred with by the Continuous Improvement Review Committee (CIRC) and ratified by the Board of Directors. Congratulations to you, the faculty, the students, the staff, and all supporters of University of Southern Maine.

University of Southern Maine has achieved accreditation for five additional years. The next on-site continuous improvement review occurs in the fifth year, 2024-2025. A timeline specific to the school's visit year is available [here](#).

One purpose of peer review is to recognize initiatives that support an environment of continuous improvement of quality programs. As noted in the team report, the University of Southern Maine is to be commended on the best practices found on **Attachment A**.

The school should begin to address the concerns identified by the peer review team and CIRC. As part of the next Continuous Improvement Review Application, due July 1, 2022, the school is asked to update the CIRC on the progress made in addressing the concerns listed on **Attachment B**.

Please refer to the [Continuous Improvement Review Handbook](#) for more information regarding the processes for continuous improvement reviews. The handbook is evolving and will be updated frequently to provide the latest revisions to the CIR process. Continue to monitor the website for the most current version of the handbook.

Again, congratulations from the Accreditation Council and AACSB International - The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. Thank you for participating in the continuous improvement review process and for providing valuable feedback that is essential to a meaningful and beneficial review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John A. Elliott".

John Elliott, Chair  
Board of Directors

cc: peer review team

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March 2, 2020

University of Southern Maine

Attachment A

This section provides a brief description of commendations and best practices of the school that demonstrate leadership and high-quality continuous improvement in management education.

1. Business faculty serve on the University of Southern Maine (USM) Technology Enabled Advising subcommittee-part of the Excellence in Academic Advising initiative to create and implement a comprehensive strategic plan for academic advising. USM is one of only 12 participating institutions nationwide and the only school from Maine.
2. The Innovation, Engagement, and Impact Committee developed an online Activities Tracker linking school and individual initiatives in teaching, research, and service to mission components and fundamental strategies.
3. The strategic plan is fully aligned with the university's mission and strategic direction. It emphasizes plans for implementing and assessing the new curriculum as well as strategies for faculty to deliver it and for students to be successful. The full strategic plan includes costs, funding sources, and start date.

March 2, 2020

University of Southern Maine

Attachment B

This section identifies areas that the school should address during the coming review cycle. Please be prepared to discuss progress made in addressing these concerns in the continuous improvement review application.

1. Certain academic disciplines do not meet the recommended faculty qualification status guidelines. Specifically, although the accounting area meets the recommended Scholarly Academic (SA) ratio of 40%, it does not meet the recommended Scholarly Academic (SA) + Practice Academic (PA) + Scholarly Practitioner (SP) ratio of 60%. Replacing the recently resigned accounting faculty member with another SA faculty member will not satisfy the recommended guideline. The school should consider adding an additional SA/PA/SP faculty member in addition to replacing the aforementioned SA faculty member. In addition, Business Analytics/MIS meets neither the SA+PA+SP recommended ratio nor the SA+PA+SP+IP ratio. The school should carefully consider its hiring needs in the BA/MIS discipline in order to align with the recommended ratios. Given the school's plan to offer a new management degree, an additional hire in management may be necessary to support the new major. With the conversion of the general management degree to a management degree, the school should consider hiring additional qualified faculty in support of the program to meet AACSB recommended guidelines. (Standard 15: Faculty Qualifications and Engagement)
2. An Assurance of Learning (AoL) system should be a mature system that tracks performance and uses outcomes to change curriculum and approaches within courses and across the degree program. The school's five selected major learning goals are assessed by embedded course assignments using standardized rubrics and an 80—item test covering all discipline areas which is administered in the capstone strategy class. Program and curriculum revision activities were mainly moving many of the capstone questions out of the capstone strategy course to the final week of their respective core courses; the use of assessment data to influence substantive changes did not occur. The faculty are encouraged to continue to improve use of AoL data for curriculum change and to clearly capture artifacts of that process. More rigorous benchmarks are suggested. The creation of the new undergraduate curriculum offers the opportunity to aggressively incorporate a robust AoL program that assures student learning. It is recommended that the AoL Committee consider incorporating external assessment measures as well as indirect assessment measures (ex: surveys of business advisory boards, alumni, employers of graduates, internship evaluations). More than one measures per objective may provide information for continuous improvement. (Standard 8: Curricula Management and Assurance of Learning)
3. Given the faculty and administrative turnover since the previous review period, many of the new policies have either just been enacted or will be enacted in the coming year. The revision of the mission and core values, the new curriculum, the creation and implementation of the new strategic plan, the AoL assessment of the revised curriculum, the new system for calculating intellectual contributions and scholarly productivity, development of the online Activities Tracker, and the suspension of the MBA will have a major impact on the school. Significant progress in the implementation of these changes should be documented. (Standard 1: Mission, Impact, and Innovation; Standard 2: Intellectual Contributions, Impact, and Alignment with Mission; Standard 8: Curricula Management and Assurance of Learning; Standard 9: Curriculum Content; Standard 15: Faculty Qualifications and Engagement)