College of Business works on realizing accreditation goal by 1996

Armando Frank Staff Writer

The College of Business Administration is striving for recognition and prestige by gaining accreditation from the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB).

"It's imperative for us because we have SACSB's (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) accreditation," said Assistant Dean Betty Harris. "But AACSB is an elite accreditation body. Only 20 percent of the Business Colleges in the country are accredited with AACSB."

The Board of Trustees made an approval for the 1994-95 term to be a self-study year. The study involves a two-year process, said Harris.

"In the fall of 1995 we will have a visitation and by April 1996 we will find out if we are accredited," she said.

The accreditation process is a verification of how things should be done, added Harris. She said it would give the college recognition throughout the country and benefit students who have a degree from an AACSB-accredited program.

"We want to move forward and have one of the best business departments," stressed Harris.

Harris said one problem the College of Business had was not enough research was being done. AACSB representatives look to make sure all faculty members are doing research, she added.

"They really want to make sure that we are progressive and that we are moving in the right direction," Harris said.

She mentioned that the AACSB considers a variety of points including syllabus content, library usage, computer usage, minorities on faculty and the student body.

"We put in our letter in the fall of 1993, and we were accepted," said Harris, "so they will look at everything we do for one year."

Harris said now that the College of Business has been accepted for review, the 1994-95 term will be used as a self-study year. The AACSB will inform the college of its decision on whether or not to recommend accreditation after an accreditation team visits in the fall of 1995. A final award will not be decided until April 1996.

Harris noted that some changes in the curriculum will be made to benefit all business students.

"There won't be a lot of changes but there will be some," added Harris.

One change that is likely to occur is an international program which will give students an opportunity to receive a degree in international business, according to Harris. Other changes that could occur in the curriculum is an insurance and risk management option with a degree in finance.

"We are trying to strengthen our courses to make every one of our existing programs very strong, and we move in the direction we think the students want," Harris said.

She explained that students in the master of business administration (MBA) program may have the opportunity to study health care administration by the fall. Programs like merchandising will be changed into marketing, according to Harris. Also, some of the low-completer programs will be eliminated. The changes will involve both undergraduates and graduate students.

"It's not particular courses that we are adding," explained Harris. "It's classes that we have that we are strengthening. Like the international section, the ethics section and the environmental and culturally diverse."

Harris said along with adding some new international classes, there will be a new international faculty member on board this fall.

One annual program that benefits students is the Business Excellence Speaker Series, Harris said.

"Through our MBA programs, we bring speakers from Boeing, Chevron and other companies," she said. "We try to have three or four guest speakers a semester. Not only are students turning out but also the business community."

Along with guidance from the business community, Harris said an executive advisory board helps in directing courses according to the changes in the field business.

"We are trying to move the way the world is moving into international along with ethical and environmental issues," she explained.

Harris added that the College of Business enrollment is not as high as she would like it to be, but she stressed that throughout the country business enrollment has decreased. She said that she has received encouraging and positive feedback and believes that the college is on the right track for accreditation.

"We are very diverse," she said. "We represent the university well and we have a strong program. We prepare students for jobs."

Harris recommended that incoming students consider business because most of the jobs for students are in business.