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TO: Mike Mahon
President and Vice Chancellor

DATE: May 30, 2022

FROM: Alan Siaroff
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

RE: Accounting Program Academic Quality Assurance Review

In accordance with the U of L *Academic Quality Assurance Policy and Process*, the Academic Quality Assurance Committee approved the review of the Accounting Program at its May 26, 2022 meeting.

The Self Study Committee for this review comprised of: Deborah Jarvie, Corie Lazenby, and Stuart Thomas.

The review produced four documents:

1. Self Study Report. Written by the Self Study Committee and the final version received May 27, 2021.
2. External Review Report. Written by Merridee Bujaki (Carlton University) and Tanya Tang (Brock University) based on a virtual site visit December 6-10, 2021 and received January 26, 2022.
3. Program Response. Written by the Self Study Committee and received April 29, 2022.
4. Dean's Response. Written by Kerry Godfrey, Dean of the Dhillon School of Business and received May 6, 2022.

The Program Review Committee was given the opportunity to respond to the Dean's Response and they chose not to respond. An Action Plan was crafted based on these four documents to provide guidance from the Provost & Vice-President (Academic) to the Dean of the Dhillon School of Business.

1. Self Study Report

The body of the report noted several **strengths** of the Accounting area:

- Accredited by AACSB; graduates prepared for CPA designation, with many successful Common Final Examination writers
- Vibrant research culture
- Diverse, qualified faculty who care about teaching, and support and challenge students.
- Two campuses (provincial reach/university town versus business capital, traditional day courses versus night and weekend offerings)
- Global diversity
- Master's program
- Good technology in place on all campuses/Use of blended learning across the campuses
- Strong relationship with accounting profession
- Strong relations with community

The following **weaknesses and challenges** were mentioned in the body of the report:

- Inflexible programs

- More/improved technology required
- Some students exhibit weak coping skills
- Lack of awareness by students that communication skills are part of an accounting career
- Lack of change in teaching innovations and alternative pedagogies over the years
- Inconsistencies across the two campuses
- Students come from two streams (2+2 and 4-year program)
- Databases inadequately funded

The Self Study Report asked for External Reviewer **feedback** in several areas:

- How will the changing information technology requirements of the CPAs impact our classes and students?
- How should technology be incorporated in the accounting curriculum - which types of technologies in which courses?
- How can data analytics and information systems be most effectively introduced into the various courses?
- What level of data analytics are required of our graduates by the public accounting firms, industry, government agencies, and other organizations employing our students?
- How can topic coverage be optimized in the accounting courses?
 - Is too much being covered?
 - What is the appropriate depth of coverage of the topics?
- What are the most effective methods of marketing the accounting program?
- Can the number of pre-requisites be reduced for some courses to increase the ability of students to progress efficiently?
- How can credit transfers be optimized to prevent being too restrictive in some area, and too easy in others.
- How can innovation be increased in the curriculum?

The Self Study report identified **key priorities** for the area in the next two years:

- Increase in technology, data analytics and information systems to align with changes in the field of accounting
- Increase innovation in the curriculum
- Increase the use of cases and other experiential techniques for learning
- Increase enrolments – both locally, nationally, and internationally
- Stronger marketing

2. External Review Report

The External Reviewers' Report noted many **strengths**:

- Faculty, staff, and students all report strong support for inspiring and supporting student potential through experiential learning.
- Students and alumni satisfaction with the quality of education and teaching is high.
- The program has been strengthened by recent developments including the AACSB accreditation, the CPA profession's Competency mapping, Link initiatives and co-op opportunities for students, additional faculty hiring, and research resources for faculty.
- Qualified and diverse faculty members are committed to making the program successful.
- Alumni network is strong and engaged in supporting the program.
- The DSB contributes to the local economy by offering quality and affordable post-secondary education. Accounting is a major driver of enrolment in the School.

The External Reviewers' Report discussed **challenges** in the report:

- There are declining enrolment and retention rates in the Accounting program across both campuses.
- There are no graduate students in Accounting.

- The current curriculum is packed to meet the CPA profession standards and liberal education requirements, limiting the room for accounting elective offerings and curriculum enhancements. This poses a challenge to ensure the accounting curriculum meets and continues to meet all CPA professional education requirements.
- The accounting program is not sufficiently differentiated from other programs and institutions to attract either high school students or college students to continue their education at the DSB, and increase enrolments locally, nationally, and globally.
- The existing curricula need to be refined to well prepare students for their professional accounting careers and professional certification processes.
- There is an increasing need for incorporating relevant technology, data analytics and information systems and their applications into the curriculum to align with changes in the field of accounting. Also, there is a concern that in-house IT support and current DSB technology staff may be lost.
- Research-oriented databases are currently heavily funded by external (non-University) sources. There is a potential threat that these resources will be unavailable in the future.

The following are the External Reviewers' 19 **recommendations** for improving and/or maintaining the Accounting program:

1. We recommend the accounting area consider developing its own strategic plan.
2. We recommend the accounting program assess ways to streamline or integrate its 2 + 2 programs with other post-secondary institutions.
3. We recommend the accounting program find ways to differentiate itself from other programs and institutions. Specifically, we recommend the DSB concentrate its efforts on developing a CPA-accredited program.
4. We recommend the accounting program and the DSB deepen connections with the business community and alumni of the accounting program.
5. We recommend the accounting program develop a range of for-profit programs targeted at lifelong learners in the business and broader communities.
6. We recommend the accounting program seek ways to capture and incorporate employer feedback in program and curriculum development.
7. We recommend the accounting program consider a Bachelor of Accounting or a course-based Master of Accounting to supplement the current Bachelor of Management, creating room for extended accounting courses and electives, and for curriculum enhancements.
8. We recommend the accounting program continue to promote Co-op and experiential learning opportunities and consider a compulsory co-op for the accounting program.
9. We recommend the accounting program adjust program design to meet students' diverse needs arising from the DSB's demographics, multi-campus structure, online learning and digital transformation opportunities.
10. We recommend the accounting program develop a plan for faculty renewal and recruitment.
11. We recommend the accounting program invest in marketing and branding opportunities.
12. We recommend the accounting program enhance experiential learning opportunities.
13. We recommend that DSB's wide-ranging course offerings be evaluated to assess the appropriateness of designating some of them as meeting the University's liberal education requirements.
14. We recommend the accounting program incorporate emerging topics, comprehensive cases and technology into the curriculum and create more opportunities for students to acquire hands-on experiences and soft skills.
15. We recommend the accounting program seek to increase the representation of Indigenous students in the accounting program and consider additional ways to offer bridging programs for new Canadians to access quality business and accounting education.
16. We recommend a needs-based review of IT throughout the DSB since a recent risk management assessment for the DSB identified IT as an area of concern.
17. We recommend the DSB rebuild and diversify its Advisory Board.
18. We recommend that the DSB develop a faculty research performance evaluation plan to prompt and elevate overall research outputs.
19. We recommend the DSB consider a research incentive framework.

3. Program Response

In their Program Response, the Self Study Committee addressed the recommendations from the External Review Report:

1. <i>We recommend the accounting area consider developing its own strategic plan.</i>	Aligning with the DSB strategic plan, we will: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to incorporate technology into the existing curriculum and software training within courses, and give students real-world experience through simulations (e.g., tax clinics, cases, guest lectures, real-world projects).• Endeavour to foster deeper engagement with employers, the business community, and alumni (e.g., classroom presentations, panel discussions).• Continue to pursue initiatives such as identifying suitable courses for micro-credits, and online and hybrid delivery• Endeavour to identify non-business prerequisites for accounting courses that are a part of the university's liberal education requirements.
2. <i>We recommend the accounting program assess ways to streamline or integrate its 2 + 2 programs with other post-secondary institutions.</i>	The DSB and the accounting area will continue to assess ways to integrate its 2 + 2 programs with other post-secondary institutions. We are currently investigating the possibility of offering two-year diplomas.
3. <i>We recommend the accounting program find ways to differentiate itself from other programs and institutions. Specifically, we recommend the DSB concentrate its efforts on developing a CPA-accredited program.</i>	We will continue to examine how to Indigenize the accounting program. We will consider a mandatory cooperative education component, however there may not be sufficient placements to make this a reality. We will consider developing a CPA-accredited program, but there may not be sufficient demand for a second such program in Alberta. We will consider an Accounting Honours program which could include a mandatory cooperative component, mentoring, mandatory case competition involvement and an integrative project.
4. <i>We recommend the accounting program and the DSB deepen connections with the business community and alumni of the accounting program.</i>	The accounting program will endeavour to foster deeper engagement with the business community and alumni (e.g., classroom presentations, panel discussions).
5. <i>We recommend the accounting program develop a range of for-profit programs targeted at lifelong learners in the business and broader communities.</i>	The DSB is currently developing for-profit programs for lifelong learners.
6. <i>We recommend the accounting program seek ways to capture and incorporate employer feedback in program and curriculum development.</i>	The program receives annual detailed feedback on program and curriculum development regarding student performance on national CPA exams which represents the interests of employers. We will, as well, regularly reach out to local employers.
7. <i>We recommend the accounting program consider a Bachelor of</i>	We do not believe a Bachelor of Accounting would create more room for more courses because of the liberal education requirement. We will

<i>Accounting or a course-based Master of Accounting to supplement the current Bachelor of Management, creating room for extended accounting courses and electives, and for curriculum enhancements.</i>	consider a course-based Master of Accounting as funding and enrollments permit. There may not be sufficient demand for a second CPA-accredited graduate program in Alberta.
8. <i>We recommend the accounting program continue to promote Co-op and experiential learning opportunities and consider a compulsory co-op for the accounting program.</i>	We will continue to promote the Co-op program, however there may not be sufficient placements, student demand and staffing for a compulsory program to be possible.
9. <i>We recommend the accounting program adjust program design to meet students' diverse needs arising from the DSB's demographics, multi-campus structure, online learning, and digital transformation opportunities.</i>	The accounting area will continually seek opportunities to incorporate technology into the existing curriculum and software training within the courses, giving students real-world experience through simulations (e.g., tax clinics, cases, guest lectures, real-world projects). We will continue to pursue initiatives such as identifying suitable courses for micro-credits, and online and hybrid delivery.
10. <i>We recommend the accounting program develop a plan for faculty renewal and recruitment.</i>	While the CPAs provide funding for this purpose, no formal plan for faculty renewal and recruitment currently exists at the DSB. The accounting area will await the formulation of such a plan before proceeding with this recommendation.
11. <i>We recommend the accounting program invest in marketing and branding opportunities.</i>	We will pursue, through the DSB, marketing and branding opportunities.
12. <i>We recommend the accounting program enhance experiential learning opportunities.</i>	Please see response to recommendation #9.
13. <i>We recommend that DSB's wide-ranging course offerings be evaluated to assess the appropriateness of designating some of them as meeting the University's liberal education requirements.</i>	This is an ongoing initiative of the DSB.
14. <i>We recommend the accounting program incorporate emerging topics, comprehensive cases and technology into the curriculum and create more opportunities for students to acquire hands-on experiences and soft skills.</i>	Please see response to recommendation #9.
15. <i>We recommend the accounting program seek to increase the</i>	These are on-going initiatives of the accounting area and the DSB.

representation of Indigenous students in the accounting program and consider additional ways to offer bridging programs for new Canadians to access quality business and accounting education.

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| 16. <i>We recommend a needs-based review of IT throughout the DSB since a recent risk management assessment for the DSB identified IT as an area of concern.</i> | This recommendation is outside the purview of the accounting area. |
| 17. <i>We recommend the DSB rebuild and diversify its Advisory Board.</i> | This recommendation is outside the purview of the accounting area. |
| 18. <i>We recommend that the DSB develop a faculty research performance evaluation plan to prompt and elevate overall research outputs.</i> | This recommendation is outside the purview of the accounting area. |
| 19. <i>We recommend the DSB consider a research incentive framework.</i> | This recommendation is outside the purview of the accounting area. |
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4. Dean's Response

The Dean of the Dhillon School of Business responded to the 19 recommendations from the External Review Report:

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| 1. <i>We recommend the accounting area consider developing its own strategic plan.</i> | <p>A separate strategic plan for the Accounting Area is not practical. This does not mean the area should be without a plan for its growth and development, but this needs to fit within the wider context of the School's strategic plan. The suggestions made by the area in response to the AQA review could be considered a bit tame, and essentially reflect the status quo. Two of the responses indicate actions of "continue", while two indicate actions of "endeavour." In terms of the latter, it is not clear what this statement is meant to achieve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Endeavour to identify non-business prerequisites for accounting courses that are a part of the university's liberal education requirements. <p>Accounting enrolment has been steadily declining over the past ten years as external competition increases, and defining a differentiator for the subject as delivered at DSB as opposed to any other provider will be of critical importance. The Accounting area needs to think more creatively and purposefully about its curricular future and the role it can play in terms of the School's strategic direction of engaging with and responding to the growth of the digital economy.</p> |
| 2. <i>We recommend the accounting program assess ways to</i> | Many college accounting programs have expanded in recent years to full degree programs, and the CPA (professional governing body) has |
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<p><i>streamline or integrate its 2 + 2 programs with other post-secondary institutions.</i></p>	<p>increasingly accepted college level programs in relation to accreditation. This has dramatically changed the accounting education landscape. The Accounting area needs to very proactively examine partnerships with college providers that would see program integration, wherein the DSB could reduce the number of introductory course sections and focus more on advanced programming especially in terms of technology, analytics and the digital economy.</p> <p>The notion of a two-year diploma is to directly compete with college two-year diploma programs. This would ladder seamlessly into the degree, and is intended to attract two-year students directly to the university, creating our own internal 2+2 program, and cut-out the college 'middle-man' where possible.</p>
<p>3. <i>We recommend the accounting program find ways to differentiate itself from other programs and institutions. Specifically, we recommend the DSB concentrate its efforts on developing a CPA-accredited program.</i></p>	<p>As noted in response to Recommendation 1 above, the Accounting area absolutely needs to define and differentiate itself in an increasingly crowded marketplace for accounting education. A market feasibility study should be undertaken in terms of the formal CPA – accredited program notion. In line with other strategic directions of the School, the work-integrated and experiential learning components (case competitions, integrative projects, internships, etc.) will be critical to substantive differentiation. Further specialization, such as through specific Indigenous content, will be very welcome. This may not necessarily be at the traditional or general undergraduate level, but more targeted and linked to programming offered by the Aboriginal Finance Officers Association of Canada.</p>
<p>4. <i>We recommend the accounting program and the DSB deepen connections with the business community and alumni of the accounting program.</i></p>	<p>Deepening and broadening connections between the DSB, program faculty, and the wider external community is a constant. While two years of COVID-19 restrictions has not severed relationships, they have for all intents and purposes, been somewhat stalled. It will be the responsibility of all members of the area and the School to rebuild and reinvigorate relationships as we emerge from pandemic restrictions.</p>
<p>5. <i>We recommend the accounting program develop a range of for-profit programs targeted at lifelong learners in the business and broader communities.</i></p>	<p>The School is currently developing new learning opportunities in accounting targeting both internal and external learners (the Insight Series). These will be micro-credit modules focussed on specific skills relevant to accounting professionals and the wider business community. This will continue to grow, but will always be constrained by the internal capacity/availability of faculty to participate and develop additional programming.</p>
<p>6. <i>We recommend the accounting program seek ways to capture and incorporate employer feedback in program and curriculum development.</i></p>	<p>The area should engage in roundtable discussions with accounting employers in the local community, perhaps organised via the Co-op office, both as a way of raising awareness of the program, but garnering feedback from employers directly linked to the University. This could follow from a more general re-engagement of the School with the local business community as we emerge from COVID-19 restrictions.</p>
<p>7. <i>We recommend the accounting program consider a Bachelor of Accounting or a course-based Master of Accounting to supplement the current Bachelor of Management, creating room</i></p>	<p>A separate Bachelor of Accounting is always a possibility, but there may not be the demand for such a qualification in the Alberta student marketplace. A special graduate program in accounting may also be possible, but Alberta does not have the same overall student market that exists in Ontario where the two external reviewers come from. In either case, a market feasibility study would need to be conducted to</p>

<i>for extended accounting courses and electives, and for curriculum enhancements.</i>	determine any level of latent demand that may exist, and any implications for existing programs that would arise as a result of adding additional programs into the accounting educational landscape.
8. <i>We recommend the accounting program continue to promote Co-op and experiential learning opportunities and consider a compulsory co-op for the accounting program.</i>	The School is considering the development of a compulsory co-op/internship format for a revised business degree program. If this proceeds, it would most likely include accounting in this degree framework. While there are likely to be enough employers in the community to facilitate such an initiative, the University's Co-op office is not sufficiently staffed to expand its employer development activities. If DSB is to pursue expanded employer engagement to support such a program, it will need to do so from its own resources, which do not currently exist.
9. <i>We recommend the accounting program adjust program design to meet students' diverse needs arising from the DSB's demographics, multi-campus structure, online learning, and digital transformation opportunities.</i>	The DSB operates out of two campus locations as well as currently offering multiple courses in the online environment. The Lethbridge campus tends to attract traditional direct-entry high school graduates, as well as college transfer students. The Calgary campus tends to attract college transfer students, and mature students returning to complete their degree while retaining full-time employment. The response to this recommendation is thus complicated. The School has been and continues to explore different options and opportunities for program development and delivery in both locations. The further complicating factor is that the accounting program does not exist in isolation of the wider degree and any changes need to fit within that context.
10. <i>We recommend the accounting program develop a plan for faculty renewal and recruitment.</i>	This recommendation is logically tied to the area defining its unique positioning or differentiation within the accounting education space, under Recommendation 1. Faculty development should exist within that construct, and faculty recruitment tied to developing that unique identity and program differentiator – in alignment with the School's overall strategic direction. Faculty recruitment, development and replacement must sit within the School's strategic plan.
11. <i>We recommend the accounting program invest in marketing and branding opportunities.</i>	The Accounting Area does not have the independent resources to invest in marketing and branding activities. The pursuit of defining any brand identity and marketing initiatives are tied to Recommendation 1.
12. <i>We recommend the accounting program enhance experiential learning opportunities.</i>	Experiential learning needs to become a more significant component of the program as a brand differentiator, as per the response to previous recommendations, including Recommendation 3.
13. <i>We recommend that DSB's wide-ranging course offerings be evaluated to assess the appropriateness of designating some of them as meeting the University's liberal education requirements.</i>	The DSB believes all of its courses should be designated as Lib Ed elective options, not just a select few in Accounting. The DSB does not believe it is in any way equitable that DSB needs to apply to have its courses considered for inclusion in the Lib Ed lists, when no department in the Faculty of Arts and Science or in Fine Arts is required to do so in order for their courses to be considered for inclusion in the Lib Ed lists.
14. <i>We recommend the accounting program incorporate emerging topics, comprehensive cases and technology into the curriculum and create more opportunities</i>	The response to this recommendation should be read in concert with several earlier recommendations and responses, particularly Recommendation 3.

for students to acquire hands-on experiences and soft skills.

15. <i>We recommend the accounting program seek to increase the representation of Indigenous students in the accounting program and consider additional ways to offer bridging programs for new Canadians to access quality business and accounting education.</i>	The School is actively engaged in exploring the expansion and development of learning opportunities for Indigenous students within accounting and other areas of business and management. The School has already developed an accounting conversion program for new Canadians.
16. <i>We recommend a needs-based review of IT throughout the DSB since a recent risk management assessment for the DSB identified IT as an area of concern.</i>	The review of IT support and development is part of an institutional review of IT services. The school will seek to retain and support IT staff relevant to the unique needs and curriculum development within the School.
17. <i>We recommend the DSB rebuild and diversify its Advisory Board.</i>	Any action related to this recommendation is not the responsibility of the Accounting Area, and thus would seem to fall outside the remit of the subject area AQA review process. Nonetheless, the School is already in the process of redefining and rebuilding its advisory boards.
18. <i>We recommend that the DSB develop a faculty research performance evaluation plan to prompt and elevate overall research outputs.</i>	Research evaluation falls within the construct of the institutions PAR process, and would seem to fall outside the remit of the subject area AQA review process. Nonetheless this is currently supported through the School's strategic initiatives in relation to our AACSB accreditation.
19. <i>We recommend the DSB consider a research incentive framework.</i>	An overall research incentive framework would seem to fall outside the remit of the subject area AQA review process. Nonetheless the School has created a 'Distinguished Scholar' award and a 'Rising Scholar' award both of which are presented as an incentive to excel in research as they carry support for research engagement. The School already offers incentive funding and support for research members of the School, with additional support dedicated for accounting faculty supported by a grant from the CPA Education Foundation.

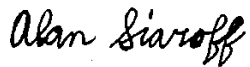
While the External Reviewer's Report contained 19 recommendations for improving and/or maintaining the Accounting program, the accounting area, Dean Godfrey, and the Academic Quality Assurance Committee each felt that the final four were too broad in scope for this review. The committee modified and consolidated the remaining 15 recommendations into the following 10:

1. The Dean must meet with the Accounting faculty to strategize about how to address declining enrolment and the differentiation of their program within the parameters of the Dhillon School of Business strategic plan.
2. To the extent that Data Analytics is the point of differentiation, the Dean in consultation with the faculty must clearly outline a strategy to make this central to this area's identity. This strategy will include developing a plan for faculty renewal and recruitment.
3. The Dean will meet with the CPA Western School of Business to understand regional market priorities and develop programming to meet those needs.
4. The Accounting program will seek to increase the representation of Indigenous students and consider additional ways to offer bridging programs for new Canadians to access quality business and accounting education.

5. The Accounting program will deepen connections with the business community and alumni.
6. The Accounting program will develop a range of for-profit programs targeted at lifelong learners in the business and broader communities.
7. The Accounting program will investigate a Bachelor of Accounting or a course-based Master of Accounting to supplement the current Bachelor of Management, creating room for extended accounting courses and electives, and for curriculum enhancements.
8. The Accounting program will identify options for enhancing and expanding co-op and other emerging experiential learning opportunities and consider a compulsory co-op for the accounting program.
9. The Accounting program will adjust program design and curriculum to i) meet students' diverse needs arising from the DSB's demographics, multi-campus structure, online learning, and ii) address employer feedback.
10. Along with the Dhillon School of Business, the Accounting program will evaluate and put forth select courses to the School of Liberal Education for inclusion on the Liberal Education Lists.

The Academic Quality Assurance Committee is satisfied that the Accounting program academic quality assurance review has followed the U of L's academic quality assurance process appropriately and acknowledges the successful completion of the review.

Sincerely,



Dr. Alan Siaroff
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee
Professor, Department of Political Science

cc Erasmus Okine, PhD., PAS, FICN
Provost & Vice-President (Academic)