

## Rapid Communication: The Accreditation Council of Business Schools and Programs 2023 Conference (ACBSP'23), “Celebrating Collaborative Alliances: Stronger Together”

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### Abstract

*The business accreditation conference, ACBSP 23, held in Chicago, June 29 through July 2, 2023, had about 750 participants, with nearly 100 sessions and 100 speakers. This conference note is an officer's reflection on the event from the perspective of one of the officers, the Treasurer of ACBSP Region 8, the International Council of Business Schools, and Programs. ACBSP Region 8, the International Council of Business Schools and Programs is celebrated for its history via the ACBSP Region 8 Journal leading up through the first three ACBSP International Conferences, and onto Dubai 2016, where the editorship passed to me, dr. Alfred Howard Miller.*

**Keywords:** *Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs, ACBSP, Region 8, Programmatic, Business Accreditation, Site Evaluator Training, Standards, Quality, Teaching Excellence Award, Accreditation Mentoring.*

### Introduction

This conference report is about the event of the Accreditation Council of Business Schools and Programs 2023 Conference, (ACBSP Conference '23, 2023), held in Chicago USA on June 28 through July 2, 2023, at the Marriott hotel located on the Magnificent Mile at 540 North Michigan Avenue at the intersection with 541 North Rush Street, and this is in downtown Chicago. The conference theme was ‘Celebrating Collaborative Alliances: Stronger Together’. There were about 98 unique sessions, 96 designated speakers. ACBSP is a global organization, and as such there was value for every stakeholder (ACBSP Conference '23, 2023). ACBSP has been in existence since 1988, and ACBSP'23 was the first ACBSP conference in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic to have garnered a substantially large attendance of approximately 750 people (Personal Communication, J. Alderman).

This conference report is my personal perspective as Treasurer and Administrative Director of ACBSP Region 8, and as editor of the Region 8 Journal a Scholarly publication, and covers activities pursued on behalf of myself and the three distinct organizations I represent: 1) First in my primary role, working for my employer, Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), Fujairah which is an ACBSP accredited institution since 1998, and where I personally have been actively engaged with ACBSP since 2010, first attending a regional meeting, and have been the System-Wide Champion, since being named so in 2013, replacing Dr. Bruce Stetar. Working in the role of System-wide Champion, I steered the Higher Colleges of Technology through several QA and progress reports, one approximately every two years, as well as a 10 Year Reaffirmation of accreditation in 2018 (ACBSP Membership List, 2023). Presently we are gearing up toward achieving our next 10-year reaffirmation in 2028. 2) My second key role is as an officer of ACBSP Region 8, where I am currently serving as Treasurer and Administrative Director. ACBSP Region 8, also known as the International Council of Business Schools and Programs, covers a collection of approximately 170 business schools located in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and a large part of Central Asia (Region 8, 2023). Furthermore, I also serve Region 8, as Editor of the Region 8 Journal a scholar practitioner publication. The Region 8 Journal is published annually and is based on submissions to the Region 8 Fall conference event. Typically, Region 8 has offered a Best of Region 8 Presentation and often a Best Paper award. As Chair-Elect, and then I completed a full term as Chair in 2016-2017. Later, I received an official appointment, which occurred during the 2018 Region 8 meeting in Paris, aspiring to the additional role of Administrative Director, a challenging but paid position. This opportunity came in the wake of a desk audit

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by the Internal Revenue service, which is the United States tax collecting body, taking place in June of 2018, where I successfully defended ACBSP Region 8 as a 501(c), an educational not profit, regarding meeting the IRS requirements. Associated duties, first undertaken as Chair, included the initial incorporation of the region in 2016. Incorporation was undertaken in the State of Nevada as it is one of the US states that both low-cost and business friendly policy toward opening a 501(c) designated educational non-profit with lesser fees and restrictions than some of the other US states. Congruent with incorporation was opening a US bank account, to which our treasurer at the time, Christine Clarke of European University in Barcelona Spain had access too, filing a tax return annually, and as already mentioned, representing Region 8 through its first IRS audit. 3) ACBSP is the parent organization of Region 8, along with Regions 1-7 and Regions 9, 10 and 11. Regions 1-7 are United States-based, while Region 8, 9, 10 and 11 are international in scope and draw their constituency from various international regions. I am a noted principal of the ACBSP and former Baccalaureate and Graduate Commissioner in that organization, and former Scholar Practitioner Publication Committee member. Currently, for the parent organization, I am serving as a member of the Digital Communications Committee (ACBSP Committees, 2023).

My ascension to role of Editor of the Region 8 Journal occurred over time. The Region 8 Journal was originally edited by Dr. Peter Horn with the first issue coming out in 2009, based on the fall conference held in Paris France. The first article I published in the Region 8 Journal was from the 2010 conference in Vienna, held on November 26-28<sup>th</sup> which was also edited by Dr. Peter Horn Chancellor - International School of Management, and also by Professor Des Cooney, Ph.D., (ABD), Assistant Dean - International School of Management, and my article, *A Research Method Investigating Deep Packet Inspection Technology Adoption in the UAE* related to my then in process PhD Dissertation was presented at the conference, whose theme was *Managing Effectively in the New Fiscal Reality* and published in the Region 8 Journal. This paper was published while I was a Ph.D. ABD faculty member in the BAS program at Higher Colleges of Technology, Fujairah (Miller, 2010).

I attended the next Region 8 conference held in Fall of 2011 in Dubai and presented a continuation of my Ph.D. research. The conference theme was *Sustaining Excellence through Quality Business Education*, and the title of my paper was *UAE Network Security Research: Confronting Political Sensitivities at UAE Educational Institutions* (Miller, 2011). This conference claimed 140 attendees and was probably the largest, and best attended ACBSP Region 8 conference ever. The paper I presented was an offshoot of my PhD research, and a continuation of the year prior as close to completing my dissertation and getting ready to sit for oral defense. I also had won two family business and entrepreneurship research grants from Wharton, one in 2010 and one in 2011, plus a supplemental grant in 2011 to help with expenses for the residency at the Wharton School in Philadelphia that I was awarded. During the Wharton residency, those of us fellows in the cohort presented our research and we received feedback and critique from key Wharton faculty members, such as Raffi Amit, Harbir Singh, Ian Macmillan, Nicolaj Siggelkow, Adam Grant and Martine Haas, as well as all the other members of our training cohort. The title of the training was the Ian MacMillan Wharton Global Faculty Development Program. There were three of us from Higher Colleges of Technology in UAE and the rest of the cohort, which was about 15 people and they hailed from a range of business school located in South Africa.

ACBSP Region 8 held their next Fall conference November 21-24 in 2012 in Geneva, Switzerland at Webster University. The theme was *Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability in the Classroom*.

There were eight educational sessions, and 12 research papers presented. Bruce Stetar of Higher Colleges of Technology joined Peter Horn the as Executive Editor. The Region 8, 2012 Best Paper Award, which is an the award for Best of Region 8 Academic Paper 2012 was presented to Nancy Maloney and Jaishree Asarpota (Higher Colleges of Technology, United Arab Emirates) for their paper *Virtual World Technology, A Constructivist Epistemology and Corporate Social Responsibility Teaching*. Each winner received a crystal trophy. The Region 8, 2012 Best Conference Presentation Award went to Dr. Jeremy Cripps (University American College Skopje and American University in Bulgaria). Dr. Cripps received the Best of the Region 8 Presentation Award for his presentation, *Sustainability: Corporate Responsibility for the Future Classroom*. The 2012 Region 8 Champion Award was presented to Dr. Peter Horn (International School of Management-Paris) as Dr. Horn was named the 2012 Champion of Region 8. The 2011 Region 8 Champion Award was

presented to Dr. Vasilis Botopoulos. This award is presented to a volunteer leader who has a history of involvement in the management and leadership of the ACBSP. Selection of Dr. Peter Horn and Dr. Vasilis Botopoulos was made based on guidelines and an application process. My paper was *Impact of gender on sustainability and corporate responsibility for teaching e-business management in the UAE*. I was listed as Al Miller in the program (Miller, 2012).

ACBSP Region 8 followed up in 2013 by hosting the first ACBSP International Conference in Brussels, Belgium. The conference theme was *Engaged Learning in the Digital Age*. Being that it was an international conference meant that other ACBSP region's members were invited as well. *Strategies for Student Engagement and Retention in a Business Communication Hybrid Course* by Kim Hogelucht was Winner of Best Conference Presentation Award. My paper was *Building Dynamic Capability: Modeling Business Simulation at a UAE Women's College* and was Winner of Best Conference Paper Award (Miller, 2013). I also presented *Quality Assurance Reporting at a Multi-Campus System*; this was not a research paper but more of practitioner-based session sharing best accreditation practices. This was the first Region 8 Journal to feature Dr. Jeremy Cripps as Editor of the Region 8 Journal, replacing Dr. Peter Horn.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> ACBSP International Conference was held in Athens Greece November 27-29, 2014. Key officers in attendance included Anthony Negbenebor, President ACBSP; Vasilis J. Botopoulos, Co-President Region 8; Jeremy Cripps, Co-President Region 8. Award winners included, *Unique Business Assignment Fosters "Partnerships" Between Students and Business Professionals Leading to Internship Offers and Career Affirmation* by Kim Hogelucht, Winner of Best Conference Paper Award, and *An Approach to Organizational Ethnographic Research: Methods and Processes* by John Russell, who was Winner of Best Conference Presentation Award, and will represent ACBSP Region 8 as presenter in Philadelphia for the Best of Region's competition. The paper that I presented at the conference was *The Stakeholder Centered Business Partnership Model for Student Success* (Miller, 2014).

The Third ACBSP International Conference was held in Barcelona, Spain. and the theme was *Creating New Knowledge in the Classroom*. The Best Presentation of the International Conference was *Teaching Critical Thinking in the International Classroom: The Importance of Understanding the Cross-cultural Dilemma in Business Studies* by Jon-Hans Coetzer and Christine Clarke of the EU Business School (European University). My paper for this event was *Analyzing the Corpus of Business Discourse: Learning by Doing in the Global Classroom* (Miller, 2015).

The year 2016, was the first year for the ACBSP Region 8 Journal to Fall under my editorship. My scholarly paper for the conference was *Preparing Students for Career Success in Accounting: The SCIL-based Model with a Focus on Content Analysis*. The Winner of the Best of Region 8 Presentation Award, was Dr. Jeremy Cripps and Dr. John Russell of University American College, Macedonia, and American University of Kuwait, respectively, for Seven Classroom Scenarios to Promote Student Career Success. While Best Paper Award was given to *Using Knowledge Tools to Prepare Business Graduates for Career Success*. by Dr. Jean-Mari Hillebrand. The 2016 Region 8 Champion Award was presented to me, Dr. Alfred Howard Miller. This award is presented to a volunteer leader who has a history of involvement in the management and leadership of the ACBSP. Selection of Dr. Alfred Miller was made based on guidelines and an application process (Miller 2016).

Regarding the 2023 ACBSP Conference, on Thursday June 29, 2023, I had a special invitation from Chief Accreditation Officer, Steve Parscale to attend a pre-conference session targeted at experienced evaluators. It was good to interact with my other experienced colleagues and hear first-hand about some logistical challenges experienced on a site evaluation visit for a school I had supervised in Saudi Arabia. That took place in the morning, the first day of the conference followed on the next day, June 30, 2023 and I attended the Opening General Session. Later that same day in the afternoon, we held the ACBSP Regional Business Meeting. The ACBSP had designated an award to be given to the Region 8 Chair, Dr. Diana Amirbekova. The ACBSP home office staff requested that I retrieve the award, a plaque, and assist by bringing it to the meeting and presenting it to Diana, along with Oliver Olson representing the home office as Head of European Operations. The Associate Director of Accreditation, Dr. Lucie Depoo, also attended our Region

8 business meeting, and she provided a home office update, as did Patty Peng, ACBSP's Director of Chinese Operations (ACBSP, About Our Leadership, 2013). We were able to receive committee reports, which is a normal activity for the regional meeting, along with reports from myself as the Treasurer and Region 8 Chair. The secretary we had elected at the previous meeting was absent and had been inactive, so at the request of the Region 8 Chair, I took written minutes of the meeting.

In addition to myself, Dr. Pavel Strach of Skoda Auto University, Prague Czech Republic, was instrumental in assisting Diana with the running of the meeting. John K. M. Mawuto of the University of Professional Studies Ghana agreed to serve as Secretary, Abigail Mensah agreed to serve on the Legislative Committee, and Denver Grigg of Boston City Campus, South Africa agreed to serve on the Region 8 Articulation Committee. At the meeting we recognized the current Teaching Excellence Award (TEA) Winners for 2023, Otkur Kubra of the American College of the Middle East, winning at the Associate's level and Shahira Abdalla of Higher Colleges of Technology, Ras Al Khaimah winning at the Bac/Grad level. We disseminated process information for the upcoming TEA competition for next year. We honored the Best of Region 8 Presentation award winner from the past year conference, November 2022, Zdenek Linhart of VSEM in Czech Republic (ACBSP Conference '23, 2023).

Time during the meeting was then spent promoting the events of the upcoming Fall 2023 ACBSP conference. These events are the Best of Region 8 Presentation, Best Paper Award, Region 8 Journal publishing opportunity, Student Showcase Award, and Cesim Region Qualifier Business Simulation Competition. The Region 8 Chair, Diana Amirbekova, promoted Almaty Kazakhstan and her institution, The Kazakh-British Technical University, as hosts for the upcoming Fall 2023 Region 8 Conference (Region 8, 2023).

The conference continued over the succeeding two days with key meetings and interactive opportunities. Saturday saw both me as Region 8 Treasurer, and John K. M. Mawuto, our newly elected Region 8 Secretary to accompany the Region 8 Chair, Diana Amirbekova in the Council of Regional Chairs Meeting, where broader ACBSP growth strategies and financial protections, were discussed in a session led by Jeffrey Alderman, President and CEO of ACBSP. Suffice to say that strong leadership was being demonstrated by the representatives from the eleven Global regions that comprise ACBSP (ACBSP Conference '23, 2023).

The Digital Media Communications Committee, where I serve as a member, and the Marketing Committee jointly met to plan the promotion of ACBSP and the Fall Conferences (ACBSP Committee, 2023). I attended the ACBSP General Business meeting and voted in favor of initiatives, and a slate of candidates that I felt would benefit ACBSP and HCT (ACBSP Conference '23, 2023). There were numerous networking opportunities, one of which led to my recruitment to review a self-study, which I did during some spare time at the conference. The self-study client was passed on by a concerned ACBSP member, who was apprehensive about the fate of the situation faced by a new dean based at a smaller college in the Northeastern USA.

Networking with the Peregrine representative, Dr. Kati Kovacs, revealed a potential opportunity for collaboration in the context of AACSB accreditation. This was because one of Peregrine's key specializations is in the area of assurance of learning, a main criteria in on the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) had recently undergone a site visit, and attained AACSB Accreditation, a competing accrediting body, the Association to Advance Collegiate Business Schools (AACSB) is indeed a competing accreditation system and considered to be at a higher level, primarily because of the greater research requirement. The ACBSP differs primarily upon its focus for teaching excellence. The HCT's successful AACSB bid was announced publicly on August 4, 2023 (AACSB 2023). Later, there was an opportunity for me to introduce Peregrine, Dr. Kati Kovacs, to HCT's departing Executive Dean of Business, Dr. Wiktor Patena, in August 2023, who introduced Kati to Mr. Pascal Krupka, the new Associate Executive Dean of Business (Personal communication, K. Kovacs, 2023).

Further potential networking occurred with Dr. Trina Lynch-Jackson, the Dean of Business at Ivy Tech Community College, and currently ACBSP's Chair of the Associate Degree Board of Commissioners. Ivy



Tech is a large state-affiliated community college network of campuses in Indiana, the USA. The opportunity was to collaborate on innovation and entrepreneurship at the certificate, diploma, and associate degree level programs with up to about 19 campuses (Personal communication, T. Jackson, 2023). This led to an online meeting a week after the conference with Ivy Tech's Assistant VP of the School of IT, Shabbir Qutbuddin. It appeared the two institutions Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) and Ivy Tech were on par technologically. The collaboration opportunity was offered to three of HCT's business program managers–Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Marketing and Project Management–in mid-August, and this initiative is in process to possibly develop further (Personal communication, S. Outbuddin, 2023).

The conference's final main day concluded on July 1, with a picture photography session of the newly accredited and reaffirmed schools being honored. I was photographed with the official principal representatives of my mentee organization, PSAU which achieved its initial accreditation. An award banquet took place in the evening, with entertainment, and the winners of the various awards were honored. Of note, an honorary doctorate was awarded to Diana Hallerud, from a university in the Philippines, the Global Humanistic University, Doctor of Human Letters, upon her full-time retirement from ACBSP, her former position being formerly the Associate Director of Accreditation with over 19 years of service (ACBSP Conference '23, 2023).

The conference concluded on July 2 for me with breakfast, followed by a few quick good-byes and a taxi ride to the Chicago O'Hare International airport. Overall, the ACBSP 23 Conference provided a unique business accreditation engagement experience for conference delegates by creating a truly boundary-spanning environment for idea exchange and fostering interaction from a range of business school stakeholders on a global level. Find out more by visiting <https://conference23.acbspconference.org>.

### **Funding statement**

Funding was received in the form of coverage of travel expenses, paid by Higher Colleges of Technology.

### **Data availability statement**

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

### **Disclosure of interest**

In accordance with my ethical obligation as a researcher, I am reporting that I am the treasurer of ACBSP Region 8, holding a current Digital Marketing and Communications Committee appointment with the ACBSP, and have participated in the preparation of programmatic business accreditation reports for ACBSP and AACSB. Five publications utilizing Artificial Intelligence to explore behavioral aspects taxation, Miller (2017), Miller (2018), Miller (2019), Miller A. H. (2019), and Miller, Alkindi & Alblooshi (2020), have received travel funding from Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), my employer, to attend ACBSP regional conferences while serving as HCT's system-wide champion. I have disclosed competing interests fully.

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