

Responsible Research Project Miami Meeting – Minutes DRAFT2 (with corrections from Jerry Davis)

January 31, 2016, Sunday, 12:00 to 4 pm
Miami, JW Marriott Video Conference Room
Host: Dan LeClair, AACSB

Attendees:

Team: Ingmar Bjorkman, Jerry Davis, Gerry George, Dan LeClair, Anne Tsui, Xiaobo Wu
Guests: Bill Glick, Dean, Jones Graduate School of Business, Rice University, Chair AACSB Board, Sri Zaheer, Dean, Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota

Overview and Key Outcomes of the Miami Meeting

The Sunday meeting had eight participants, including guest Dean Sri Zaheer. On Monday, Anne met three deans, Ira Solomon of Tulane, Rich Lyons of UC Berkeley (with Dan), and Bill Boulding of Duke. (See Appendix A for notes on these three meetings). The deans affirmed the importance of this project. Sri agreed to join the deans' group of the project team. The other three deans will consider (Ira has agreed to join a week after the Miami meeting). The key outcomes of the Miami team meeting including the individual meetings with the deans are the following. The minutes of the meeting follow this summary.

1. Position paper:
 - a. Jerry and Gerry will take the lead in drafting the position paper, with other members (Peter, Thomas and Anne are ready to help) contributing to the writing. We will aim to complete a draft before the end of May.
 - b. There are some exciting new framing suggestions: a) open opportunities for faculty to pursue research that addresses the grand challenges of business and society, b) to improve return to research investment by business schools (from Rich Lyons).
 - c. There is a suggestion to add a list of “Principles for Business School Research in Service to Society” in the position paper.
2. There is strong enthusiasm to pursue the grand challenge special issue idea immediately. Team members of each discipline will try to gain preliminary commitment from at least one top journal in their respective disciplines by the end of May 2016.
3. The Miami team agreed to meet on August 8, 2016, Monday in Anaheim, the Academy of Management meeting location. None can meet in either Boston (April) or Rome (June). We agreed to hold the “visioning” exercise Katrin Muff suggested until after we have a draft of the position paper.

Minutes

Introduction and general discussion

We welcomed Sri Zaheer to our meeting. Below are a few reflections on why this project is important.

1. *Changing mission for changing times:* **Dan LeClair** said that the project is consistent with the new vision of AACSB: to increase engagement, impact and innovation of business schools for better service to society. This will include co-creation of knowledge, practices, and opportunities, to facilitate new partnerships to address social problems, not just business and management. He further stated that the Ford Foundation report in the 1960s caused the current trajectory. How can we build on academic strength and develop on new opportunities? **Bill Glick** believed this project can be a way to accelerate the AACSB agenda, which is to transform management education for global prosperity. This means extending business school mission beyond the for-profit firms. Faculty has to think about serving the broader society in both their teaching and research. **Sri Zaheer** observed that there is increasing homogenization of what is acceptable in our journals. This is the identification question. If the research does not fit that “identity” – in terms of questions, theory, and method – it is rejected. Accumulation and replication are forgotten. We need to ask the “so what” question more seriously in our research. **Gerry George** said that we can’t expect all the papers to have great ideas. The real question is about the mission of the business school. Is it to serve the regional economy or the global society? However, a regional focus must also take into account its impact on its neighbors and the world. The school can do a lot to encourage faculty to be engaged with society. Gerry has given faculty at SMU special research grants to work on regional problems, sabbaticals to spend time in industry. Eventually, this will require loosening the tenure process to encourage and reward different forms of contribution. **Ingmar Bjorkman** said that in Europe, schools are expected to solve business problems. UK research assessment criteria include impact. EU also has research funds for societally important problems. Ingmar believed that those who do a good job would have a competitive advantage.

2. *Encourage applied and support basic research:* **Jerry Davis** encouraged us to clarify the answer to the question “research for whom”? Are we studying and training students only to work for large for-profit corporations or are there other constituencies that business schools also should include? The large corporations are shrinking and the world now has many more other organizations (e.g., small enterprises emerging economies, such as the Pearl River Delta in China). **Xiaobo Wu** agreed and believed that the business schools should be inclusive and contribute knowledge to all kinds of businesses and organizations. Jerry brought up the Pasteur’s Quadrant: Basic research inspired by use. This suggests that even basic research should keep potential use in mind. This means that basic research also should address real problems. **Bill Glick** said that the business schools should support some basic or esoteric research even though such research may not realize its potential till years later. There is a consensus that majority of the faculty in a business school should focus on addressing and solving contemporary problems of businesses and society. The answer to the question of “research for whom” should be more than “our peers”. Ingmar agreed that the medical school is a good example of faculty being engaged with practice in their research. The medical research faculty study real problems and some of their research may be very basic. **Bill Glick** further said we do not do a good job of transferring our research results to end-users. The value chain is incomplete. **Sri** agreed that we should identify and strengthen the mechanisms for knowledge transfer. Ingmar said that co-creation with business/industry would naturally facilitate transfer of knowledge to practice.

3. *Two types of faculty:* Anne related a comment made by Xiaobo Wu in Budapest. In China there are two types of faculty. One publishes papers in top journals to help the school ranking and international reputation. The second helps businesses in China or locally by their Chinese

writing and consulting. Some schools are co-creating knowledge with companies (e.g., at Zhejiang U, under the leadership of Dean Wu). **Sri** said that it is her professional (non-tenure track) faculty who are engaged with industry. The research faculty does much less interaction with businesses. Anne said that our project focuses on the research by tenure-track faculty. However, we need to value faculty who are already studying current issues, contributing to business practice, but their publications do not appear in the top journals. **Dan** said that standard 15 in accreditation is a problem. It requires journal publications every five years. This may diminish the value of the professional or clinical (non-tenure track) faculty.

4. *Mechanisms of change*: Deans can create opportunity to connect faculty with society. Both **Gerry** and **Sri** are doing this at their schools. Journals have to do something different (e.g., the grand challenge special issue) to send a strong signal of welcoming research on contemporary challenges. **Jerry** said that the journal publishing model is very outdated. **Sri** said that computer science have gotten rid of journals altogether. They use online publishing, blogs. The promotion and tenure committees should develop new criteria and standards. Other enabling groups include the accreditation agencies, government/funding agencies, ranking publishers. **Dan** said that there is a Science article, which says that scientific changes only come after the old guards have died. Anne said that this is the idea in Kuhn's book "The structure of scientific revolution". Kuhn also said that change could occur also when some brave young scientists propose new ideas and gain the support of their contemporaries. We just have to look for these brave scientists among our journal editors, deans, and senior scholars. We have some already on our team!

Delphi study

Jerry identified the key themes in the Delphi results. He said that the results are quite informative, and will be helpful in writing the position paper. The group suggested the following new questions for Round 2 Delphi to fill the gaps in the paper.

1. Who is our research for?
2. What are the principles that we have to adopt to help business schools to engage in research that will contribute value to business and society?
3. How should we assess impact of business school research for the constituency?

Position paper

We spent most of the time on the position paper. The following outline was suggested.

1. Purpose: to offer a "position" on the nature and promises of a new research ecosystem.
2. Audience: There are two. The primary one consists of our selves – faculty in the various disciplines, senior and junior scholars, journal editors, deans and associate deans of research, department heads, and directors of PhD programs. The second consists of those who have a stake in business school research such as managers of organizations and policy makers of government, funding agencies, accreditation bodies, ranking publishers, and consultants.
3. Major sections:
 - a. Preamble – important disclaimers or premises.
 - b. The problem –how to frame the problem?
 - i. Large research-practice gap – How to reduce the gap and increase the relevance of the research for business and society? (Team offered several statements, see Appendix B)

- ii. Low efficiency in research investment – How to improve the return (or value of the output from) in research? (This suggestion came from Rich Lyons the dean of UC Berkeley. He believed that this framing may be better received by economic-based disciplines in the school).
 - c. The context – changing economic systems and grand challenges facing businesses and especially the challenges that business school research can help to address.
 - d. The current research ecosystem and nature of research– the inter-connected nature of the research and publishing activities, pressures on business schools and priorities of research faculty. Research in this ecosystem tends to be single disciplinary, strong paradigmatic, and inward focused by emphasizing more contribution to literature/theory than contribution to practice. This research ecosystem is misaligned with the changing nature of the societal context.
 - e. The new research ecosystem
 - i. Vision: Business school research in service of society
 - ii. Goal: To open up opportunities for business school research to address grand challenges facing business and society in the 21st century.
 - iii. New ecosystem: more connectivity with business and society players, more co-creation of knowledge across disciplines and with practice sectors.
 - f. The stakeholders and actions for each group (the Delphi has many suggestions)
 - i. Journal editors
 - ii. Senior and junior scholars
 - iii. Deans, associate deans of research and PhD program directors
 - iv. Accreditation bodies
 - v. Government and private funding agencies
 - vi. Ranking publishers
- 4. Writing plan and schedule
 - a. Jerry Davis will develop a first draft of the paper outline and pass to Gerry George.
 - b. They will identify who are the appropriate writers for each section. Peter has volunteered to write the Delphi section. Thomas Dyllick is willing to do some writing also. Anne is ready and willing to do anything to help 😊
 - c. Will aim for first complete draft before the end of May.
- 5. New idea: Gerry suggested a very exciting new idea – develop a list of principles for business school research. What principles should guide our research to realize our vision of “research in service of society”? A few examples:
 - a. Solve contemporary critical problems facing business and society.
 - b. Encourage experimentation in organizations
 - c. Pursue co creation of knowledge with industry
 - d. Value interdisciplinary as well as disciplinary work
 - e. Flexibility in promotion and tenure system to recognize contributing knowledge of value to business and society
- 6. Dissemination plan (social movement approach?) – postpone to next meeting

Other matters

1. Visioning exercise
The group saw value in this exercise but decided to complete the first draft and then decided if there is a need for this exercise to fill in the gap. It is possible that we could do this in the August meeting at AOM.
2. Boston (April 3, Sunday) and/or Rome meetings (June 11, Saturday)
Most members cannot make it to either meeting. It is agreed that we should meet in Anaheim on August 8, Monday morning.
3. Grand challenges special issue
The group agreed that this is a great idea. The AMJ special issue is a strong indication that authors respond well to this opportunity. There is a great need for journals to publish research on current challenges in business and society. We will proceed to invite journals to participate in this project.

We thank everyone for a great meeting and the meeting ended at 4 pm.

Appendix A

Meeting with Ira Solomon, Tulane University

Feb. 1, 9:30-10:10 am

1. We agreed that most research is narrow and divorced from the problems of business and society.
2. We discussed the homogenization problem with applied journals also emphasizing theory (the supply side has a homogenous type of research). The applied journals are being coopted by the top journals. For example, the journal Auditing: Practice and Theory used to be a primarily practice journal. Now it emphasizes theory like other theory journals.
3. He warned that we should not give the impression that we want to turn research faculty into consultants with the engagement emphasis.
4. He said that accounting research could benefit from privately databases (e.g., AICPA) that are not available for research. The accounting consulting firms are trying to combine auditing data from different companies and do their own research. The justification is to improve auditing practice. However, they are not willing to share the data for university research. We discussed the possibility of co-creation of knowledge with industry.
5. He also suggested a “train the trainer” exercise. Get the PhD directors together to discuss the new research mission and to train the PhD students from paper writers to being responsible scientists.
6. He suggested two accounting scholars as possible members of this project team: Kris Palepel at Harvard (who published a very popular book Business Analysis and Valuation) and Rashad Abdel-Khalik at UIUC. He also mentioned Mark Peecher, also at UIUC, the PhD program director. He said that the Kris and Rashad might be appropriate since they are very engaged with business in their research.

Meeting with Rich Lyons, UC Berkeley

10:15 to 11:00 am

1. Is the project about responsible research in the narrow sense or about research of the entire business school? Rich suggested deleting the word “responsible” in the vision statement so that it is “Business

School Research in Service of Society”. Alternatively, the word “responsive” might be better than “responsible”.

2. Rich also suggested that a different framing focusing on the cost of research, because this might speak better to colleagues in finance, economics, or accounting. Is the problem “The efficiency of investment in research is too low”. We want to be sure that we are not suggesting that the business school should decrease investment in research. Rather it is the output side that needs attention. We are not getting the right values from our research – values in terms of solving timely business problems.
3. The project is about change. It is to change an ecosystem. Therefore, we need to use ideas in change management.
4. Rich said that we should find a way to allow faculty colleagues to sign up if they are open to this change. I said that we plan to have a website to host the position paper and ask people to read, comment, and sign if they support the proposed change.
5. Rich is in favor of having some leading journals open to papers on non- traditional topics, along the idea of Grand Challenges special issue. He said that this is a great idea with the biggest potential of effecting the needed change.
6. Rich suggested that we need an “operator” who can make the transition from an idea to implementation. He said that we should consider getting a (\$2 million) grant to hire an executive (operator) over a five-year period. Perhaps the Ford Foundation might consider this. He asked me to ask Dan at AACSB if they know of any granting agencies that have giving funding to educational initiatives.
7. I said that we have an annual review. If the project is not making meaningful progress, we will stop. He said funding agencies like this approach.
8. He suggested Richard Sloan, an accounting faculty member at UCB, might be suitable for our project team. He said Richard is a very thoughtful scholar and would be sympathetic to the goal of this project.
9. Rich wants to make sure we are not talking about making research less important. I responded that the project is exactly opposite of his worry. Research is important in business schools, and it is part of our mission. The project is to identify opportunities for our research to contribute to better business practices and a better society. In other words, we want to increase the efficiency of research investment by attention to the value of research outcomes for business and for society.

Bill Boulding, Duke University

1:00 – 1:25 pm

1. The project is important but there is a risk. It might sound like you want to eliminate theory and basic research. You might need some examples of how some basic research has applied value. Good theories are very useful to solve problems.
2. He liked the grand challenge idea, reminded him of the Grand Challenges in Engineering. If the leading journals do this, it will send a powerful signal of the transformative changes. It will open up the opportunities for research on new problems, new economies, and new industries.
3. As professional schools, we have a responsibility to develop knowledge to educate students to add values to business and society. Business should be a most important force for good in the world.

Appendix B

1. Suggested problem statements focusing on the “research-practice” gap or relevance issue.

Anne: To transform business school research toward addressing great challenges facing business and society in the 21st century. Examples of grand challenges: UN’s 17 sustainable development goals, Delphi results, WEF’s global risk reports, etc.

Ingmar: How to increase the likelihood that business schools will do research with the potential to influence important business ...

Bill: Create systematic change to reduce the research-practice gap in business school research.

Gerry: business schools as generators of knowledge that is informed by and relevant to transforming practice and educating leaders.

Sri: how business schools can support and encourage research that has greater impact in the classroom and on the society.

Jerry: how can business schools that can change ...

2. Develop a “position” to be advanced in this paper, a position stating importance of research for both business and society.

Anne: Business schools have a responsibility and opportunity to contribute to a better and sustainable world by developing knowledge that helps businesses to be positive forces of change for society. This means research that focuses on developing business models, organizing principles, governance systems, and management practices that advance the sustainability of both businesses and society.

Sri: develop mechanisms to recognize, support and reward faculty research to ...

Jerry Davis has extensive notes of the meeting, which is available if you are interested. Please contact him directly or contact Anne.