

Foreword

All of us, as accounting educators, have been warned many times that accounting education must change if it is to be relevant and add value to our students and the community. Some educators have heard these warnings and have made significant changes to their programs and curricula. However, there is considerable evidence suggesting that changes to accounting education have not been pervasive or substantive enough. We are experiencing decreases in student enrollments and we still hear continued criticisms of our educational programs. Now, we are hearing disturbing statements by practicing accountants and even educators—statements that if they were completing their education over again, they would major in something other than accounting. These are serious problems.

We believe the critics are right. The time for change “just to be better” is past. We must now transform our educational programs merely to survive. We are threatened by changes in the marketplace, some of which are beyond our control. Nonetheless, there are a number of things we can do to shape our future, and we dare not delay. The time for action is now.

Four major groups that have a desire to improve accounting education joined together to sponsor this study—the Institute of Management Accountants (IMA), the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), the American Accounting Association (AAA), and the Big 5 professional service firms. We are deeply indebted to them for their support of this project. Their charge to us was to “write a high-level thought piece, supported by evidence where possible, about the future of accounting education.”

Each of these organizations provided two members of the “[Sponsors Task Force](#).” The Task Force provided continued guidance throughout the project. At those times when we needed strategic guidance, they worked closely with us. We are very grateful for the helpful comments and direction provided by Bud Kulesza and Keith Russell of the IMA, Karen Pincus and Bea Sanders of the AICPA, Jan Williams and Michael Diamond of the AAA, and Brent Inman and Ellen Glazerman of the Big 5. We also appreciate those who were kind enough to permit personal interviews and those who participated in our focus groups. Without their participation, this report would not have been possible. Finally, we appreciate the help of Danny R. Olsen and Steven A. Wygant of the Brigham Young University Assessment Office who assisted with data analysis.

We make bold statements about accounting education in this report. Where possible, we have supported these statements with empirical evidence. You may disagree with some of our statements. We anxiously hope you will agree with our overall conclusion—that the accounting education environment cries out for action.

—W. Steve Albrecht and Robert J. Sack