

Leadership in Professional Associations for Business Education

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Leaders of business education professional associations acknowledge that business educators who join professional associations “with others who share similar work-related interests and goals” receive many advantages (Scott, 2008, p. 285); however, challenges exist within the professional associations that leadership needs to address. According to the Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education (PCBEE, 2006), professional associations “exist to help members value and promote their profession as well as nurture their individual careers” (p. 1). Professional associations provide professional growth and leadership development opportunities for business education professionals. The PCBEE continues to place importance on professional organizations as evidenced in its program of work for 2012–2013. The PCBEE addressed professional organizations with Policy Statement #92, *This we believe about the role of professional organizations in the future of business education*, published in 2013 (Hagler, 2012).

Educators who become involved in their professional associations have access to up-to-date publications, professional networks, an avenue to build leadership skills, and other membership benefits (Shumack & Forde, 2012). According to the National Business Education Association (NBEA, n.d., p. 3), “Leadership in business education is critical if the profession is to move forward in our fast-paced global society.” Without innovative leaders, the professional associations may struggle for relevancy, resulting in a struggle for membership numbers. Haynes and Samuel (2006) discussed the responsibility of association leaders by stating, “It is leadership that will determine

the sustainability of an organization” (p. 2). To meet this obligation to the professional association, leaders should be aware of the current environment of the profession, provide a vision for the organization, and create meaning and value for members.

Leadership sets the stage for the success or failure of organizations. According to Bennis (1999b), leaders are responsible for four roles within a group:

- They provide direction and meaning to the group. Leaders “remind people of what’s important and why their work makes a difference” (p. 320).
- They generate and sustain trust that allows the members of an organization to move through periods of dissent and challenge that are a normal part of the group process.
- They are action-oriented risk takers who are curious in order to achieve results.
- They are purveyors of hope because they “find both tangible and symbolic ways to demonstrate that the group can overcome the odds” (p. 321). One way that business education leaders provide direction and meaning is through the history of the profession and its associations to provide future directions for the profession (PCBEE, 2006).

This chapter discusses the contributions of professional associations, responsibility of professional organizations to ensure quality professional preparation and practice, current trends in professional associations, and challenges faced by the leadership of business education professional associations.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

Multiple and related associations support the business education profession. These associations vary by mission and areas of support for the profession. Many business education professionals are members of multiple associations, and even the leadership within the organizations often overlaps. The parent association for the profession is the National Business Education Association (NBEA).

National Business Education Association (NBEA). “The National Business Education Association (NBEA) is the nation’s leading professional organization devoted exclusively to serving individuals and groups engaged in instruction, administration, research, and dissemination of information for and about business” (NBEA, 2013a, para. 1). NBEA provides opportunities for professionals to stay current in the field of business education, advocates for legislation in the field of business education, and serves as a unifying organization for professional organizations in business education. Publications made available by NBEA for sharing information on business education include *Business Education Forum*, *NBEA Yearbook*, and *Keying In*. NBEA also offers webinars on current issues in business education and multiple social media networking opportunities.

NBEA creates an annual program of work that contains an extensive section on leadership development. Many leadership opportunities are outlined for NBEA members and facilitated through the Leadership Development Task Force. NBEA is currently revising its program of work and incorporating implementation of leadership development materials into the documents governing NBEA and its regions. New ways to introduce members to leadership opportunities are being developed (NBEA, 2012). Additionally, NBEA offers a leadership development program each year during its annual convention using the *Leadership in Business Education* handbook (NBEA, n.d.). This handbook contains a section (pp. 20–21) on membership and identifies the following association membership benefits and services:

- Enhance career growth and development
- Expand influence with linkages among national, regional, and state, territorial, and provincial associations
- Expand professional networks
- Strengthen the image of business education
- Receive the following membership benefits and services:
 - Publications
 - Conferences/conventions
 - Unified voice
 - Awards program
 - Exhibits of instructional resources
 - Group travel
 - Financial planning
 - Group insurance
 - Tax-sheltered annuity programs

NBEA is also the parent organization for five regional business education associations. NBEA automatically assigns a regional membership based on where the member lives. Any NBEA member may participate in a regional activity, and many of the membership benefits are available to all NBEA members, regardless of region. The five regions include Eastern, Mountain-Plains, North Central, Southern, and Western regions of the United States and Canada, as well as American Samoa, Bermuda, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands (NBEA, 2013b).

The Eastern region includes Bermuda, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Brunswick, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Pennsylvania, Prince Edward Island, Puerto Rico, Quebec, Rhode Island, Vermont, and the Virgin Islands. The Eastern region no longer has an active association.

The Mountain-Plains region (Mountain-Plains Business Education Association or MPBEA) includes Colorado, Kansas, Manitoba, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Saskatchewan, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming. MPBEA holds its annual conference in June each year. The region's leadership has determined that important membership benefits include a peer-reviewed journal that is published in even-numbered years. It rewards innovative teaching ideas through a program called Share-an-Idea and the winning submission is available on the region's Web site. Each year during the annual conference, the association's past president at the time facilitates a Leadership Development Institute in an effort to prepare future leaders for business education (Mountain-Plains Business Education Association, 2013).

The North Central region (North Central Business Education Association or NCBEA) includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin. NCBEA holds its annual convention in conjunction with a state conference. The host state determines the timing of the convention each year. NCBEA offers summer workshops, a listserv, and conference presentations as a few membership benefits (North Central Business Education Association, 2013).

The Southern region (Southern Business Education Association or SBEA) includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. According to the SBEA Web site (2013), the region represents more than 3,000 business education professionals. SBEA typically holds its annual conference in October each year. To reach members, the region hosts a group on Facebook. The region also offers a variety of teaching resources through their Web site.

The Western region (Western Business Education Association or WBEA) includes Alaska, Alberta, American Samoa, Arizona, British Columbia, California, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Northern Mariana Islands, Northwest Territories, Oregon, Utah, Yukon, and Washington. WBEA provides professional and leadership development through the annual Professional Development Institute and a workshop for the presidents-elect of business education associations in the states, territories, and provinces at the regional conference held annually in February (Western Business Education Association, 2012).

Throughout the regions, most individual states, territories, and provinces also have active business education associations that offer conferences and networking opportunities with other business educators within their boundaries. Several of the states also offer peer-reviewed journals in an effort to improve the knowledge base of the profession. Guidance for locating opportunities and services with specific state, territorial, or provincial business education organizations is available at <http://nbea.org/newsite/about/states.html>.

Several divisional associations fall under the NBBA umbrella. Each of these divisional associations provides a unique service to its members. Joining a divisional association requires membership in NBBA.

The International Society for Business Education (SIEC-ISBE).¹ The mission of SIEC-ISBE is "to enhance the international perspective of business and business education professionals" (International Society for Business Education, 2013, para. 3). Publications made available by SIEC-ISBE for sharing information on business education include the *International Journal for Business Education* from SIEC-ISBE International and *Journal for Global Education* from the United States Chapter of the International Society for Business Education. Any business education professional who is interested in global business education can benefit from SIEC-ISBE and ISBE activities. Networking activities with professionals from chapters on four continents provide opportunities in international business through improved international educational exchanges; cooperative efforts among individuals, institutions, and businesses; and unification of the goals of business education professionals on a global scale.

Association for Research in Business Education—Delta Pi Epsilon (ARBE-DPE). ARBE-DPE is a national graduate honorary society for professionals who support and promote scholarship, leadership, and cooperation toward the advancement of education for and about business. ARBE-DPE was founded on a shared mission to improve the teaching of business through the engagement of scientific research, development of leadership skills, and advancement of the profession, providing members with team-building and networking opportunities (Association for Research in Business Education—Delta Pi Epsilon, 2013). ARBE-DPE offers opportunities to share research findings through presentations at the annual NBBA convention and through two peer-juried publications: *Journal for Research in Business Education* and *Journal of Applied Research for Business Instruction*.

National Association for Business Teacher Education (NABTE). The primary purpose of NABTE is to promote business teacher education by providing national leadership and services to its member institutions and business teacher educators. Institutional membership is open to colleges and universities offering a business teacher education curriculum approved by state departments of education for the certification of business teachers (National Association for Business Teacher Education, 2013). Associate memberships are also open to any individual business education professional interested in the preparation of business education teachers. Opportunities to share research and best practices in business teacher education are available through presentations at the annual NBBA convention and through a peer-juried publication. NABTE publishes *Business Teacher Education Journal* for sharing information on the preparation of business education teachers.

¹SIEC-ISBE stands for La Société Internationale pour l'Enseignement Commercial—The International Society for Business Education.

Professional Associations Ensure Quality of the Profession

Professional associations contribute to the quality of professional preparation and practice through membership benefits. Benefits of professional associations typically include publications, professional development, networking opportunities, leadership opportunities, and discounted costs on professional materials. However, these benefits are provided as membership benefits for those who join and participate in professional activities as stated by the profession's policy-making body, "Members should take an active role by participating in association activities" (PCBEE, 2006, p. 1).

One of the most valuable benefits members of a profession can derive from their professional associations is access to up-to-date publications. Written by contributors from the field of business education, the information in the professional journals provides a vehicle for sharing the best practices of successful educators with other members (Shumack & Forde, 2012).

According to the PCBEE (1997), "business educators must pursue activities that promote their individual growth and that bring them together with other educators for reflection and planning" (p. 1). Therefore, professional development opportunities are important to the associations and to their members. Through active participation in professional associations, business educators have access to multiple professional development opportunities such as participation in formal instruction, research of best practices, and collaboration at conferences.

Professional associations offer a variety of networking opportunities. According to Shumack and Forde (2012), "peer relationships strengthen morale, encourage the novice teacher, and play a part in success when ideas are brought back to the classroom" (p. 178). Building a professional learning network can lead to professional growth (Davis, 2013). Such a network is collaborative and "may include educators, learners, parents, administrators, employers, community members, governmental representatives, and professional association members" (PCBEE, 2001, p. 1). Professional conferences and trade shows provide ways to build professional relationships. At conventions and conferences, business and education leaders provide keynote addresses, members offer professional development sessions, and vendors/publishers demonstrate their latest products and resources available to educators. Each business education professional association provides conferences throughout the year. Conference dates may be accessed at Web sites for sponsoring organizations.

Professional associations also provide an avenue for leadership development. Shumack and Forde (2012) stated, "successful professionals realize that positive reputations are built over time by forming and maintaining a strong professional network" (p. 178). Most states have state associations in which professionals may begin their leadership careers by serving on committees while developing the skills needed and the reputation required to move into leadership positions at the state, regional, national, and international levels. However, members "must be open and willing to contribute

when invited, and professional associations must always be aware of immediately providing opportunities for new members to grow and to be involved” (Shumack & Forde, 2012, p. 178). As professionals, business educators must be willing to strengthen the profession through participation in the associations.

Professional discounts offered by professional associations may be significant. For example, NBEA membership currently provides members with \$250,000 in professional liability insurance, discounts on professional publications, and other discounts. Many professional associations offer substantial discounts for students planning to enter the profession. These discounts apply to most costs, including membership and conferences. Additionally, many of the professional associations offer scholarships and/or stipends to students and new teachers to encourage participation in association activities.

TRENDS IN PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

A Delphi study conducted by Davis and Bailey (2013) found that business education leaders identify multiple trends for professional associations. The panel of business educators interviewed, who serve as association leaders in professional associations, indicated that professional associations are experiencing several positive trends. Many business education associations at all levels are producing quality publications, staying current with technologies, leading change within the profession, providing professional development, and unifying individual organizations under the umbrella of the National Business Education Association. The various professional associations under the umbrella of one parent organization should lead to increased collaboration among the affiliated associations, regions, and state, territorial, and provincial associations allowing for greater coordination of activities. This collaboration and coordination should result in increased services of greater quality at reasonable costs; a study by O’Neil and Forde (2007) indicated that organizations providing valuable and meaningful resources will survive. Providing valuable and meaningful resources is an important issue to be addressed by leadership because “many of the services traditionally provided by professional organizations can now be found in public places and accessed readily through electronic channels—free of charge” (O’Neil & Forde, 2007, p. 47).

Shumack and Forde (2012) summarized the status of current professional associations as follows:

Today, educators weigh carefully membership costs vs. benefits while professional associations are challenged to (a) provide abundant membership services that cost more and more to provide, (b) understand how best to use technology in providing membership services, and (c) fulfill the needs of the profession. (p. 177)

Based on this study, leadership needs to address how to provide valuable benefits while maintaining costs as an important issue for the survival of business education professional associations.

CHALLENGES FACING PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS IN BUSINESS EDUCATION

Davis and Bailey (2013) found that professional association leaders observed a decline in the number of members and member involvement at all professional association levels: local, state, regional, national, and international. Declining membership numbers appear to be the primary challenge for professional organizations (Davis & Bailey, 2013; O’Neil & Willis, 2005). The association leaders surveyed stated that one reason for this decline may be that professional associations are struggling to earn the respect of their constituencies.

Additionally, the declining numbers of programs to license business education teachers and the challenges facing business education programs in K–12 settings create a challenge for professional association membership numbers and member involvement. With challenges of maintaining viable business education programs, the emphasis on technology and technology instruction is oftentimes offered at the expense of discipline-based knowledge and soft skill development (Davis & Bailey, 2013). This challenge provides opportunities for professional associations to enhance knowledge through conferences and publications.

In 2007 O’Neil and Forde addressed the challenge of maintaining professional association membership levels by stating, “Membership must have value” (p. 46). Current professional association leaders confirmed the need for value. Many new as well as more experienced teachers do not see the relevance of the professional association (Davis & Bailey, 2013). O’Neil and Forde also indicated that professional associations need to be aware of the needs of their current and potential members; failure to understand and anticipate the needs of members would be detrimental to the association.

A related membership challenge for professional associations is the aging of members and leaders. Attracting new members is an important key to maintaining successful professional associations. New association members must replace those who have been members and leaders in organizations if the organizations are able to evolve and reflect the changing needs of the profession (Davis & Bailey, 2013).

Lower attendance at professional conferences and conventions is another challenge to professional associations. O’Neil and Forde (2007) stressed the need for conferences to provide valuable professional growth opportunities because many attendees must personally pay the cost of attendance. Members will not attend conferences if immediate value is not apparent for potential attendees. One way to provide professional growth is through networking, as “technology still falls short of human interaction” (O’Neil & Forde, 2007, p. 49). According to the Davis and Bailey (2013) study, members appreciate and value technological methods for disseminating information; however, the personal interactions that occur at conferences and meetings cannot be replaced by the technological means currently available.

In summary, the challenges that must be addressed by the leaders of the business education professional associations are many. Bennis (1999a) shared that “The global challenges and changes of the emergent millennium...compel the creation of both new forms of organizations and new forms of leadership” (p. 215). A professional association provides a competitive edge to its members by providing professional development for those involved in the association.

ADDRESSING THESE CHALLENGES

Leadership of professional associations has multiple avenues to address the challenges presented in this chapter. Davis and Bailey (2013) offered the following tactics for addressing the challenges facing professional associations in business education:

- Using one-on-one recruitment strategies that involve individual association members in recruitment
- Searching for new cohorts, such as recent college graduates, to include in recruitment activities
- Adapting services such as conference and publication topics to the changing demographics of current and future members
- Surveying stakeholder groups, such as employers, teacher preparation institutions, state teacher licensure agencies, and teachers, on ways to involve additional professionals in the associations
- Using social media to interact with fellow professionals
- Providing recruitment training for membership directors at the state and regional levels

Although these strategies may have been used in the past with some efficacy, membership issues continue to plague the professional associations. The panel of business education association leaders in the Davis and Bailey (2013) research offered the following suggestions for professional association leaders. Professional association leaders may want to consider ways to be more relevant to new teachers in the profession by seeking to learn what these teachers need from a professional association. It is also imperative to determine what current members need to retain their membership in the associations. Understanding that costs may prohibit innovative teachers new to the profession from attending large regional or national conferences, association leaders should consider ways to deliberately include newer teachers in professional development activities. For example, leaders might invite innovative teachers to prepare and present webinars that can be offered through the Internet or open-source avenues. Offering live videoconferencing opportunities for opening keynote speakers at conferences or for designated professional development workshops is another possibility. Innovative teachers who cannot attend the conference might be asked to virtually present to the attendees at a conference. Additionally, videoing some professional development workshops to be modified into podcasts would be a valuable benefit for members unable to attend conferences. All

activities of the associations need to strive to showcase the services and programs that reflect credibility within the overall education community. Offering a variety of services throughout the year and between conferences is one way to achieve this goal.

Leaders surveyed by Davis and Bailey (2013) indicated a need to work more closely with teaching universities to determine what new teachers require for becoming active in the professional organizations. Finding ways to recruit and involve students in business education programs into the professional associations and providing them with the tools and resources needed to be successful as novice teachers will benefit the associations. One final suggestion offered was to target publications, workshops, and conferences to K–12 teachers and teachers at community colleges. Involving these teachers in action research to determine best practices for instructional methodologies and other activities related to the business education classroom may provide another avenue of membership for the professional associations.

The PCBEE (2008) also suggested the following actions in order to transform business education. Professional associations must do the following:

- Explore and understand the changes in learners, social context, and business educators to transform their marketing, publications, workshops, and conferences.
- Provide the incentive and a forum for business educators to engage in this transformation.
- Support the development of excellent teachers by providing opportunities to be skillful, innovative, and entrepreneurial in their teaching, given their changing environments.
- Use the new “tools” to enable business educators to network, to engage in professional and leadership development, and to share ideas and best practices collaboratively.
- Ensure that all business education literature is available and indexed electronically so that it can be retrieved not only by business educators but also by other professionals.
- Strengthen existing and implement new partnerships among the varied professional associations to collaborate in promoting and sustaining the transformation of the business education profession. (p. 2)

SUMMARY

This chapter discussed leadership contributions and considerations of professional associations by summarizing the contributions of NBEA, the five regions of NBEA, divisional affiliations, and state, territorial, and provincial associations. The foundation to ensure quality professional preparation and practice is in place and available to any member willing to take advantage and participate within the associations. Current leaders should mentor others who are willing to become leaders within the

associations. "The underlying purpose of professional organizations—that of helping members develop professionally—remains the same regardless of the century and the technology available" (Shumack & Forde, 2012, p. 186).

Positive trends within the associations include quality publications, staying current through the use of technology, professional development, and collaboration between NBEA and affiliated divisions. Professional associations also face challenges, primarily in the form of declining membership numbers and decreased participation at conferences and conventions leading to decreased revenues, which can lead to a need to decrease services. Additional challenges can be seen within business education programs whose emphasis is shifting away from discipline-based knowledge and soft skill development. Leaders of professional associations must find ways to provide value to their members and to make prospective members aware of that value. Value could be provided through membership benefits such as publications, networking, professional development, leadership development opportunities, and membership discounts. The value of membership must be visible throughout the year, not just via annual conferences or conventions.

"Viable professional associations are essential to the life of the business education profession" (PCBEE, 2006, p. 2). Addressing the challenges and incorporating suggestions from association leadership into the activities of professional organizations may provide additional revenue-generating streams, help retain current members, entice new members to join, and provide valuable benefits to all members and to the professional community. Incorporating ways for members unable to attend conferences should provide additional value. "Strong, effective leadership must be cultivated and exercised so that the business education profession is able to accomplish this transformation" (PCBEE, 2008, p. 3).

In conclusion, "the organizations that will succeed... are those that take seriously, and sustain through action, their belief that their competitive advantage is their people and their development" (Bennis, 1999a, p. 79). Leaders have the responsibility to find the key in order to sustain professional associations for future generations of business education professionals.

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