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Accounting Education at a Crossroad in 2010

edited by Elaine Evans, Roger Burritt and James Guthrie



Centre for
Accounting, Governance
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The Institute of
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Preface

The higher education sector sets the foundation for a quality-driven accounting profession and is the corner-stone of future economic prosperity in Australia. However, with the present government setting ambitious degree qualification targets to be achieved by 2025, there are a number of important challenges for the higher education sector; and more specifically for accounting education. These include first, the low level of Commonwealth funding, per student place, for accounting and business students. This has placed pressure on universities to maximise international full-fee-paying business students. Second, the large classes in university business faculties with the highest student to staff ratios can result in undesirable, sub-optimal teaching and learning outcomes. Third, a key challenge is the ageing academic population. It is currently difficult for universities to fill vacancies in accounting and finance. There are many reasons including: low salary levels; large classes; heavy teaching and preparation loads; increased level of administration; limited time and support for research; and a career structure. These factors are all disincentives for individuals, who may otherwise have become accounting academics.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia (the Institute) recognises the important role of accounting education and the potential cost to the accounting profession and the wider community if accounting academics remain unheard.

With this acknowledgement, I was proud to support the successful accounting education forum that was organised by The Centre for Accounting, Governance and Sustainability (CAGS), a research centre at the School of Commerce, University of South Australia and the Institute forum held on 4 February 2010. The purpose of this forum was to investigate contemporary challenges relating to accounting education, academia and the accounting profession in Australia.

This current book will contribute to an ongoing dialogue between academics, the profession and public policy makers concerning the key challenges facing Australian accounting education in 2010 and the future. As part of the Institute's strategic objective, we will be investing in an accounting education strategy that will include support for academics in terms of research funding, participation in wider community debates and representation at the highest levels of government. The Institute has always held strong links with the academic community, embodied in our presence and ongoing sponsorship of the Accounting and Finance Association of Australia and New Zealand and we look forward to continued dialogue and debate in the near future.

I commend the book's contributors for the detailed discussions on various aspects of Australian accounting education and wish the various stakeholders success in their continued debates on this important issue.



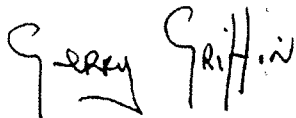
Graham Meyer
Chief Executive Officer
The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia

Preface

Australia has, over the years, developed a reputation as a leader in accounting education and so it is rewarding to lend support to industrious accountants from academia and practice to help them consider possible futures in a strategic manner. The forum on *The Future of Academic Accounting in Australia* organised in the Division of Business, the University of South Australia through its Centre for Accounting, Governance and Sustainability and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia is both timely and relevant given the global, regional and local issues confronting the profession.

Accountants are often portrayed as people who look in the rear view mirror to tell businesses, governments and non-government organisations where they have been. They are also associated with some of the difficulties facing the global economy caused by the recent financial crisis. Yet accountants come in different shapes and sizes and work in many contexts. New strands of professional expertise are always emerging. By way of example, management accountants look to the future as they provide information about decisions and problems that may affect the future of businesses; sustainability accountants focus on policies and information that impact on the sustainable development of business, regions and the world; financial accounting continuously looks to improve transparency, which forms the core of democratic political and legal systems. Internationalisation of the supply of accounting students and demand for accounting services further stimulates the need for a forward looking and adaptive profession in the face of change.

The future of accounting education is surely in good hands when dedicated professionals such as those whose thoughts are represented in this book take the time to step back and view the bigger picture as well as recommend actions in an attempt to ensure that necessary changes take place. I am pleased to lend my support to the development of the debate and to the dissemination of ideas that will provide the foundation of the profession in years to come.



Professor Gerry Griffin

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List of Contributors

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