

Policy Statement 92

This We Believe About the Importance of Professional Associations to the Future of Business Education

Professional associations contribute to the vitality of the business education profession. They advocate for educators at the local, state, and national levels on issues such as legislation, state and federal mandates, professional development, and funding. Membership in professional associations provides both intrinsic and extrinsic benefits. Business educators who join and actively participate in professional associations invest not only in themselves, but in the future of the business education profession.

CURRENT PRACTICES

Many business education professional associations embrace the challenges and opportunities inherent in providing relevant and timely member benefits and services. Examples include digital and print journals, magazines, newsletters, websites, discussion boards, webinars, listservs, conferences, seminars, and training sessions. Associations provide the opportunities for members to:

- network with colleagues and business professionals
- develop leadership skills
- encourage and disseminate research
- learn classroom management techniques and instructional strategies
- identify new and emerging technologies, curricula, and best practices

Thus, **we believe** many business education professional associations are delivering useful, timely, engaging, and critical support for business educators.

Professional associations provide benefits and services to attract members, yet recruitment and retention of members pose significant challenges. Research suggests an individual's decision about membership is impacted by:

- limited professional development funds
- priorities and obligations in other areas
- increased costs of membership and conferences
- a lack of interest in or awareness of the value of available resources
- the availability of free online resources
- the expectation of immediate returns on membership investments

We believe associations must meet these challenges by creating a paradigm shift that boldly offers creative and innovative ways to effect outcomes and rewards.

STAKEHOLDERS

Members of professional associations represent diverse educational categories, including K-12, postsecondary, college/university, and administration. Professional associations also need to reconsider membership incentives and services to attract and retain members from all generations. **We believe** professional associations should continue to recognize the changing needs and demographics of current and potential members.

Business and Technology Educators

The majority of traditional business education programs during the 20th century indoctrinated future educators with the mantra “join a professional association.” In contrast, 21st century educators are trained in both traditional and alternative certification programs and come from a variety of backgrounds, such as business, industry, government, and military. As a result, the expectation and motivation of new and current educators to join a professional association is not as strong today.

Generational characteristics also impact changes within professional associations. While Baby Boomers cite a strong work ethic as their chief identifier, Generation Xers and Millennials consider technology their primary identifier. **We believe** changes in business teacher education programs, generational characteristics, and technological implications are important factors for professional associations to consider when providing membership benefits and services.

Students

Learners in the 21st century are technologically savvy and are expected to be critical thinkers, decision makers, and problem solvers. Professional associations should offer a valuable support system to educators by providing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to prepare students for the future. **We believe** students are ultimately the most important beneficiaries of an educator who seeks continual professional growth through participation in professional associations.

Administrators

Administrators are key stakeholders who can become valuable partners with professional associations to enhance educators’ performance and professional growth. **We believe** professional associations should collaborate with administrators to encourage and support professional development for educators.

Teacher Educators and Certifying Agencies

Traditional business teacher educators promote professional association memberships and participation; however, educators in non-traditional programs may not be aware of these associations or the value of embedded benefits and services. Furthermore, many professionals in other disciplines or certifying agencies who work with business education candidates do not understand or appreciate business education professional associations. **We believe** professional associations must identify and

collaborate with all agencies and programs preparing and certifying business educators to support professional growth.

CONCLUSION AND CALL TO ACTION

The goal of professional associations should be to support educators and strengthen academic programs—not merely to save the associations. To that end, **we believe** the network of professional associations must:

- Provide leadership, direction, and a unified voice for the discipline (PCBEE Statement #79, 2006).
- Continually reassess the professional development needs of current and potential members.
- Create and implement a viable and sustainable marketing plan for promoting professional growth opportunities.
- Focus on follow-up strategies that encourage first-year members or first-time conference attendees to continue their professional growth.
- Encourage educators to identify and communicate with those who control their professional development resources.
- Partner with states to provide state pre-approved professional development credits for conference attendance, webinars, and committee involvement.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of all membership outreach efforts to ensure the focus is on supporting educators and strengthening academic programs.
- Facilitate discussion forums among leaders from different associations to share successful strategies that benefit members.
- Ensure that association activities and resources are readily accessible to professionals through creative delivery opportunities.
- Contact and collaborate with state departments of education, educational institutions, and other certifying agencies/programs that prepare business educators and provide association information emphasizing the benefits for educators.
- Explore the potential membership benefits for non-business educators teaching business and technology courses.

Therefore, **we believe** professional business education associations must strive to provide innovative, timely, and accessible member benefits and services that will strengthen educators' personal and professional portfolios to help them be the best educators they can be.