



April 15, 2021

Dear Members of Academic Affairs,

I appreciated hearing from several of you about the decision to not pursue our EQUIS re-accreditation. Since my last communication with you, I have met with an EQUIS representative, and we mutually agreed that Bentley's EQUIS accreditation would be extended for an additional year. During this one-year extension, we will reevaluate our accreditation with EQUIS within the context of our institutional strategy. I will also be discussing this opportunity with our new president, Dr. Brent Chrite, when he joins us this summer.

As I stated previously, I have tasked Otgo Erhemjamts, Associate Vice President/Associate Provost of Strategic Initiatives, and Natalie Schlegel, Director of the Cronin Office of International Education, with taking lead on developing a draft of an internationalization strategy. Specifically, I have asked them to both articulate what Bentley is already doing with regard to international initiatives, and to identify gaps and opportunities for new international priorities. Otgo and Natalie have begun this effort, and we have good work ahead of us.

We value the power of immersive experiences at Bentley, and we know our graduates are better positioned for the world they will experience when they are globally oriented and internationally connected. An initial review of our international efforts reveals that our student mobility – the opportunity for students to work or study abroad while making progress toward their degree – is strong, with 38 partner institutions in 19 countries. 50% of each class of the undergraduate student body participates in a study abroad experience before graduating, and our international student body represents 26% of graduate students and 15% of undergraduate students.

However, a comprehensive internationalization strategy will not be achieved through Academic Affairs alone. While Academic Affairs will lead on research and education, we need to partner with other divisions. Comprehensive internationalization is an ongoing process rather than a static goal. It recognizes that all members of our community—students, faculty, and staff—are active participants in a global knowledge and learning network.



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Our current global partnerships can be better leveraged into multi-faceted partnerships that focus not only on student mobility, but also for joint degrees and research activities. Such efforts can include identifying high priority partners based on institutional goals and improving synergy and collaboration across interconnected institutional goals.

Looking forward, the incorporation of a comprehensive internationalization strategy as an enabling feature will help us better achieve Bentley's strategic priorities. The formulation of a comprehensive internationalization strategy will require broad input and participation to ensure that it develops in a way that is sustainable and inclusive. I look forward to discussing this with all faculty over the next year in various formats. Please do not hesitate to be in touch with either Otgo or Natalie to provide suggestions and input.

Cordially,

**Donna Maria Blancero, PhD**

*Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs*

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers