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The Journal for Global Business Education is a refereed publication of the United States chapter of the US Chapter of Société pour l'Enseignement Commercial (SIEC). The U.S. Chapter (SIEC-USA) is one of multiple chapters of the Société pour l'Enseignement Commercial (SIEC). These chapters represent different countries that are engaged in education for international business. An affiliate of the National Business Education Association (NBEA), the purpose of the U.S. Chapter of ISBE is to promote international business education among member nations through improved international educational exchange, cooperative efforts, and unified goals and objectives.

Business educators, business representative, members of SIEC and others interested in global business are invited to submit manuscripts. Topics should focus on International Business and may include reviews of literature, research, teaching methodologies, and other appropriate options. A Call for Paper is included at the end of this Journal. Copies of the Journal may be obtained by contacting the address listed below.

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When change is necessary: A SWOT analysis

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Abstract

Strategic planning is an important part of growth for any organization. The International Society for Business Education—U.S. Chapter, facing membership losses, determined that an updated strategic plan was needed. However, before a new strategic plan could be created, the leadership also recognized that they did not understand why members were leaving the organization. To learn about the underlying causes, and on the recommendation of SIEC-International, the chapter determined that a SWOT analysis would be beneficial.

This study describes the membership survey and Delphi Study with a Panel of Experts that was used to identify membership perceptions of the chapter and the international association. Through this process the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were identified and analyzed. Recommendations for the future of the organization include specific steps for the future based upon the information learned from the members.

Keywords: SIEC-ISBE International, SIEC-USA, International Society for Business Education, professional associations, leadership, SWOT Analysis, Delphi

Introduction

Strategic planning is an important part of growth for any organization. The International Society for Business Education—U.S. Chapter answered the call of the *La Société Internationale Pour l'Enseignement Commercial* (SIEC-International) Association to take a critical look at its strategic plan and how it is providing value to members. SIEC-International began the process of updating its strategic plan during the 2019 International Conference in Kefalonia, Greece. As the data from the conference was reviewed and a plan started, the executive committee determined that asking the chapters to conduct their own critical analysis would be beneficial to inform strategic plans for all chapters and the international association.

The U.S. Chapter is a membership association and a chapter of SIEC-International. It is also an affiliate of the National Business Education Association. The chapter is a formally organized group of members with a professional connection related to business education for those who teach or are interested in business education.

Although U.S. Chapter was facing challenges and recognized those challenges, when this study was authorized during the spring 2020, its members had no idea of the changes that would take place over the next 10 months. The author conducted a formal research study to critically analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the organization. The 2019-2020 leadership team of the U.S. Chapter authorized the study. The International Office of SIEC-International approved the study, and the author received approval from her home institution's review board to conduct the formal study.

In consultation with several researchers who are members of both the U.S. Chapter and SIEC-International, the author designed a two-pronged approach to analyze the U.S. Chapter and the chapter members' perceptions about the U.S. Chapter and SIEC-International. The goal involved gathering information needed to begin the process of updating the strategic plan for the U.S. Chapter and provide information to SIEC-International as they update their strategic plan. On the recommendation of SIEC-International and the U.S. Chapter, it was determined that formalizing this study into a research project would provide validity to the results. This paper will document the process used and analyze the data received from a membership survey and a modified Delphi study of active leaders within the association.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to conduct an analysis of the internal and external challenges facing the professional association known as The International Society for Business Education – U.S. Chapter with the goal of identifying reasons why members continue to be a part of the association and use this information to update the strategic mission of the organization while addressing the internal and external challenges facing many professional associations.

Through this study, the U.S. Chapter, other SIEC National Chapters, SIEC-International, and other niche professional associations, can make informed decisions to update strategic plans and build associations that are responsive to members' needs. The U. S. Chapter had not studied its organization or membership perceptions in more than a generation. Anecdotal evidence through informal discussions with members, potential members, and former members indicated the perception of the association was that it was a "travel club" for retired business teachers. Although not the reality, this perception was pervasive and potentially resulted in rapidly declining membership within the association.

Literature Review

When conducting a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threat's analysis, known as SWOT, it is important to review the literature surrounding the topic being analyzed. This literature review will describe several aspects related to professional associations, including the importance of membership benefits, leadership development, and contributions to professional scholarship. In addition, a history of the U.S. Chapter of ISBE will be provided to inform the specifics of this study.

Importance of Membership Benefits

To be successful, a membership-based organization can only grow through increasing membership; however, membership in professional associations has been declining since its peak in the 1970s (Putnam, 2000). Most membership associations follow a social exchange theory where the cost of joining the organization is less than the value obtained from that membership. To be successful an organization should provide benefits that fall into three main categories: knowledge, intangible benefits, and tangible benefits where sharing knowledge and building professional networks are most valued (Adebo-Adelaja, Daramola, Patrick, & Breckon, 2019). Adding to the importance of professional associations, Farrington (2014) wrote about professional associations as serving "the discipline itself, for those individuals who identify with and practice within that discipline, and for the educational institutions which offer instruction and conduct research within that discipline" (p. 254 – 255). Other disciplines also write about the value of professional associations, as evidenced by the works of multiple researchers (DeLeskey, 2003; Ki & Wang, 2016; Goolsby & DuBois, 2017). The benefits listed vary by author; however, all have similar themes related to the validation of subject matter knowledge; the

direction to use the knowledge for the public good, ethical conduct, social connection/networking, and research around the profession.

Organizations can develop membership benefits by providing knowledge through curriculum, continuing education, and certificates. Providing value to student members not only builds the membership base, but it also grows the next generation of leaders. Adebo-Adelaja, Daramola, Patrick, and Breckon (2019) see student members potentially being more up-to-date and innovative. Embracing student members and respecting their needs can build loyalty to the association and develop future leadership for the group. This sentiment of fostering students to develop professional networks by finding a professional commonality was echoed by Mata, Latham, and Ransome (2010). They continued by stating the importance of faculty exposing students to professional association membership and benefits, specifically stating that educators “have a responsibility to mentor others and should encourage professional organization membership as a method of professional development” (p. 451) through a broad network of the unique individuals who attend professional conferences and bring personal experiences to share with other members of the profession. For the working professionals in the field, a professional association provided a shared commitment to the field through knowledge creation and the development of professionalism within the field (Farrington, 2014).

Leadership Development

Leadership development is another important membership benefit, not only for the association, but for the profession. Mata, Latham, and Ransome (2010) described participation in professional associations as an evolutionary process. Applying the evolutionary process from Mata, Latham, and Ransome, the business education professional associations can also grow; however, to do so, each meeting of the association needs to provide multiple opportunities for networking, knowledge attainment, collaboration, special conference deals, and more for new professionals.

Professional Associations Membership and Leadership Considerations

Knoke and Homson (1977) wrote, “An individual’s position in the family life cycle affects his or her involvement in voluntary associations” (p. 48). Within organizations where membership is voluntary, the choice to join an organization is difficult to analyze. This is one difficulty facing the U.S. Chapter where all membership is voluntary. According to Rotolo (2000), this is a dynamic process where an individual can move between member and nonmember status for individual reasons. Previous research studied individuals who join organizations or join an organization and remains a member for long periods of time. “Such designs tend to ignore when current memberships started and how long the membership have persisted; cross-sectional studies identify memberships that are active at the time of the observation and ignore what has transpired in the past” (Rotolo, 2000, p. 1134). This project seeks to capture why members belong the U.S. Chapter and their perceptions of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the chapter.

History of the International Society for Business Education—U.S. Chapter

The U.S. Chapter of ISBE formally organized in 1947 and joined the International Society which was founded in July 1901. When the U.S. Chapter formed, it listed nine purposes which have remained relatively unchanged since its inception. The purposes of the U.S. Chapter were listed in the original Constitution circa 1947 or 1948.

1. Translate into English, in full or in synopsis form, selected foreign language articles and reports published into the *International Review for Business Education*

2. Assist educators in other countries in developing a better understanding of business education in the United States and help American educators develop a better understanding of business education in other countries
3. Encourage cooperation between businessmen and business educators in the United States through their joint sponsorship of the Society
4. Encourage American business educators to take courses in business education in other countries and to participate in International Congresses on business education
5. Serve as host to the International Society when it holds courses or congresses in the United States
6. Assist business educators from other countries visiting in the United States in making plans and contacts for their visits so that their purposes may be realized to the best advantage
7. Arrange conferences on business education for visiting business educators whenever and wherever such conferences are desirable and feasible
8. Assist individual teachers and appropriate agencies in arranging the placement of business educators in "exchange" teaching positions in interested countries
9. Create a better understanding among businessmen and business educators of the place of the United States in international affairs in general and international business education in particular (Streeter & Grever, 1993, p. 1).

According to Streeter and Grever (1993), Dr. Herbert A. Tonne, during the first meeting of the Society, moved to amend the original constitution to allow the Society to become a permanent organization of SIEC-International. John A. Zellers, Vice-President of Remington Rand, Inc. was elected to serve as the chairman of the U.S. Division of ISBE and Dr. Herbert A. Tonne, Professor of Business Education at New York University, New York was elected to serve as the Vice-President.

During the 1948 meeting, the Society paid tribute to one of its most distinguished members, Dr. John Robert Gregg, "an international figure in education, in business, and in the arts, we [ISBE] were proud to have him as an active member and leader. To all of us he was an inspiration" (Streeter & Grever, 1993, p. 4). Also discussed was the possibility of becoming a division of the United Business Education Association (UBEA) with full divisional status. In late 1948 or early 1949, the Society became a division of UBEA, leading to a successful partnership. Over the next two decades, UBEA and the Society worked together to publish multiple items, including "the 1959 *Business Education Forum* that was devoted exclusively to the theme of 'International Business Education'" (Streeter & Grever, 1993, p. 8). In 1962, UBEA changed its name to NBEA: National Business Education Association. Throughout the years, members of the Society hosted multiple professional development sessions at the NBEA Annual Convention. The United Business Education Association became the National Business Education Association in 1962/1963.

In 1964, a *Handbook for NBEA Officers* was prepared and among the policies the purpose of the International Division was defined "to encourage better understanding and learning between the United States and the members of SIEC" (Streeter & Grever, 1993, p. 13). During this same meeting, the U.S. Chapter raised dues to \$3 for its members who were also members of NBEA and \$4 for non NBEA members. The reason was that the dues were to cover increased dues to SIEC International.

During the 1968 meeting, "Dr. Byrnside pointed out that the International Division of NBEA and the United States Chapter of ISBE are separate and distinct organizations, but that the officers and Board members are the same for both groups" (Streeter & Grever, 1993, p. 16), and it was documented that a constitution and by-laws existed for the U.S. Chapter, but not for the International Division of NBEA. This

distinction was documented and followed until 2020 when NBEA unilaterally declared that the the U.S. Chapter did not exist.

In 1965, the Society hosted the SIEC-International Conference for the first time in New York City, beginning a long history of hosting SIEC-International Conferences. The most recent conference hosted by the U.S. Chapter was 2012 in Denver, Colorado. International conferences are important to the society in that they are the primary source of revenue for the chapter. The membership dues collected by the U.S. Chapter are primarily used to cover SIEC-International membership. The U.S. Chapter supported chapter operations through the dues collected and used conference proceeds to provide membership benefits such as the newsletter and journal.

In 1973, during the U.S. Chapter business meeting, reorganization plans were discussed. Three possible outcomes were considered: To become part of the National Association for Business Teacher Educators, a part of NBEA, or to remain a separate organization. "No decision was reached" (Streeter & Grever, 1993, p. 18); however, in 1976, the U.S. Chapter became an affiliate with NBEA "and to be recognized as the international arm of NBEA" (Streeter & Grever, 1993, p. 20) giving the U.S. Chapter a voice at the NBEA Board and creating the requirement that all members of the U.S. Chapter would also be NBEA members. The finances of the U.S. Chapter were kept separate and reported to the chapter by NBEA who acted as treasure of the association each year with an income and expnese statement.

The Society voted in 1978 to contribute \$500 to the NBEA Building Fund and contributed another \$500 in 1981. At the 1987 business meeting of the Society, "the SIEC 1986 Organizing Committee for the Stanford International Conference placed a gift of \$10,000 into a trust fund at NBEA with the interest generated to be used for the support of the ISBE Newsletter" (Streeter & Grever, 1993, p. 31). Streeter & Grever (1993) also documented the appreciation NBEA held for SIEC-ISBE. "In 1988 a special room was dedicated to ISBE at the NBEA Headquarters building in Reston, Virginia. The plaque on the wall contains the following words: 'The National Business Education Association gratefully dedicates this room to the U.S. Chapter of the International Society for Business Education'" (Streeter & Grever, 1993, p. 32).

In 1992, the Friends of ISBE Fund was initiated and chaired by Frank O. Fairley. The fund was created because the Society was experiencing an operating fund deficit. All money collected from the Friends of ISBE were placed into a restricted account at NBEA to be used at the discretion of the Society. Also, in 1992, the U.S. Chapter raised membership dues from \$20 to \$30 to cover an increase in the SIEC-International dues. The dues did not increase again until 2017, when they increased to \$35. In 2020, the dues were increased to \$50.

In 1993, the chapter borrowed "\$2,500 from the Friends of ISBE Fund to correct the chapter deficit with NBEA. This money will be returned by June 30, 1994, through increased chapter dues" (Streeter & Grever, 1993, p. 38), confirming the separation between the funds of the U.S. Chapter and NBEA who was serving as the fiscal agent for the chapter. Further reinforcing the fiduciary nature of the relationship between the U.S. Chapter and NBEA, the minutes of the 1997 U.S. Chapter Business meeting state, "Helene Zimmerman reported that the [1996 SIEC Conference hosted by the U.S. Chapter] conference earned a profit of \$26,000. Based upon a previous agreement with SIEC required splitting either profits or losses, the U.S. Chapter share was \$14,446.63. Of the profit, \$3000 has been given to NBEA to be used for completion of the lesson plan project and the remainder (\$11,446.63) is to be used for special projects and publications for the U.S. Chapter (U.S. Chapter of ISBE, 1997). The chapter formed a committee to determine the special projects that would be funded from this gift to

the U.S. Chapter. It was determined that the funds would be restricted and used to begin the *Journal for Global Business Education* which debuted in 2001 and is still a publication of the U.S. Chapter today.

Between 1993 and 2017, minimal changes to the organizational structure were made. The chapter operating structure and relationship with NBEA remained unchanged. In 2017, the chapter president proposed separating the U.S. Chapter from the SIEC organization, a proposal that was determined to be against the U.S. Chapter Constitution during the membership meeting in 2018. The proposal failed during the business meeting and the executive board for the U.S. Chapter was reminded that any changes would have to follow the chapter's constitution¹.

As recently as February 28, 2019, the last year NBEA provided the required *Statement of Revenue, Expense and Changes in Fund Balance* report to the membership of the U.S. Chapter, the Chapter paid NBEA to act as its fiduciary agent by paying \$750 for legal, auditing, and accounting expenses and \$1,500 for NBEA Headquarters Administrative Services (U.S. Chapter of ISBE, 2019). Prior to the 2019 statement, the U.S. Chapter paid \$3.00 per member to NBEA for administrative services (U.S. Chapter of ISBE, 2018). In addition, the 2019 statement indicated that the Chapter had \$7,063.26 in the restricted fund for Friends of ISBE and an additional \$52,313.65, in the ISBE Trust and Reserved Funds, for a total of \$59,376.91 being held in trust for the benefit of the U.S. Chapter. The chapter membership did not receive a statement in 2020 from the NBEA Office.

Methodology

Theoretical Perspective

Loosely based on a theoretical perspective of functionalism, this study seeks to examine how professional associations are interdependent and contribute to the entire profession. Functionalism is rooted in the works of Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist and is based in how social order is possible and how a society maintains stability. Functionalism is a "theory based on the premise that all aspects of a society—institutions, roles, norms, etc.—serve a purpose and that all are indispensable for the long-term survival of the society" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2008). As part of functionalism, it is important that members of the society understand the interrelationships that are part of any society. Parsons (1937) expanded upon the work of Durkheim and examined how social systems consist of units that create the structures which contribute to the overall system through development and maintenance of that system. Using the basis of functionalism and through the examination of how members perceive the association and its functions, it becomes possible to see how the association can maintain or regain stability.

SWOT Methodology

A SWOT analysis is an analytical tool used to examine an organization. A well-conducted SWOT can help an organization build on its strengths and discover opportunities while working to minimize or even eliminate weaknesses and threats to the organization. According to Sarsby (2016), a SWOT analysis is used by most industries, including businesses, higher education, and volunteer organizations. He states, "when used well, SWOT is a useful tool to aid to your thinking" (p. 4) and can be used as an analysis or development tool. Within the SWOT framework, an organization should examine both internal and external forces and their impact. Strengths and weaknesses are internal forces on the organization while opportunities and threats are external to the organization.

¹ No citation available as the minutes for the 2018 Business Meeting were never provided to the membership. This statement can be verified by multiple people present at that meeting, including the author of this paper.

Research Questions

The research questions were developed to answer four questions. 1) What do members perceive to be the major strengths of the U.S. Chapter? 2) What do members perceive to be the major weaknesses (challenges) of the U.S. Chapter? 3) What do members perceive to be biggest opportunities of the U.S. Chapter? 4) What do members perceive to be the biggest threats of the U.S. Chapter?

To determine the U.S. Chapter membership perceptions of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the association, a survey was deployed to the entire membership. The survey questions were proposed by a committee of U.S. Chapter members in consultation with the international office of SIEC-ISBE to address the informational needs of both the U.S. Chapter and the International Office. The survey used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions to determine if the members knew about various benefits of the association, if they utilized the available benefits, and their perceptions of the value of the various benefits. Using qualitative questions, the survey questions delved into the perceptions of the membership related to the strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats of the U.S. Chapter.

Survey research is beneficial to gather perceptions from those who participate and is a standard methodology to gather data from membership of organizations. The goal of the survey was to gain a contextualized real-world picture about the knowledge, behaviors, and shared beliefs of a specific group of people.

After analyzing the results of the survey, the researcher, independent of the organization, determined that additional information was required to form a complete picture of the organizational situation. To gain more information, a modified Delphi Study was conducted. The use of a Delphi study methodology is useful when there is not a known answer. Typically, a Delphi is used for decision-making or forecasting, and is a preferred method of research when interviewing a single subject could lead to bias. The experts selected to participate in the Delphi were leaders within the U.S. Chapter and included leaders who were active at the international level and leaders who had only participated in activities within the U.S. Chapter. All participants of the Delphi had served as a board member of the U.S. Chapter within the last 15 years and were currently active within the organization.

Limitations

The study is limited to the small population of the U.S. Chapter of ISBE and generalizations outside of this group should not be attempted. Due to the small population of the association membership, difficulties in finding significant relationships from the data exist. Statistical analysis is not possible, and the results will rely upon the qualitative responses provided by the participants in the study. Additionally, the study relies upon self-reported data and perceptions. The information presented cannot be independently verified; therefore, potential bias of the participants may be present. Specifically, selective recall of the events and exaggeration may be present within the data.

As with any Delphi study, the limitation exists for researcher bias in the interpretation of the qualitative data from each round. To minimize this risk, the researcher worked with an independent third party who was not associated with the U.S. Chapter, SIEC-International, or NBEA. The independent researcher is an experienced qualitative researcher who has conducted multiple Delphi Studies.

Additionally, during the Fall 2020, an announcement was made by NBEA that the organization would be severing ties with SIEC-International and eliminating the U.S. Chapter of ISBE on December 31, 2020. The Friends of ISBE immediately began working to preserve the U.S. Chapter. On January 1, 2021, SIEC-USA, a chapter of SIEC-International, was launched.

Findings

Based upon the two-pronged approach to data collection, the findings will be divided into two sections, survey results and Delphi results.

Survey Results

This study used a two-pronged approach to collect data. In Phase One, a survey was sent to all members using Constant Contact. The membership numbered 305 on March 31, 2020. Of this number 20% had invalid email addresses in the system. Of the remaining 244 members, 64 returned the survey, with two rejecting the informed consent. The response rate was 26%. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix A. The survey collected perceptions on both the U.S. Chapter and SIEC-International; however, the focus of this paper is on the U.S. Chapter. Results related to SIEC-International will only be provided where context is necessary.

When asked if the U.S. Chapter was meeting its mission, 64% (40) of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the U.S. Chapter was meeting its mission while 23% (14) responded that the chapter was not meeting its mission. By contrast, SIEC-International was perceived by 79% (49) of the respondents as meeting its mission, while only 11% (7) disagreed that SIEC-International was not meeting its mission, indicating that the U.S. Chapter was not meeting its mission at the same level as SIEC-International.

When asked about the importance of the US Chapter's goal of providing a vital link between international business and education, over 95% (59) of the respondents saw this as moderately to extremely important.

Survey responses related to strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the U.S. Chapter identified in the survey were also identified by the Panel of Experts and listed as part of the rankings in the Discussion Section.

Delphi Results

Phase Two of the project was a modified Delphi Study. The researcher determined *a priori* that the Delphi would be performed in 3 – 4 rounds. Members of the 2019 – 2020 U.S. Chapter Leadership and members who had attended multiple international conferences in the last five years were selected to be the panel of experts. Twelve people participated in the Delphi Rounds. Again, questions were asked about SIEC-International; however, only the results related to the U.S. Chapter will be detailed in this paper.

Delphi Round 1. Round 1 Delphi Questions:

- Q1: What do you see as the greatest strengths of SIEC-ISBE International?
- Q2: What do you see as the greatest challenges facing SIEC-ISBE International?
- Q3: What do you see as the greatest opportunities of SIEC-ISBE International?
- Q4: What do you see as the greatest threats facing SIEC-ISBE International?
- Q5: What do you see as the greatest strengths of the U.S. Chapter?

- Q6: What do you see as the greatest challenges facing the U.S. Chapter?
 Q7: What do you see as the greatest opportunities facing the U.S. Chapter?
 Q8: What do you see as the greatest threats facing the U.S. Chapter?

In Round 1 data analysis, each response was analyzed using thematic coding. Due to the small size of the expert panel, the coding was done manually by the researcher and an independent third party. The themes were created and presented to the respondents in Round 2 for ranking.

Delphi Round 2. In Round 2, the panel of experts were asked to rank the various strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Strengths. Related to the strengths of the U.S. Chapter, the panel of experts was asked to rank each of the items identified from strongest to weakest. All items on the list had to be ranked. There could be no ties between items. Sigma Rank was used to place the themes into order. Based upon the rankings, the panel of experts determined that networking was the greatest strength of the U.S. Chapter while the history of the organization and funds from past conferences were the least important strengths of the chapter. See Table 1 for the findings related to the strengths of the U.S. Chapter.

Table 1
Sigma Rankings Related to the Strengths of the U.S. Chapter

Strengths of the U.S. Chapter	Sigma Rank Score
Opportunity to network with others	32
Opportunity to provide business curriculum related to international business	44
Size and diversity of the US Membership related to geographical, cultural, expertise, and teaching level	50
Opportunity to attend an international conference	52
Ability to access cultural experiences	52
Past Leadership who continues to be involved at the international level	56
Loyalty of the membership	67
Desire of members and leadership to grow the organization	73
History of the organization	87
Funds earned from past international conferences that can be used to grow the organization	92

Following the ranking question, the panel of experts was asked if any of the items should be removed from the list. The panelists most frequently requested that the history of the organization be removed, with four requesting its removal. Other items that were suggested for removal included the loyalty of the membership, the funds to grow the organization, and past leadership, each item receiving one request for removal.

In addition, the panelists were asked if any items should be added to the list. The panelists requested that the ability to create global learning communities, the opportunity to advance business education across intercultural and global venues, the deep appreciation from international conference attendance, and the talents of the membership should be added. Each item was listed once; therefore, no additional items were added to the rankings list for Round 3.

The survey responses and the Delphi responses were aligned. From the survey of members, qualitative responses were coded thematically. Related to strengths, the common theme was networking and opportunities to enhance the classroom experience. Survey responses include comments such as:

- “SIEC has provided me with the opportunity to meet teachers from around the world.”
- “Through the international conference, I have learned how teachers in other countries inspire students.”
- “I have made connections with others who can serve as guest speakers in my classes.”

Challenges. When asked about the challenges facing the U.S. Chapter, the panelists were again asked to rank the items identified as themes from Round 1. Respondents were asked to rank the items from the most challenging to the least challenging. Table 2 provides the ranking for the challenges facing the U.S. Chapter. As the table indicates, two main challenges face the U.S. Chapter: dwindling membership and the relationship with NBEA.

Table 2
Sigma Rankings Related to the Challenges Facing the U.S. Chapter

Challenges facing the U.S. Chapter	Sigma Rank Score
Dwindling membership due to lack of younger members joining and older members retiring	46
The relationship with NBEA	47
General lack of understanding regarding the mission of the US Chapter from the membership	51
Lack of "new blood" in leadership who are also active at the international level	51
General lack of understanding regarding the mission of the US Chapter from the current leadership	56
Not being able to communicate directly with membership. All communications must go through NBEA.	56
Lack of understanding of the current leadership about the relationship with SIEC-ISBE International	57
Current leadership who has never attended an international conference	60
Poorly designed and maintained website	71

Once again, the respondents were asked what they would have removed from the list. Interestingly when considering the other responses, only one item was listed by one person to be removed. This respondent asked to have the relationship with NBEA removed stating, “NBEA has been very helpful to our chapter over the years. The implication is there is a poor relationship between the U.S. Chapter and NBEA.”

Items that were suggested to be added to the list included the strained triangular relationship between the U.S. Chapter, SIEC-International, and NBEA; lack of pedagogical resource sharing, external threats such as budgets and COVID; and the requirement that the U.S. Chapter must pay dues to SIEC-International. Each suggestion was made by only one person; therefore, no changes to the list were made for Round 3.

The biggest challenges identified in the survey results a lack of resources or benefits for K-12 teachers. It is interesting to note that the Delphi study revealed the challenge of dwindling membership; however, the leaders did not link the membership issue to lack of benefit for K-12 teachers.

Opportunities. The opportunities facing the U.S. Chapter were provided for the respondents to rank. Again, they were asked to rank the items as the most important opportunity to the least important opportunity. Table 3 details the rankings. The greatest opportunity for the chapter was identified as the engaged members who are active at the international level who want to build networking opportunities.

Table 3

Sigma Rankings Related to the Opportunities Facing the U.S. Chapter

Opportunities for the U.S. Chapter	Sigma Rank Score
Engaged members who are active at the international level who want to build networking opportunities	21
A chance to allow for student memberships	42
The relevance and dynamic nature of International Business	45
The desire of some US members to host an international conference	53
Members who want to have access to interaction that can be facilitated through social media and other communication tools	54
The new NBEA platform that allows an opportunity to share resources with a larger audience	54
A chance to "start over" and develop a new "normal"	60
The opportunity to develop new marketing materials	67

Requested for removal from the list included the NBEA Platform for sharing resources and a chance to start over. Additional opportunities that were requested to be added to the list was the opportunity to attend an international conference, the chance to create an interactive website, the opportunity for teachers to participate with international colleagues, the ability to join SIEC-International without being a member of NBEA, and the sharing of knowledge through SIEC-International.

From the survey responses, the opportunities presented included the potential to increase participation of K-12 teachers through networking with teachers in other countries and connections to university and other post-secondary teachers. Additional opportunities shared included the opportunity to create and share lesson plans that incorporate a global perspective.

Threats. The final question involved the threats to the U.S. Chapter. Following the same format, the respondents were asked to rank the threats from the most serious to the least serious for the chapter. Table 4 shows the threats as ranked by the respondents. As can be seen from the rankings, the fear that NBEA would take over the chapter administration and control of the U.S. Chapter's funds was the most critical threat to the chapter, followed by the attitude of NBEA and the 2019 – 2020 U.S. Chapter Leadership's negative attitude towards SIEC-International. The overwhelming consensus of the respondents related to NBEA, in some way, being the biggest threat to the chapter.

Table 4

Sigma Rankings Related to the Threats Facing the U.S. Chapter

Threats to the U.S. Chapter	Sigma Ranking Score
NBEA has taken over the administration of the chapter and control of the funds	56
NBEA and the Current Leadership of US Chapter has a negative attitude toward SIEC-ISBE International that has been expressed openly during meetings and in messages to current board	67
Fewer members	68
NBEA controlling the US Chapter funds and not allowing the chapter to expend funds per the US Chapter Constitution	70
NBEA believing that it has the ability to dissolve the US Chapter	71
The requirement to join NBEA in order to be a member of the US Chapter of SIEC-ISBE International	73
All communications must go through NBEA. SIEC-ISBE cannot contact the US Chapter membership directly.	74
Lack of participation and volunteers to grow resources in the organization	89
Group think of current leadership	93
Opposition to change by current and former members	96
Few members attending the US Chapter meetings and the International Conference	97
Younger teachers are not joining professional organizations, including US Chapter	98
Technology allows non-members to access the benefits at no charge	113
Unprofessional website	114
COVID-19	141

When asked what should be removed, only COVID-19 was on the list. No additions were requested for the list. The comments that were made revolved around the need to collapse all items related to NBEA into one item. Additionally, collapsing all membership related items into one category was made multiple times. The researcher shared the rankings at the granular level for Round 3 for consistency between the categories.

From the survey responses, the threats revolved around the feat that NBEA would do something to damage the U.S. Chapter. Another threat identified was the lack of information flowing through NBEA from the International Office. The comments came from two distinct perspectives. Of those who responded with text feedback, almost one-half the respondents stated the threat as a lack of information being sent to members reducing the value of joining the organization. The other half responded that the threat was the NBEA was not forwarding the information that they knew was available because it was on the international website.

Delphi Round 3. The researcher determined that based upon the consensus from Round 2, the Delphi would consist of three rounds. To prepare for Round 3, the results from the Sigma Rankings for each of the four areas of the SWOT were placed into ranking tiers by finding natural breaks in the Sigma Rank Scores.

Strengths. The strengths were placed into four tiers as shown in Table 5. Respondents were asked if they agreed with the top two strengths identified in Round 2. All 12 respondents agreed that the first two strengths were correct in the order listed.

In Tier 2, the ranking changed with the opportunity to attend an international conference ranked higher than the ability to access cultural experiences and the size and diversity of the U.S. Chapter being the new order.

From Tier 3, the members were asked if any of the remaining strengths were critical strengths of the U.S. Chapter. Only past leadership’s continued involvement received more than one vote.

All of Tier 4 were minimal strengths of the U.S. Chapter and removed from the overall ranking of chapter strengths. Also included in Table 5 are the final rankings as determined by the Panel of Experts who completed the Delphi questionnaire.

Table 5
Strengths of the U.S. Chapter—Tier and New Rankings

Strengths of the U.S. Chapter	Sigma Rank Score from Round 2	Tier	Updated Ranking
Opportunity to network with others	32	1	1
Opportunity to provide business curriculum related to international business	44	1	2
Size and diversity of the US Membership related to geographical, cultural, expertise, and teaching level	50	2	5
Opportunity to attend an international conference	52	2	3
Ability to access cultural experiences	52	2	4
Past Leadership who continues to be involved at the international level	56	3	6
Loyalty of the membership	67	3	
Desire of members and leadership to grow the organization	73	3	
History of the organization	87	4	
Funds earned from past international conferences that can be used to grow the organization	92	4	

Challenges. For challenges facing the U.S. Chapter, four tiers were evident by the Sigma Rankings. Table 6 shows the tiers and updated rankings after the Delphi Round 3.

During the third round, the most critical challenge for the U.S. Chapter was determined to be the relationship with NBEA. The respondents broke the tie in Tier 2 by determining the lack of “new blood” in leadership who are also active at the international level was the third most critical challenge. The respondents were asked to rank all items in Tier 3 again. Based upon the responses, the rankings in Tier 3 changed with the respondents identifying current leadership’s lack of participation at the international level a greater challenge than the others. Only the website was removed as a challenge as the respondents noted that a webmaster could be hired to update the website.

Table 6
Challenges of the U.S. Chapter—Tier and New Rankings

Challenges facing the U.S. Chapter	Sigma Rank Score from Round 2	Tier	Updated Ranking
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Dwindling membership due to lack of younger members joining and older members retiring	46	1	2
The relationship with NBEA	47	1	1
General lack of understanding regarding the mission of the US Chapter from the membership	51	2	4
Lack of "new blood" in leadership who are also active at the international level	51	2	3
General lack of understanding regarding the mission of the US Chapter from the current leadership	56	3	6
Not being able to communicate directly with membership. All communications must go through NBEA.	56	3	7
Lack of understanding of the current leadership about the relationship with SIEC-ISBE International	57	3	8
Current leadership who has never attended an international conference	60	3	5
Poorly designed and maintained website	71	4	

Opportunities. When examining the opportunities for the U.S. Chapter, all twelve respondents agreed that engaged members are the most important opportunity for the organization; however, they switched the rankings of the items in Tier 2 by indicating the relevance and dynamic nature of international business is more important as an opportunity than allowing student membership into the chapter. In Tier 3, only the membership desire for interaction was listed as an important opportunity. One respondent wrote, “Communication to those who have specific interests in international business is often difficult as it often has to go through the ‘gatekeeper’ officer-in-charge of the regional or national organization.” The other items, although still opportunities for the chapter were not considered vital to the success of the organization. Table 7 shows the tiers and the updated rankings related to the opportunities that are available to the U.S. Chapter.

Table 7
Opportunities for the U.S. Chapter—Tier and New Rankings

Opportunities for the U.S. Chapter	Sigma Rank Score from Round 2	Tier	Updated Ranking
Engaged members who are active at the international level who want to build networking opportunities	21	1	1
A chance to allow for student memberships	42	2	3
The relevance and dynamic nature of International Business	45	2	2
The desire of some US members to host an international conference	53	3	
Members who want to have access to interaction that can be facilitated through social media and other communication tools	54	3	4
The new NBEA platform that allows an opportunity to share resources with a larger audience	54	3	
A chance to "start over" and develop a new "normal"	60	4	
The opportunity to develop new marketing materials	67	4	

Threats. When discussing the threats to the U.S. Chapter, the respondents in Round 2 provided more granular responses; however, further review of the themes and the comments from the Panel of Experts

in Round 2 showed that the categories could be collapsed. In Round 3, although provided the granular items, the Panel of Experts commented again in the need to collapse the items into overarching themes with NBEA being listed as the main threat to the survival of the U.S. Chapter and all items ranked equally as the number one threat for the chapter, followed by decreasing membership as the second most important threat to the chapter. The third ranked threat identified by the respondents was the lack of volunteers to help grow the organization. Table 8 provides the updated rankings and the tiers for each response from Round 2.

Table 8
Threats facing the U.S. Chapter—Tier and New Rankings

Threats to the U.S. Chapter	Sigma Rank Score from Round 2	Tier	Updated Ranking
NBEA has taken over the administration of the chapter and control of the funds	56	1	1
NBEA and the Current Leadership of US Chapter has a negative attitude toward SIEC-ISBE International that has been expressed openly during meetings and in messages to current board	67	2	1
Fewer members	68	2	2
NBEA controlling the US Chapter funds and not allowing the chapter to expend funds per the US Chapter Constitution	70	2	1
NBEA believing that it has the ability to dissolve the US Chapter	71	2	1
The requirement to join NBEA in order to be a member of the US Chapter of SIEC-ISBE International	73	2	1
All communications must go through NBEA. SIEC-ISBE cannot contact the US Chapter membership directly.	74	2	1
Lack of participation and volunteers to grow resources in the organization	89	3	3
Group think of current leadership	93	3	
Opposition to change by current and former members	96	3	
Few members attending the US Chapter meetings and the International Conference	97	3	
Younger teachers are not joining professional organizations, including US Chapter	98	3	2
Technology allows non-members to access the benefits at no charge	113	4	
Unprofessional website	114	4	
COVID-19	141	5	

It is important to note that the researcher was prepared to complete one additional round related to threats of the U.S. Chapter; however, by the time Round 3 was completed, the NBEA Executive Board was in discussions to update the strategic plan of the NBEA Organization. Conducting a Round 4 related to threats potentially could have resulted in biased responses. Two members on the Panel of Experts were contacted by NBEA to inform them of the discussions underway and one panel member served on the NBEA Executive Board. The researcher was also contacted by NBEA about the discussions. As noted previously, in late fall 2020, NBEA announced that the new strategic plan would eliminate the U.S. Chapter of ISBE and replace it with a council, effectively confirming the Panel of Expert’s opinion that NBEA was the greatest threat to the U.S. Chapter.

Bringing it Together

Conducting a SWOT analysis is only part of the process. To learn from a SWOT, an organization must work through each strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat. When considering strengths and weaknesses, the organization is analyzing internal factors. External factors make up the threats and opportunities for an organization. The role of the researcher in this situation is to provide the analysis of the SWOT to the leadership of the organization and then allow the organization to develop a strategic plan with goals, objectives, and tactics to meet the needs of the organization by building upon the strengths, turning weaknesses into strengths, incorporating the opportunities into the plans to become potential strengths, and minimizing the threats.

Through the research process multiple strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges were identified for the U.S. Chapter of the International Society for Business Education. Table 9 documents the identified factors impacting the association.

Table 9
Listing of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Networking with others Ability to provide curriculum to business teachers Conference attendance Cultural exchanges/experiences Diversity of the U.S. membership base Engaged past leaders Publication opportunities Engaged members who want to see the organization grow Members who are eager to participate in activities The ability to link with an international organization 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for leadership development Lack of understanding of the mission of the organization Lack of knowledge that the organization exists Little or no focus on K-12 teachers Lack of member participation Lack of current leadership Lack of communication to members
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pervasiveness of international business in all business endeavors Inviting students to join the organization Hosting an international conference to expose U.S. based teachers who can't travel to international connections Partnerships with businesses Ability to communicate directly with members without going through an intermediary (NBEA) Ability to develop new and valuable membership benefits 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relationship with NBEA Decreasing membership Free resources available online and through social media channels Teacher education programs closing K-12 teachers entering the profession via alternative licensure

Next Steps for SIEC-USA

Based upon the membership survey, members identified benefits that SIEC-USA should explore. These benefits can be categorized into themes such as communication, scholarship, and knowledge which are directly linked to the information presented in the literature review; specifically, to be successful an organization should provide benefits that fall into three main categories: knowledge, intangible benefits, and tangible benefits. Sharing knowledge and building professional networks are most valued (Adebo-Adelaja, Daramola, Patrick, & Breckon, 2019). To be successful, SIEC-USA needs to build a robust knowledge base that can be accessed by all members from K-12 teachers to post-secondary teachers, university professors, and the business community. The chapter should also build upon its strengths of successful conferences, diverse membership, engaged leaders and members, and the unique ability to network with teachers across the globe in order to provide both tangible and intangible membership benefits.

Additionally, the U.S. Chapter will benefit from building membership through the model shown in Figure 1. Specifically, the chapter needs to seek ambassadors who can build membership at a local level. By using the loyalty and passion of the current members, the association should recruit membership locally. For example, a member can gift an institutional membership to their colleagues or provide scholarships for students who wish to be members. The next step is to hold local or regional meetings where the new members can network with each other and long-term members. Through this mentorship, the mentors can encourage the dissemination of research and scholarship. Through a systematic membership campaign, the group should see growth and success. The association can provide the opportunities for participation in meetings, both in-person and virtually, that leads to the ability to mentor and provide publication opportunities for both the university scholars and the classroom teachers. Senior members can provide guidance and mentorship to new scholars and teachers while learning innovative teaching pedagogies from the new professionals. By offering more opportunities for both personal and professional growth through collaboration, the association may see improved membership participation, leading to organic growth in the leadership potential for all.

Figure 1

The Evolutionary Process of New Members for Organizational Success



Note: Figure adapted from Mata, Latham, & Ransome, 2010

The SIEC-USA membership requested monthly communication that could include classroom related information, teaching resources, or virtual conferences. They also requested opportunities for collaboration and publishing opportunities or the ability to read the published works of the members to gain access to resources. A few very specific requests included the need for teaching resources related to diversity and inclusion, opportunities to create projects with colleagues in other countries, and opportunities to earn scholarships to travel to the international conference.

For SIEC-USA, the next step is to develop a strategic plan based upon the information presented in this paper while also creating opportunities for collaboration, providing knowledge to members, and developing the future leaders of the organization.

It will be important for SIEC-USA to conduct future research related to this study by conducting a membership survey early in 2022 to determine if the new strategic plan is working. In addition, other niche organizations can look to this project to conduct a SWOT for their own associations.

The future for SIEC-USA is now in the hands of the association without interference from any outside organization. Through this SWOT analysis, the leaders of SIEC-USA have a roadmap of how to develop a strategic plan that will inform the tactics necessary to build a strong and viable association.

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