Measuring Research Accomplishments

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Why do so many people in accounting – in practice and in academe – think that accounting research is in trouble? What are the symptoms of this trouble? What are its causes? What can we do about it? I believe that some of these concerns are exaggerated. But we do have real problems. There exist simple solutions to these problems, and with some hard work, they can be implemented.

What are these symptoms of trouble in accounting research? First, accounting research should lead practice. Instead, it often follows. Unlike doctors and lawyers, accountants typically do not look to researchers, or research journals, for solutions to their problems. Arrival of each issue of the New England Journal of Medicine is awaited, and its reports are discussed, even outside the medical profession. Can we say something similar about our own publications? Doctors are galvanized into action to fight AIDS. Why does the savings and loan crisis receive so little attention from researchers? Second, there is little pressing demand for the expertise of accounting researchers from accountants, industry, or the regulators and government. Third, in a growing number of MBA programs at research universities, fewer students major in accounting, and teaching of accounting is becoming a service activity. An increasing proportion of freshman and sophomore accounting courses are taught in junior colleges. Can accounting research in universities remain unaffected by this process?