

REVIEW OF THE B.S. IN ACCOUNTANCY

Classification of Instruction Programs (CIP) Code: 52.0301
Accounting

Review Outcome: The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the B.S. in Accountancy program to be in Good Standing.

The Academic Planning Committee recognizes that many of the efforts and activities that led to the development of the self-study report were accomplished during the time period coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee thanks the program for a comprehensive and critical self-study report that included input from multiple stakeholders. The curricula of the B.S. in Accountancy and the Integrated B.S./M.P.A. in Accountancy programs overlap considerably, particularly during the first three years of both programs. Nearly two thirds of undergraduate students in the Department of Accounting enroll in the B.S. in Accountancy program and select one of five sequences (Accounting Business Analytics, Accountancy Information Systems, Accountancy Business Information Systems, Career Specialty, and Financial Accounting). Most students opt for the Financial Accounting sequence, as it is intended to prepare students for the Uniform Certified Public Accountant (CPA) Examination. However, because the B.S. in Accountancy program requires 120 credit hours for graduation, the program does not automatically provide the educational requirements necessary to sit for the CPA exam in Illinois (Illinois requires at least 150 credit hours). It is common for students in the B.S. in Accountancy program to double major in finance to obtain the 30 additional credit hours necessary to sit for the exam.

The committee commends the program faculty for their efforts to support the success of their students. We note that the analysis of enrollments during the review period shows a decreasing trend that mirrors those seen at other institutions within the state and nationally. The committee supports faculty efforts to explore further expansion of program enrollment during the next program review cycle through the use of several unique recruitment strategies identified in the self-study report that the program has begun using (e.g., scholarships from donors, increased communication with community colleges, student admissions ambassadors). We further commend program faculty for the development of the new sequence in Accounting Business Analytics. The committee commends the program for the support of many registered student organizations (RSOs), including the National Association of Black Accountants (NABA) and the newly developed Accounting and Financial Women's Alliance (AFWA). The committee commends faculty efforts that have reduced average time-to-degree, including efforts to improve tutoring for students to reinforce basic subject content before completing more advanced courses and to develop a condensed course designed to help students complete their internships during the industry's busiest time. We also note that the employment and salary data indicate strong outcomes for program graduates.

The committee commends the program for the creative and varied curricular options it provides students to meet their educational and career goals, including the option to transfer into and out of the Integrated B.S./M.P.A. in Accountancy program, work toward a second major to meet the prerequisites for the CPA exam, and enroll in one of several sequences specially designed for students not interested in pursuing certification. We further commend the program faculty for their work to create the new sequences and to update the courses within the curriculum to integrate data analytics and information systems content in response to feedback from the program's specialized accreditor and to changes in the employment sector. The committee recognizes the program for maintaining and expanding industry partnerships for the benefit of the program, its students, and its faculty. We further commend the Department of Accounting and the College of Business on their continued accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business-International (AACSB) and wish them well for their reaccreditation efforts in fall 2021.

The committee commends the program faculty on the development, implementation, and revision of their plan for the assessment of student learning outcomes. The assessment plan provides for collecting evidence of student performance, evaluating this evidence with rubrics, and consulting with the program advisory board in curricular and program review based on this evidence. The self-study report provides ample evidence that evaluation and assessment findings continue to be used by faculty to design and implement program modifications.

The committee notes the scholarly contributions of the Accountancy faculty members. Faculty members are active researchers who publish in national and international peer-reviewed journals.

Follow-up Reports.

Comparator and Aspirational Programs. The committee has included analyses of comparator and aspirational programs in the self-study report guidelines to provide faculty with opportunities to consider the niche their program has among its peers and to gather information for program planning. The committee would like the program to revisit these two sections of the self-study. The comparator analysis used programs defined by the College's accrediting body which only included one in-state institution. Furthermore, the analyses were primarily descriptive, without providing insights gained from the comparisons. Although the faculty did discuss aspirational initiatives, the committee determined that the aspirational analysis was underdeveloped. The committee asks the faculty to address this through an expanded analysis of aspirational programs that could help develop strategies for addressing the initiatives faculty has identified. Accordingly, the committee asks faculty to revisit their discussions of comparator and aspirational institutions and to summarize the findings of those discussions in a report submitted to the Office of the Provost by May 15, 2022.

Recommendations.

The Academic Planning Committee thanks faculty and staff of the B.S. in Accountancy program for the opportunity to provide input regarding the program at Illinois State University through consideration of the submitted self-study report. The following committee recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle are provided in a spirit of collaboration with program faculty and staff. In the next program review self-study report, tentatively due October 1, 2028, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

Continue to monitor enrollment trends and refine the plan for recruitment and enrollment growth. The committee encourages faculty to continue to actively evaluate the program's recruitment plans to ensure that Illinois State University is meeting the needs of both the program and the State. The committee supports faculty efforts to explore further expansion of program enrollment. The committee encourages the program to continue to develop and implement a plan for student recruitment, including in the plan strategies for increasing enrollment by students from gender, racial, and ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in the program and discipline.

Continue to focus on diversity, inclusion, and equity. Although the committee recognizes the efforts to increase the international diversity of students within the program, the committee encourages the program to continue to pursue its goals related to further developing a diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment that effectively supports students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds. We encourage the program to continue refining and implementing their plans for recruiting students (as mentioned above) but also for faculty recruitment from gender, racial, and ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in the program and discipline. We encourage the program faculty to examine ways to infuse diversity, equity, and inclusion into the curriculum

Continue to focus on student success and retention. The committee recommends that the program faculty develop a plan for student success. The plan should be used to increase transparency and communication around "student success" by defining the program's goals for, assessment of, and actions towards supporting students enrolled in the program. The plan may provide an overarching structure for other plans (e.g., retention, curriculum, alumni engagement). The committee recommends that the program continue monitoring student retention, particularly of students from traditionally underrepresented groups. The committee encourages the program to continue developing opportunities for student scholarship and creative activities. The committee further recommends that the program faculty develop a system to collect and analyze data related to students exiting the program to identify challenges related to retention. The committee notes the program's concerns regarding extremely high advisor loads. We support the efforts to develop avenues designed to reduce these loads. We also recommend that the College Advisement Center review their metrics for advising effectiveness, looking beyond student outcomes exclusively. We suggest that looking to aspirational institutions may provide valuable insights for the development of action items for this plan.

Complete a review and evaluation of the changes to the curriculum. The committee encourages faculty to review and revise the different sequences to ensure that students can successfully identify which sequence is most appropriate for their intended career outcome. The committee notes that the pass rates on the CPA exam are below national and comparator averages. We recommend that the program faculty continue to explore developing further

supports designed to increase these rates. Given the high incidence of students with double majors, we recommend that an analysis examines which paired majors lead to higher CPA exam success. The committee also recommends exploring ways to communicate career opportunities associated with the Certified Management Accountant (CMA) license, especially for those students not immediately pursuing the 150 hours required for the CPA license.

Continue implementing and refining the student learning outcomes assessment plan. The committee encourages faculty to continue its implementation of the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program during the next program review cycle, to continue to utilize information gathered through plan implementation to make program revisions as necessary, and to document how that has been done. The committee encourages faculty to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in assessing student learning to identify any modifications to the plan faculty may deem necessary.

Continue the collaborative work with Milner Library. The committee recommends that the program work with the subject liaison librarian to examine and evaluate the library's journals and monograph collection related to accountancy to aid in both the selection and deselection process of these sources. Given recent journal cancellations and expected increases in distance and hybrid courses, we encourage the Department and Library to further collaborate to increase awareness of alternative access to resources, such as Interlibrary Loan and I-Share lending, among faculty and students. We also recommend that the program work with the subject liaison librarian to develop a tiered approach for information fluency learning outcomes for the Department, align those outcomes to the curricula, and integrate those outcomes into the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program.

Continue to refine a plan for alumni tracking and engagement. Although program faculty have been successful at increasing scholarships through donations from alumni, the committee encourages the faculty to continue to refine their plan for tracking program alumni and use this system to enhance alumni networking. These activities may become even more important in the years ahead as the program's alumni become more diverse. The program could benefit from increased involvement of its alumni in providing input regarding the program and in mentoring students.