

Accounting Scholars Program Capstone Experience

Objective: Provide upper-division accounting students an opportunity to apply knowledge obtained across prior accounting courses and engage in accounting-based research to solve contemporary accounting problems.

Honors program integration: The capstone experience will be implemented as a case/research competition. The capstone experience will be completed by students in their senior year and will be completed solely outside of class.

Case/Research: Faculty advisors will select a number of accounting cases and/or research topics for each competition that focus on contemporary accounting issues. Accounting education journals and Big4 accounting firm resources (e.g., Trueblood cases from Deloitte) will be used as a source for cases. Cases are typically based on real world problems faced by accountants and auditors that do not have an obvious answer (or have multiple answers and interpretations). Many times, the information provided in these cases is incomplete requiring extensive research and critical thinking. Current deliberations at the FASB and IASB (and related exposure drafts) will be used to identify controversial accounting issues under debate. By their nature, these issues represent questions about how to account for items that have not yet been answered. As such, the student must be able to develop a thorough understanding and critically analyze both sides of the issue. In both situations, the student is required to identify the options, research the issues, evaluate the options, decide on the appropriate course of action, and persuade the audience.

Competition description: Students will work in groups of five (maximum groups per semester will be ten). The case competition will occur over a week-long period late in the semester. On Thursday evening, all group members will attend an orientation meeting where the competition rules and timing will be discussed. Each group will also be provided a case/topic on which to work over the weekend. Each group must submit one write-up to the faculty advisors by 8:00 am on Monday. The write-up should be in the form of a research paper. On Friday afternoon, the student groups will present their findings to one of two evaluation committees in a fifteen-minute competition. The evaluators will then have fifteen minutes to ask questions. The presentations will be videotaped for later review. Each evaluation committee will consist of one of the two faculty advisors, two other accounting faculty members, and two accounting professionals from local accounting firms and business. After completion of the presentations, the two evaluation committees will meet, review videos as necessary, and select a winner. The winner will then be announced at a reception that evening.

Student evaluation: The evaluation will include a team and individual aspect. Each student will be expected to participate and answer questions in the group presentation. Each student will be required to submit self and peer evaluations of performance.

Faculty advisors: The capstone experience will be supervised by professors with extensive experience with cases and similar material.