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make accounting more appealing to students.

Jason Bramwell • May. 18, 2023



One of the biggest questions currently being asked by many throughout the accounting profession is, “How can we make accounting more appealing to students?” There’s plenty of accounting jobs out there that need to be filled—**more than 300,000 accountants and auditors** have left the profession in the past few years. But **modest starting salaries, horrible work/life balance** (especially in public accounting), and time-consuming and **strict requirements to obtain CPA licensure** have resulted in declining student interest in accounting careers—thus creating a talent shortage in the profession.

But the AICPA said today it has a framework in place to fill that CPA pipeline back up.

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“Building the CPA pipeline requires a united effort from all stakeholders tied to the profession,” Susan Coffey, CPA, CGMA, the AICPA’s CEO of public accounting, said in a press release. “We need to work together to raise awareness about the rewarding work we do, broaden the range of talent we draw from, and address stumbling blocks that derail too many prospective CPA candidates. As the largest national body for the accounting profession, the AICPA is uniquely positioned to channel ideas into action and mobilize efforts in a coordinated way to achieve success. Our plan offers a framework for moving forward but is by no means the last word—this is an evolving process that will require resolve, foresight, and close collaboration with important partners.”

The AICPA said considerable attention, discussion, investment, and research is being focused on a variety of initiatives at each stage of the CPA pipeline—from the Center for Audit Quality-led [Accounting+ student awareness campaign](#) to CPA Evolution and the [launch of the new CPA exam in January 2024](#).

In collaboration with such stakeholders as state CPA societies, accounting firms, academia, state boards of accountancy, the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy, and the CAQ, the AICPA identified initiatives that address the following key areas:

- **Awareness:** Increasing awareness about the accounting profession and promoting the benefits of a career in accounting.
- **Improved perceptions:** Dispelling outdated perceptions and leveraging updated, positive messaging that can help the profession resonate with today’s students.
- **Training and education:** Providing high-quality accounting education and training opportunities.
- **Firm culture and business models:** Equipping firms with the tools to offer competitive salaries and benefits, as well as career advancement opportunities and

compelling work.

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AICPA said.

There are 12 initiatives—some considered near-term, some mid-term, and others long-term—the AICPA said it's focusing on to fix the accountant shortage.

Pipeline Acceleration Plan: Addressing root causes

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Experience, Learn & Earn Program | 7 STEM recognition |
| 2 Addressing firm culture and business model challenges | 8 AICPA Foundation and scholarships |
| 3 30-hour communication campaign | 9 Expansion of 529 funds to CPA Exam costs |
| 4 Extending 18-month exam window | 10 Government audit and finance collaboration |
| 5 Examining Uniform Accountancy Act variances | 11 Best practices for offshore talent |
| 6 High school and college strategies | 12 CPA image campaign |

Main elements of the AICPA's plan to boost the pool of prospective CPAs

The Pipeline Acceleration Plan also includes several recommended actions not included in earlier drafts, according to the AICPA:

Expand 529 funds to CPA Exam costs: The AICPA and state CPA societies are working with federal legislators on the Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act (H.R. 1477), which would allow the use of 529 college savings plans to include expenses required to obtain or maintain postsecondary credentials, including CPA-related costs such as exam review courses.

Support for the government audit and finance sector: To address concerns over the ability of local governmental entities to find skilled auditors and finance professionals, the AICPA is collaborating on solutions with the National Association

of State Auditors, Comptrollers and Treasurers (NASACT). A working group involving

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Korea, and exploration of offering the CPA exam in the Philippines.

Explore launch of a CPA image campaign: The AICPA said it is looking into a campaign that would create positive awareness of the profession with middle school and high school students. The initiative would build on the CAQ's Accounting+ initiative, and the AICPA said it will work with state society input and perspectives to draft a feasibility plan later this year.

“Collectively, these initiatives paired with ongoing investments such as CPA Evolution, aim to increase flexibility for CPA candidates and enhance the reputation of the profession. They are designed to deliver action and drive results,” the AICPA said. “Continued dialogue with stakeholders will shape and expand this plan.”

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