

Process for accounting programs to apply for and receive STEM designation for their degree programs

1. Become Aware of Technology Being Used in the Accounting Program:

Since the accounting programs and their use of technology has changed in the past 5–10 years (and even in the past two years), you'll want to spend some time understanding the technology that is used in their curriculum. This will require an understanding of what courses are being taught in the curriculum and what technology is taught in each course. A friendly professor, dean or advisor will be able to explain the various courses in the curriculum and discuss the course content to determine that the school is teaching innovation in their technology components of the various courses and encourage the individual accounting program to pursue STEM designation.

Common questions about the technology use in the courses might include this level of discussion:

- ▶ Does the program have a data analytics course or significant coverage in other core courses? What software tools do they use (Excel, Tableau and Power BI are common ones). Do they write macros, scripts or perform programming? Do they produce visualizations (graphs, plots, histograms, etc.)? Do they prepare data for further analysis?
- ▶ In the accounting information systems course, do they cover relational databases and link databases to each other? Do they use Microsoft Access (or other similar database software tool) to work with databases?
- ▶ In their audit course, how do they use technology to find and evaluate risky transactions?
- ▶ In their fraud detection course, do they use process mining technology to identify transactions that don't follow prescribed policies?

If the answer to these or similar questions are that they are applying technology to applicable accounting questions, they qualify as STEM.

2. Encourage Accounting Degree Program to Become Stem Designated:

The next step is to encourage leadership in each degree program (such as department chairperson or master's program coordinator) to go through the process of receiving official STEM designation. Describe the benefits and the overall process and offer to assist them through the steps. (See Toolkit Document: *Jan 2023 – Benefits of STEM designation*) Offer to provide letters of support from the state CPA society, and local accounting practitioners. If the university has an accounting alumni board or other active association, offer to ask that group for letters of support as well. Finally, the state board of accountancy may also be willing to assist this effort with a support letter. Toolkit documents can also be provided to the program for its reference.

3. Accounting Degree Program Puts Together Dossier to Support Nomination:

Once an accounting department determines it is interested in gaining STEM designation for its programs, there is likely to be a petition or other document for requesting a change in the program major's CIP code within the college's or university's system. We have provided example applications from several universities who successfully received STEM-designation for their programs. (See Toolkit Documents: *Sample - Florida State STEM Application for Master of Accounting Program* and *Sample - North Carolina State University Master of Accounting Program*).

4. Accounting Degree Program Chooses Among CIP codes to Apply for STEM and Submits Paperwork:

The department must choose from the set of Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes that have already received STEM designation. Accounting programs offering undergraduate degrees and master's degrees will need to make the case that their program fits in under one of these CIP codes with

a justification of the technology used to qualify for the appropriate CIP code. The five CIP codes that we are aware have been used to date to qualify as STEM are:

- ▶ 11.1003 – Computer and Information Systems Security/Information Assurance
- ▶ 27.0305 – Financial Mathematics
- ▶ 45.0603 – Econometrics and Qualitative Economics
- ▶ 52.1301 – Management Sciences and Quantitative Methods
- ▶ 52.1399 – Management Sciences and Quantitative Methods, Other

There are even more CIP codes that have not been used, in part because some of them were approved by DHS in January 2022, and may be more appropriate for a given accounting department's program(s). (See Toolkit Document: *Jan 2023 STEM CIP Codes available or submitted to DHS for approval*).

The AICPA® has also recently petitioned the Department of Homeland Security to consider adding accounting-oriented CIP codes to their STEM-designated degree program list (see Toolkit Document: *2022 AICPA – Accounting Profession STEM Nomination*). It is believed that DHS will

announce the new additions to its DHS STEM Designated Degree list in early 2023. The AICPA is hopeful that at least some of the CIP codes nominated will be approved.

5. University Leadership Considers Petition, and Approves Petition:

The petition next goes to university leadership (such as college dean, provost or registrar) for their consideration, support and approval. It may be necessary to review the technology being used in the accounting degree program to educate college and university leadership to ensure support from the university level. Sometimes providing university leadership the name of peer colleges that have recently received STEM designation is helpful, or reminding them how the new CPA exam has changed to embrace technology.

6. State Higher Education Authorities Consider to Approve Petition:

Once approved by university officials, the petition goes to state higher education authorities for approval with the accounting degree program receiving STEM designation. If you see other programs in your state that have received this designation, it may make sense to ask them directly about the process once it gets to the state and what types of questions state officials asked.