



# STUDENT AUXILIARY IS A STRONG CONNECTION TO FUTURE CPAs

By Rhonda Ledbetter, TXCPA Volunteer and Governance Specialist

The future is bright! Thanks to the powerful partnership between TXCPA and its chapters, there are strong connections between CPAs, accounting educators and the students who are the future of the profession. Those connections are nurtured through a variety of programs and projects, such as affiliated student groups. TXCPA Houston is celebrating the 30th anniversary of its Student Auxiliary, established in 1989.

TXCPA Houston Student Auxiliary provides activities and networking for college-level students in the Houston area who are interested in a career in accounting. Auxiliary meetings cover a variety of topics, including discussions on big data, soft skills, alternative career paths, cybersecurity, and careers in industry, audit and tax. Student officers develop the topics and moderate the panel discussions. Following is a summary of the top events.

**Career Speed Networking** – Fast-paced discussions allow students to learn about a rich variety of career options. CPAs from industry and public practice move from table to table, spending approximately 10 minutes at each one. They talk briefly about their respective career paths and answer questions from students. Sometimes two professionals are paired – e.g., one from the energy industry and one from public with a practice focused on that business. Other pairings

have covered health care, nonprofit, government and education.

**Hot Topic** – Professionals from a Houston office of a Big Four firm present a current topic, such as blockchain, big data, etc. The firm sponsors the food for the event and recruiters are on hand to meet with students one-on-one.

**Panel Discussions** – The groups are comprised of CPAs from different career stages and/or sizes of public



practice firms, and they talk about the wide range of areas in which they work. Popular topics include advisory, forensic/valuation, tax and audit.

**Excel Training** – In this full-day interactive seminar, local CPAs teach Excel shortcuts and practices.

**Letter of Intent Workshop** – Students are led through the CPA Exam application process at a four-hour

event held on a Saturday, enjoying pizza provided by Becker. The program is marketed to professors in a masters' or CAP program, as well as through the chapter's website and email communications.

**IDEA Workshop** – Audimation Services sends professionals to teach IDEA in a six-hour workshop for new users, where they are provided with electronic training materials. Two exciting new projects are on

track. The Auxiliary is the first accounting association to participate in the TrueUp National Bot Challenge. More than 40 students have signed up to create an accounting bot. The chapter helped recruit judges to review the entries and obtained corporate sponsorship to provide funding for cash prizes to local high scorers.

The other project is a recruiting fair that will be held in 2019-2020. Area firms will send recruiters to visit with students at booths, then utilize a speed networking format during dinner.

Students hungry for a place to form valuable friendships and let off steam from their intense studies enjoy Auxiliary social events. Fun food (underwritten by sponsors), games and team-building activities are on the menu to complete the well-rounded offerings.

Leadership skills are crucial to propelling a career. The Student Auxiliary provides great opportunities to develop these lifelong skills. Officers learn to perform tasks found in volunteer organizations, such as:



- Recruiting new members;
- Encouraging event attendees;
- Visiting accounting classes and campus clubs to share information about Student Auxiliary events and offerings;
- Serving as a facilitator for panel discussions;
- Contacting speakers and panelists;
- Developing questions for panelists to discuss; and
- Running the event, including greeting guests, ensuring that everyone checks in and gets a name tag, directing guests to the food and games, filling in when another officer can't attend and cleaning up.

The Student Auxiliary Steering Committee, which includes former student officers and accounting professionals, assists the current leaders in planning monthly career

panels and social events. Officers and steering committee members have a one-day retreat in June to work together in planning the new year's calendar of events.

The chapter has experienced an explosive 120% increase in student membership during the last year, from 221 to 487. A significant factor has been the chapter's outreach. With nine major universities in the area, plus satellite locations for two local community college systems, it is challenging to get information to all students and professors. To share the message, representatives attend as many campus career fairs as possible – hosting a table that provides accounting career information, upcoming event schedules and opportunities, and membership applications.

The Auxiliary is fortunate to have a great group of student officers who not only plan and facilitate the meetings, but also speak during accounting classes at their campus. In addition, there are very active TXCPA Faculty Ambassadors in the area who spread the word.

TXCPA's offer of complimentary membership to students at a school with a designated Faculty Ambassador has also been instrumental. The chapter works closely with TXCPA to encourage sign-ups at these events and at its Student Auxiliary programs.

Yes, the future of the accounting profession is bright indeed. Join in the excitement by being engaged in student outreach through your TXCPA chapter. ■



Fastest smartest malpractice insurance. Period.

800.906.9654  
GilsbarPRO.com