

An Examination of Forensic Accounting Courses: Content and Learning Activities

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Forensic accounting is a rapidly growing area within the accounting profession, due to the prevalence of fraud in business. In recent years, a need for expertise in this area has been recognized, resulting in the formation of The Association of Certified Fraud Examiners ("ACFE"), a new professional certification ("Certified Fraud Examiner"), numerous textbooks, and several self-study continuing professional education materials on the subject of fraud. Accounting educators agree that there is a need to provide students with some forensic accounting education, and specific courses have been developed at various universities across the United States. This paper looks at the content of those courses and the learning activities used in order to aid faculty who might be considering adding a course in forensic accounting to their accounting curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Forensic accounting has been defined as “a discipline that deals with the relationship and application of financial facts to business problems, conducted in a legal setting” (Bologna, Lindquist, and Wells, 1993, p. 233). It focuses on: 1) the prevention, detection, and investigation of both occupational fraud and financial statement fraud, and 2) the rendering of other litigation-support services (Buckhoff and Schrader, 2000).

Forensic accounting is a rapidly growing area within the accounting profession, due to the prevalence of fraud in business. The *Wall Street Journal* has called forensic accountants “the accounting profession’s new glamour kids” (MacDonald, 1996), and reported that not only did the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) double its forensic accountant agent force between 1992 and 1996, but several large public accounting firms doubled or quintupled their forensic ranks during the same period. KPMG (1993, 1994, 1998) has conducted three national fraud surveys in recent years in an attempt to determine the extent of the fraud problem in the United States, while Ernst & Young (1996, 1998, 2000) has examined fraud on an international scale. In response to the need for expertise in this area, the Association of