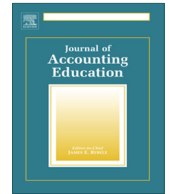


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Special issue on developing accounting students' soft skills versus technical competency



In the fall of 2016, Kent St. Pierre (St Joseph's University) and I spoke about a potential special issue related to whether or not soft skills could/should be taught in the accounting curriculum and if those skills can be developed at the undergraduate level. We briefly discussed publishing a special issue containing articles that present opposing views regarding this issue. We did not move forward with that particular idea. In Spring 2019, Kent again reached out to let me know that he and Jim Rebele (Robert Morris University, retired) had written an article about soft skills development and I inquired if they would like to be guest editors for a special issue. Both Kent and Jim enthusiastically agreed to become guest editors. A big thank you to both of them.

Special issue introductions usually appear after all manuscripts are received and reviewers are chosen; an updated introduction will appear in the coming months. To promote discussion, we wanted to provide a commentary related to the following special issue topic:

*Position statements on accounting education have generally called for an increased emphasis on developing students' so-called soft skills with the expectation that accounting graduates will be more well-rounded and productive professionals. Many accounting educators have responded to these position statements with efforts to develop, for example, students' communication skills, ability to think critically, and ethical awareness. Largely missing from the accounting education literature has been a discussion of whether **undergraduate** accounting student' soft skills can effectively be developed and whether accounting faculty members are trained or equipped to assume this responsibility. Given the constrained number of accounting credit and contact hours in accounting education programs, efforts to develop soft skills have often been made at the expense of covering important technical material that continues to increase in amount and complexity.*

The commentary relates to two authors' views on this topic. As stated in the call,

Possible topics include whether soft skills identified by accounting position statements can be developed at the undergraduate level, if accounting faculty are qualified to help students develop soft skills and where faculty acquired this capability, and whether the increasing use of adjuncts and part time faculty complicates developing accounting students' soft skills. Papers can also address the question of what should be the primary learning objectives of accounting education programs and the relative importance of soft skills versus technical subjects given expected career paths for program graduates. This list of possible topics is not exhaustive, and papers relevant to the soft skills versus technical competency debate will be considered.

We look forward to receiving papers containing multiple viewpoints on soft skills development and the importance of technical competency in the undergraduate accounting curriculum.

Appendix A. Supplementary material

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaccedu.2019.07.001>.

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