

**THE UNDERLYING FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE
STUDENTS' DECISION TO MAJOR IN ACCOUNTING IN THE PRESENCE OF
THE 150-HOUR REQUIREMENT**

**Cheryl L. Allen
Morehouse College**

ABSTRACT

The AICPA requires new members to have 150 semester-hours of college education, including a baccalaureate degree or its equivalent. Many states have passed legislation mandating a similar policy as a prerequisite for CPA licensing. Despite the overwhelming move toward the 150-hour requirement, debate over its efficacy continues. However, supporters and critics of the 150-hour requirement agree that the mandate may affect the number of students attracted to the accounting major. Prior research shows that students' perceptions directly influence their choice of academic major [Cohen and Hanno, 1993; Hermanson et al., 1995]. Thus, of particular interest is potential accounting students' perception of the 150-hour requirement, and the impact of that perception on students' decision to choose accounting as a major. How students perceive the 150-hour requirement may affect their decision to choose accounting as a major and, in turn, may affect the supply of accounting graduates entering the profession. The purpose of this study is to investigate how students' perception of the 150-hour requirement influences their initial attraction to the accounting major. This study uses the cognitive theory of planned behavior to investigate the relation between the 150-hour requirement and students' perception of accounting as an academic major. This study extends previous research on the impact of the 150-hour requirement by examining the association between students' perception of the 150-hour requirement and their academic major

decision. To my knowledge, previous research has not examined the impact of the 150-hour requirement in this context. The results of this study are consistent with the hypothesis that there is a positive relation between students' perception of the 150-hour requirement and their academic major choice. The study provides evidence about the factors that attract students to the field of accounting, as well as those factors that limit students' interest in a 150-hour accounting major. Further, the results suggest that in the presence of the 150-hour requirement the accounting major is attracting the type of student the profession desires. This finding is encouraging given the profession's concern about losing access to high-performing students. The results of this study provide information to accounting administrators particularly related to enrollment projections. CPA firms will also find the results useful for projecting the supply of accounting graduates following the implementation of the 150-hour mandate.