THE FUTURE OF ACCOUNTING CHALLENGE

The Future Of Accounting Challenge
Sponsored by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants

Acting as consultants for the AICPA (American Institute of Certified Public Accountants), a national professional association focused on supporting accounting professionals, create a student-focused marketing and engagement plan. Participants will develop a strategy for the CPA Pipeline Team to help high school and college students better understand the value of student membership and increase interest in joining AICPA's student community.

Driving Questions or Challenge:
How can DECA members help the AICPA build a student-focused marketing and engagement strategy that clearly communicates the value of professional membership to a Gen Z audience?

Real-World Context:
The AICPA is a nonprofit professional association representing nearly 600,000 members in public and management accounting, including 40,000 high school and college students. Many students are unfamiliar with what professional associations do or why membership matters — a challenge shared by associations across every industry. This challenge asks DECA members to step into the role of consultants, developing messaging, promotional strategies, and membership benefit recommendations that would genuinely resonate with their peers. This experience mirrors real-world work done by marketing strategists and membership teams at the AICPA.

CHALLENGE OVERVIEW

- This event consists of **two** major parts: a financial plan/budget and a video presentation that is **three to five minutes** in length.
- Each event entry will be composed of **two to three** members of a DECA chapter. Chapters may submit multiple entries for consideration.
- Participants will act as consultants for the AICPA developing a student-focused marketing and engagement strategy that helps high school and college students understand the value of professional association membership and increases interest in the AICPA student community and the accounting profession.
- The participants will present their strategy in a video that is a **maximum of five minutes** in length and upload a financial plan/budget. Videos longer than five minutes will not be evaluated and will not be eligible for awards.
- The participants must fully complete and submit the online registration form at www.deca.org/challenges no later than by **January 11, 2027, 11:59 p.m. ET** to be eligible for awards. Late entries and entries over five minutes will not be accepted.
- Representatives from the AICPA will evaluate all submitted video presentations and select the top three overall teams.
- DECA Inc. and the AICPA are not responsible for lost, damaged, mislabeled, or misdirected entries.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS DEVELOPED

Participants will demonstrate knowledge and skills needed to address the components of the project as described in the content outline and evaluation forms.

Participants will also develop Career Competencies, in the following categories, desired by today's employers:

- **Critical Thinking -** Thinks critically to understand and solve problems.
- **Communication -** Communicates clearly, effectively, and with reason.
- **Decision Making -** Considers the impacts of decisions.
- **Collaboration -** Participates and advocates in groups of all sizes to achieve common goals.
- **Innovation -** Demonstrates a creative and innovative mindset.
- **Technology -** Ethically leverages technologies to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.

PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

The participants will present their strategy to AICPA judges in a video that is a maximum of five minutes in length and submit a financial plan/budget. All submissions must include the following components:

I. Introduction

- Description of AICPA and the role they play in the accounting profession.
- Description of the target student audience (high school and/or college students).
- Overview of the proposed marketing and engagement strategy.

II. Proposed Marketing & Engagement Strategy

- Messaging and promotional strategies designed to resonate with Gen Z audiences.
- Recommended membership benefits, experiences, and opportunities students would find valuable and exciting.
- Explanation of how the strategy builds awareness of, and increases membership and interest in the accounting profession and the AICPA student community.

III. Video Presentation

- Research into student perceptions of professional associations and the accounting profession clearly demonstrated.
- Presentation demonstrates creativity, audience understanding, and innovative ideas.
- Provide supporting items such as visuals, sample content, or promotional materials.
- Engaging presentation with a clear verbal message.

IV. Financial Plan/Budget

- Estimated costs to implement the proposed marketing and engagement strategy, broken down by major activity or channel (e.g., content creation, paid promotion, events).
- Identification of potential funding sources, partners, or in-kind resources.
- A brief justification of cost-effectiveness and expected return on investment for the AICPA.
- A one-page budget summary submitted as a separate document alongside the video.

For evaluation details, please see the Presentation Evaluation Form.

PRESENTATION JUDGING

American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) representatives will evaluate all submitted entries and select the top three overall teams. From the final three teams, the overall winning team will be selected.

AWARDS

In partnership with the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) the following awards will be provided:

- 1st Place Team - $1,500
- 2nd Place Team - $1,000
- 3rd Place Team - $500

The top three teams will be recognized on stage during DECA's International Career Development Conference in Anaheim, California. Eligibility to attend DECA ICDC is determined by the chartered association advisor based on their policies. Finalists should consult with their chartered association advisor for eligibility guidelines and gain approval from their school advisor to attend the conference.

TIMELINE

Challenge announced	September 2026
Challenge submission deadline	January 11, 2027
Top 3 teams announced	February 23, 2027
Top 3 teams recognized at ICDC (Anaheim, CA)	April 17-20, 2027

2-3 PARTICIPANTS

3-5 MINUTES
PRESENTATION TIME

1 VIDEO
ENTRY

FINANCIAL
PLAN/BUDGET

THE FUTURE OF ACCOUNTING CHALLENGE

PRESENTATION EVALUATION FORM

Name of School: _______________________________________ City: _____________________ State: __________

Team Member Names: ____

Did the participating team...		Novice	Developing	Proficient	Exemplary	Judged Score
CONTENT CRITERIA						
1.	Explain the purpose of the AICPA and the value of professional association membership.	0-1-2-3-4-5	6-7-8-9-10	11-12-13-14	15	
2.	Analyze research to identify the needs, interests, and motivations of the target student audience.	0-1-2-3-4-5	6-7-8-9-10	11-12-13-14	15	
3.	Develop a financial plan/budget that supports the proposed strategy.	0-1-2-3-4-5	6-7-8-9-10	11-12-13-14	15	
4.	Identify the target student market and develop a student-focused marketing and engagement strategy.	0-1-2-3-4-5	6-7-8-9-10	11-12-13-14	15	
5.	Explain how the proposed strategy increases awareness of the accounting profession and AICPA student membership.	0-1-2-3-4-5	6-7-8-9-10	11-12-13-14	15	
VIDEO PRESENTATION						
6.	Video clearly communicates the proposed marketing and engagement strategy and its intended impact on AICPA student membership.	0-1	2-3	4	5	
7.	Messaging and promotional approach demonstrate a strong understanding of Gen Z audience preferences.	0-1	2-3	4	5	
8.	Financial plan/budget is realistic, clearly organized, and appropriately supports the proposed strategy.	0-1	2-3	4	5	
9.	Video includes supporting visuals, sample content, or promotional materials that strengthen the strategy.	0-1	2-3	4	5	
10.	Show evidence of creativity and originality in the video's format, storytelling, and visual design.	0-1	2-3	4	5	
TOTAL SCORE (100 points)						