

The accounting profession: A view from a college student

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High school graduates are looking for jobs that will provide them security, income, flexibility, and opportunity. First, however, graduates must decide what career path to pursue. Unfortunately, the limitless career options make this choice difficult. During this decision making process, students could filter out careers that may be the best choice for them simply because they are unfamiliar with the field.

Many students may overlook a career in accounting because of some common misconceptions about the profession. However, if they learn about the profession, they will be able to overcome these misinterpretations and perhaps choose a career in accounting. The accounting and auditing profession is projected to be one of the largest growing occupations, according to the United States Department of Labor. In this study, the profession is expected to increase 21.65 percent or 279,400 more jobs by 2018.

The demand of accountants has increased due to government regulations, new accounting standards, and globalization. The United States passed the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 as a reaction to many corporate scandals. The Act requires businesses to comply with new financial reporting standards, and public accounting firms have to test internal controls and look for fraud. The United States needs more certified public accountants to protect the public from fraud and misrepresentations of financial statements.

The increase in the profession is also the result of the new role accountants play in organizations as business consultants. This requires accountants to be more highly trained with a variety of skills including communication, analytical, computer, and people skills. Business managers with increased pressures from the economy need to make informed decisions and can do so with the help of accountants.

For example, accountants can analyze numbers to identify unprofitable departments, provide tax expertise, maintain financial records, audit organizations, and create budgets. The demand for accountants and the services they provide help secure their jobs even an economic downturn.

The Wall Street Journal ranked accounting as the 12th best job in 2011 based on the criteria of physical demand, stress, job outlook, work environment, and midlevel income. Accounting is an exciting career that offers many opportunities for people to explore their interests in auditing, taxation, financial and managerial accounting, financial planning, and financial statement analysis.

Accountants are involved in all areas of the business and have an influence on its operations. Therefore, students interested in business and becoming a part of the decision making process should consider a career in accounting. According to the Robert Half 2010 salary guide, a public accountant starting their first year in tax with a midsize firm can make \$52,750 and the potential to make up to \$137,500 as a senior manager.

Many other benefits in the public accounting field include flexible work hours outside of the busy tax season and the opportunity to travel throughout the United States and sometimes internationally!

Someone who is unfamiliar with accounting may perceive it as primarily for numbers-oriented people, who sit alone at their desks all day staring at a computer. However, as an

intern in a public accounting firm, I can say that this is definitely not true. The culture in my firm creates a relaxing atmosphere with free food and fun activities outside of work such as socials, golfing events, basketball games, and massages from a professional masseuse.

I work on a team with people who want me to succeed so that we as a firm can provide excellent accounting services to businesses and individuals. Many team members leave the office to perform audits for organizations and provide various accounting services. The experience and knowledge that I learn from everyone, as well as the training courses the firm provides will help me during the rest of my professional career.

How can you get started to pursue your dream as a professional accountant? Students interested in the accounting career path need to earn their bachelor's degree in accounting with 150 credits. The 150 credits allow students to sit for the Uniform CPA Exam, which tests for competency in auditing and attestation, regulation, financial accounting and reporting, and business environment and concepts.

An accounting degree provides many opportunities for students who are interested in understanding business and developing their critical thinking skills. This degree will give students a skill set that lays down a solid foundation for an accounting career path and anything they wish to pursue.