

Stop Checking Boxes: Making The Most Of Your Meetings With Your Accounting Professors



Gregory P. Tapis
Ph.D
Assistant Professor of Accountancy
Missouri State University



Spencer C. Usrey
Assistant Professor of Accountancy
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

When meeting with students, we notice many of you only ask questions regarding course schedules and the accounting curriculum. In reality, you are missing opportunities for improving yourself professionally. Being an accounting professional involves life-long learning and dedication to your career. In this article, we provide suggestions for making the most out of your meetings with your accounting faculty. We develop our suggestions from meetings with our own students.

You may believe your accounting professor can only provide academic advice. For example, many of our students come to us asking similar academic questions. These questions include: “What do I need to take to graduate on time?,” “What courses should I take this term?,” “Is course X (on the list of electives) really necessary?” While it is important to meet with your professors to discuss your current and/or future classes, your accounting professors can also provide valuable information and guidance as you transition from student to professional.

If you currently approach meetings with accounting professors in this manner, we encourage you begin thinking differently. In this article, we address specific topics and make recommendations that should be helpful in your transition



from student to professional. These topics include immersing yourself into the accounting profession, building your resume, choosing a career path, and selecting an area of specialty within the accounting profession. Your accounting professors are helpful in discussing these items with you and providing details specific to your situation.

Immersing Yourself in the Accounting Profession

Arguably, as an accounting major, you must begin immersing yourself into the accounting profession earlier and more frequently than most other majors on campus. There are many reasons for this including: many firms expect at least one internship prior to hiring accounting graduates, the ever-changing nature of accounting rules and regulations, and the jargon of the accounting profession.

The first recommendation we make is joining the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) as a student member. Student membership is free and has many benefits, including an electronic subscription to the Journal of Accountancy. This publication is sent to members of the AICPA and is an excellent resource for keeping up with the latest developments in the accounting profession. A second suggestion is joining the State Society of Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) in the state you wish to obtain your initial CPA license. Generally, student memberships in state societies are either free or offered at a reduced rate. These memberships offer many benefits from networking to updates on licensure requirements in your desired state.

Accounting programs typically keep you informed of current changes in licensure requirements for the state the institution is in. For example, we keep our students informed of changes impacting the requirements for sitting for the CPA Examination in the states of Missouri and Tennessee. However, not all our students begin working in Missouri or Tennessee. If you desire working in a different state than your school is located in, membership in a State Society of CPAs can keep you informed of licensure requirements in your target state. Discuss joining these societies with one of your accounting professors. Membership in professional associations is something to include on your resume and signals to employers you are serious about your chosen profession.

Building Your Resume

An increasing number of firms prefer an internship before extending fulltime job offers. Discuss internship opportunities with your accounting professor. Before discussing internships, bring a current version of your resume and ask for advice. Realize your accounting professors are there for suggestions for improvement rather than writing your resume for you.

After reviewing your resume with an accounting professor, discuss potential internship opportunities. Before discussing these internship opportunities with a faculty member, consider factors influencing the decision in order to provide your professor with as

much information as possible. These include your interests in public versus private accounting, firm size, and accounting specialty. Conducting research on these different paths/options assists you with asking your accounting professor relevant and helpful questions. Selecting a career path and area of accounting specialty is an in-depth process, which we now discuss further.

Choosing a Career Path and Area of Expertise

The first consideration is public, private, or governmental accounting. This choice involves more than the classes you enjoy. Different areas of accounting have different requirements that could impact your life outside of work. Generally, private accounting has a more defined work day than public accounting. Most jobs in private accounting will have the typical “eight to five” work day with some overtime required, while public accounting will have periods of long work days. Some areas of public accounting (e.g. auditing) require travel. You should think about the job requirements when making a decision about the area of accounting you prefer.

Once you have made a decision regarding the area of accounting, the next item for discussion is firm size. Your accounting faculty can assist you with this decision making process. Often,

Continued on Page 22

MS IN ACCOUNTING



Classes start every April, May, July, September, and November (*It's possible to finish the program by December, when you begin with the April or May start date!*)

- Public, Private & Forensic Tracks
- 100% Online Courses
- No Classes During the Busy Season
- Flexible, Complete in 8, 12, or 24 Months
- No GMAT or GRE Required
- Financial Aid is Available

APPLY TODAY
BAYPATH.EDU

 **BAY PATH**
UNIVERSITY
FOR A CONSTANTLY CHANGING WORLD

Continued from Page 7

we connect current students with former students at different firms so they can ask what it is really like to work at different size firms. These connections allow students to ask questions from recent graduates they may otherwise refrain from asking their accounting professors.

An additional area for consideration is accounting specialty. When most students declare the accounting major, they think a career in accounting is preparing tax returns. As you progress through the accounting major, you see this is not true. The majority of students find themselves entering three areas of specialization: auditing, taxation, or information assurance (an example is conducting SSAE 16 Examinations). As you discover your particular interests, discuss these with your accounting professors as they can recommend additional coursework for improving your working knowledge of your desired accounting specialty.

When considering an area of expertise, you should ask your accounting faculty about industry related associations. The majority of industries have specific associations providing many benefits. One of these benefits is a published magazine, keeping members informed of changes in the industry. Another benefit of joining such associations is they can connect you with professionals in the field. This allows building relationships that help your transition from student to accounting professional.

Once you identify your desired track in the accounting profession, you should discuss the various professional designations in accounting. While the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) license is viewed as the premier designation in accounting, there are other professional designations that are helpful additions to the CPA. Your accounting professors can discuss these with you and help identify which are most germane for your desired career path. Examples of these certifications include:

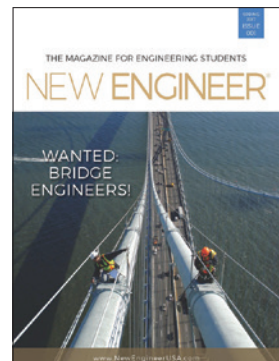
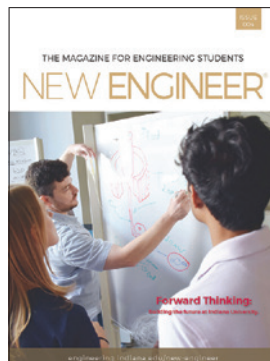
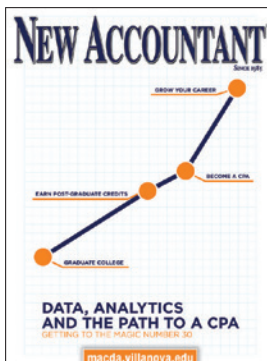
Certified Information Systems Auditor (CISA), Certified Information Security Manager (CISM), Certified Management Accountant (CMA), and Certified Internal Auditor (CIA).

Conclusion

Interactions with accounting faculty are more than just inquiries regarding courses and the accounting curriculum. You should view meetings as opportunities for growth from student to professional. Your accounting faculty can serve as a source of information for developing your professional growth. Whether it is helping you perfect your resume, guiding you towards finding your particular area of passion, or simply discussing your concerns about the profession itself, you should approach these meetings as professional coaching sessions rather than “what do I need to do to graduate.”

Custom Academic Publishing

Branded Educational Print & Digital Publications



----- High School & College Editions -----