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An Accounting Student's Place in the Job Market

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Submitted in Partial Completion of the
Requirements for Departmental Honors in Accounting and Finance

Bridgewater State University

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Chanakya, teacher, philosopher, economist, jurist and royal advisor, once said “Before you start some work, always ask yourself three questions - Why am I doing it, What the results might be, and Will I be successful. Only when you think deeply and find satisfactory answers to these questions, go ahead.”¹ As an accounting student, the road to finding a career is not narrow. A student must focus on their GPA, extracurricular activities, and school-life balance all while under a tremendous amount of stress. Even after working hard to maintain this, it is up to the company hiring criteria on whether or not the individual is offered an internship or job. The main goal in writing this thesis is to explore the hiring process and compare it with a student’s education. This paper looks at the ladder of jobs one may obtain depending on the size of the company, (i.e. large or medium) a public or private firm, and with the applicants level of education straight out of college (i.e. bachelors’ degree (120 credit hours) and master’s degree (150 credit hours). This thesis answers the question: What is a Bridgewater State University accounting student’s place in the job market? by exploring four sub questions: What kind of careers may one find in accounting? What traits do employers look for when looking at accounting students? Does Bridgewater State University prepare students for life after Bridgewater State University? Does the average accounting student feel secure in their current standing?

My research done throughout the past two semesters has explored what the most desired attributes accounting majors must possess for a company or accounting firm in Massachusetts to hire them. While focusing on the student, it dug in to the details of what specific attributes a student must have in order to stand out in the eyes of an employer and obtain the position they desire.

For confused undergraduate or graduate students who do not know what path they would like to take and what job they may obtain with an accounting degree, nearing the end of their college education is a stressful time. As the President of the Bridgewater State University Accounting and Finance Club, I try to advise my fellow classmates on how they should be preparing for their life after college. I use the knowledge I have gained from speaking with human resources recruiters and my colleagues during former internships to give meaning and facts to back up what I relay to members.

Sub Topic 1: What kind of careers may one find in accounting?

When exploring the accounting field, one must see that accountants are in high demand throughout all kinds of industries and positions, including entry level. Accountants hold the knowledge needed to perform many important functions throughout a business. So, this begs the question: what specific kinds of careers may individuals find in accounting? When digging further into this topic we must look to the individual and what they prefer. Does an individual prefer a high salary or low salary job? Are they willing to work more than 40 hours a week? Would the individual prefer to travel for work to clients or stay at the office? Does the individual have 150 credit hours? If not, are they interested in obtaining 150 credit hours? If they obtain their 150 credit hours, are they interested in taking the CPA exam? Lastly, is the individual willing to go back to school and receive another degree that they may apply with their accounting experience to enhance their abilities? Yes, an individual must reflect at their personal views of a perfect job.

The roles and requirements of accountants vary from one type of accountant to another to another. Accountants perform so much more than just bookkeeping tasks; they also perform fraud auditing, payroll reporting, and accurately report financial information to the government

and shareholders. Accountants allow businesses and individuals to understand and evaluate profitability, which creates a need for accountants in almost every industry.² This means that whatever interests an individual has, whether it be entertainment, government, fashion, and even travel, one may have a career in that industry. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the accounting industry is expected to grow at a rate of 11% from 2014 to 2024, which is faster than the average in all occupations.³ This means that there are more and more opportunities and needs for accountants and students interested in pursuing a degree and career in accountancy. As the economy grows, so will the need of workers who know how to examine and prepare financial statements.

Accountants usually complete and examine financial statements, compute taxes owed, prepare tax returns, assess financial operations, and suggest ways to reduce cost while enhancing revenues.³ The Bureau of Labor Statistics examines six different types of accountants and auditors: public accountants, management accountants, government accountants, internal auditors, external auditors, and information technology auditors. Among them, the duties interconnect. Public accountants perform auditing, tax, and consulting work for corporations, governments, and individuals. Public accountants are usually Certified Public Accountants (CPAs), and either have their own business or work for a public accounting firm. An example of a public accountant is a forensic accountant. Their duties include investigating financial crimes like securities fraud, embezzlement, bankruptcies, and contract disputes.³ The information that public accountants prepare is usually used by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), stockholders, financial institutions, and the general public. Management accountants, who are also called cost, managerial, industrial, corporate, or private accountants record and analyze the financial information of the organizations in which they work including budgeting and

performance evaluations, which is then used internally by business managers.³ Government accountants record and analyze financial statements of government agencies as well as audit private businesses and individuals whose activities raise suspicion under government regulations or taxation.³ Internal auditors check for mismanagement of an organization's funds and identify ways to improve finding and eliminating waste and fraud.³ An example of an internal auditor is an information technology auditor. They review controls for their organization's computer systems to ensure that the financial data comes from a reliable source.³ External auditors perform similar duties as internal auditors, but are not employed by the organization. They check to see if the financial statements have been properly prepared and reported.³

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are many opportunities for advancement within these different accounting fields. Entry level public accountants often advance to senior positions with more responsibility in one or two years. Those who excel may become supervisors, managers, or partners, open their own public accounting firm, or transfer to executive positions in management accounting or internal auditing in private firms.³ Management accountants often start as cost accountants, junior internal auditors, or in other entry level accounting positions. They may advance to accounting manager, chief cost accountant, budget director, or manager of internal auditing. Some become controllers, treasurers, financial vice presidents, chief financial officers, or corporation presidents.³ Public accountants, management accountants, and internal auditors can move from one aspect of accounting and auditing to another. Public accountants often move into management accounting or internal auditing.³ This shows how flexible a position in accounting is and just how much opportunity there is for growth.

All of the positions listed previously are similar in nature. The education required for accounting positions varies. Most positions require at least a bachelor's degree in accounting, but public firms prefer students with a masters' degree in accounting or business administration. Being a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) is also a must for public accountants. One may still have a very successful career in accounting without their CPA within a company.

For every individual, their work environment either makes or breaks their desire to stay with a company. Most accountants work in offices, from home, or at a client location. An accountant may work either alone or in teams with other accountants.³ On average, accountants work full time with periods of longer hours at the end of the budget year or during tax season.³ When surveyed, one in five accountants said they work more than forty hours weekly.³ This is great because it breaks the stereotype that accountants work an obscene amount of hours each week all year round.

The extra degree, license, and hours put in has been shown to pay off with the median pay for an accountant starting at a respectable amount and varying depending on size and whether an individual is employed by a small, medium, or large Public Accounting Firm or Corporate Accounting Company. There is also a vast difference in salary for a junior level accountant verses a senior level accountant. A junior level accountant is one with zero to three years of experience in accounting. A senior level accountant is one with four to six years of experience.⁴ The chart below depicts the average salaries for college graduates in public and private accounting.⁴

Employer	Junior Level (0-3 Years)	Senior Level (4-6 Years)
Public Accounting (Small Firm)	\$51,500- \$60,500	\$63,750- 81,500
Public Accounting (Medium Firm)	\$56,500- \$67,750	\$70,500-\$96,000

Public Accounting (Large Firm)	\$63,250- \$83,250	\$78,500- \$106,500
Corporate Accounting (Small Co.)	\$45,000-59,000	\$57,500-\$70,000
Corporate Accounting (Medium Co.)	\$49,250- \$65,250	\$61,250-\$79,750
Corporate Accounting (Large Co.)	\$53,750-\$69,500	\$68,750-\$87,750

According to the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), the expected starting salary for accountants in Boston is between \$41,758-\$61,788.⁴ One must also keep in mind that if they possess a CPA license, then their starting salary will increase by 10-15% more.⁴ There is a direct correlation between an accountant's salary and the size of the firm or company. The more earnings, profits, and clientele a company has, the more employees are compensated.

Accountants are in high demand, but this does not mean the path to becoming one is easy. It consists of hard work, dedication, and knowing what one would like to do with their degree. An accounting degree pays off tremendously in the long run because it gives an individual the knowledge and finances to reach their highest potential.

Sub Topic 2: What traits do employers look for when looking at accounting students?

Now, many university faculty members of other majors may say that obtaining a job after graduation is not the most important accomplishment a student may have. However, in the case of accounting majors, it is. Elbert Hubbard once said: "The best preparation for good work tomorrow is to do good work today."⁵ Accounting students must work diligently while in school to obtain the knowledge needed to prepare them for their careers. Accounting majors are bred into the mindset that our end goal is to obtain a job and make a career out of it. Since accountants and individuals with accounting degrees are in such high demand, this is not an issue for most

students. But, as read in sub topic one, the type of job one obtains varies. Different companies look for different attributes in individuals. The characteristic an individual possesses makes them stand out in a crowd and get a position that many are vying for. So, this begs the question: What traits do employers look for when looking at accounting students?

Research on this topic includes a tremendous amount of qualitative data that was obtained by interviewing various human resources personnel from different companies and searching through company websites and news articles to find what they look for in a potential employee.

Every year the Massachusetts Society of Certified Public Accountants (MSCPA) publishes a book called *College Student's Guide to Accounting Firms in Massachusetts*. This book is published yearly and updated with current surveys and information on various public accounting firms' desired prospect traits. In the 2015 and 2016-2017 publishing, it found that a majority of national firms and many regional and local firms require entry-level staff to have completed their 150 hour compliance.^{6,7} This does not mean that a student must have completed their masters degree to obtain an entry level job; it means that a prospective employee must have obtained 150 credit hours and within those credit hours have the correct classes of which makes them eligible to sit for the CPA exam in Massachusetts. When it comes to a student's cumulative grade point average (GPA), 55% of public accounting firms accept students with a GPA of 3.0 or higher, which has decreased from 56% in 2015. The data shows that in any given year, the absolute minimum GPA most public accounting firms will accept is a 2.8.^{6,7} Public accounting firms keep their standards high and expect an applicant to lie within the standards in this competitive profession. Lastly, internships are another important experience added to a prospective student's resume. According to the MSCPA, the number has risen in 2016 from 50%

to 60% of firms hiring summer interns and from 85% to 89% of firms hiring winter interns.^{6,7}

This is a great way to have an offer extended to an individual and gain knowledge and experience to make an individual more marketable.

After interviewing various human resources personnel from different companies and searching through company websites and news articles to find what they look for in a potential employee, the results were as expected. Employers look for individuals who excel in their schoolwork and personal life to represent their company. Employers have recognized that Bridgewater State University harbors some of the most driven individuals who possess the necessary skills and drive to thrive in the fast paced accounting world. As said by the Gray, Gray, & Gray HR Generalist: “[Gray, Gray, & Gray’s] current employees from Bridgewater State University are all top performers.”⁸

The five most sought after qualities that large public accounting firms look for in potential employees listed in importance is that the individual plans to pass the CPA exam, has basic knowledge of Microsoft Office, is a team player, has strong communication skills and a diverse resume, and that the individual is ready for a professional office culture.⁹

Passing the CPA exam is one of the most important and attractive aspirations an individual may possess if they are looking in to public accounting. Though it is not required, larger firms strongly encourage obtaining it within an individual’s first year of working.⁹ Larger firms like KPMG and Grant Thornton expect new hires to have fulfilled the minimum credit hour to sit for the CPA exam: 150 credit hours. As an incentive to pass the CPA exam within the first year of employment, both firms offer a \$5,000 bonus.⁹ Smaller public accounting firms like Gray, Gray & Gray require entry level employees to have a bachelors degree. They strongly encourage their employees to obtain a master’s level degree or a Juris Doctor degree and obtain

their CPA license by providing tuition assistance. Gray, Gray, & Gray even provides a monetary bonus upon CPA completion, though it is not as large as KPMG and Grant Thornton. This shows just how valuable an individual is to a company after passing the CPA exam. Again, although it is strongly encouraged in public accounting firms, many accounting positions inside companies do not require an individual to obtain their CPA. The President of DJP Rightfit Recruiting, LLC, a recruiter for small private companies that hires internal accountants has stated that applicants need not obtain their CPA “unless they are applying to a CPA firm.”⁸

It is expected that an individual harbor adequate knowledge of Microsoft Office process, communication skills, and a diverse resume. On a daily basis, associates use Microsoft Excel and Word to complete worksheets and documents. Therefore, most employers regularly train their employees in these and different software programs.⁹ Employees communicate with clients on a regular basis, so knowing the appropriate way to converse is crucial. In an employer’s eyes, the ability to speak and write in a clear and effective manner sets prospective candidates apart.⁹ Having a diverse resume is also crucial to obtaining the attention of a large firm. The Gray, Gray, & Gray HR Generalist listed the top four items she looks for when viewing an applicant resume in order of significance as past experience and internships, GPA, college attended, and attention to detail. Firms look for well-rounded individuals who engage in different activities and are interested in learning new things.⁹ Of course job experience in accounting is appealing, but employers enjoy seeing work experience in any field. Having been previously employed shows that potential employees have the ability to work with others, which is also an important quality to possess. Another important aspect of employment history is longevity and job progression. According to the DJP Rightfit Recruiting President, “employers are interested in candidates that will remain with them and not jump around from job to job.”⁸ This shows that employers see

potential employees as an investment and are in it for the long run. In the eyes of employers, employees who have had fewer jobs with longer employment periods are more favorable than employees who have had many jobs for short periods of time. As stated earlier, accountants often communicate directly with the client and work with other associates to complete company and client objectives; therefore, each employee plays an integral part and relies on each other. This skill is built and shown from extra curricular activities and former work experience. This shows just how important being a well-rounded individual really is.

All in all, these skills come together to prepare an individual for a professional culture. This is shown in a prospects demeanor in an interview. These skills bring forth a strong candidate who will succeed in public accounting.

Sub Topic 3: Does Bridgewater State University prepare students for life after college?

When choosing a university, some students look for a school with the most well known name or the university that costs the least amount of money. Bridgewater State University (BSU) may not be well known for accounting, but their program is just as competitive as any other as well as affordable. Bridgewater State University educators and Career Services encourage students to reach their full potential in a variety of ways through different channels.

Bridgewater State University prides itself on the opportunities its students receive. At BSU, a student is not paying for the school name; they are paying for the education. A Bridgewater State University accounting degree is worth just as much as any name brand private university because of the faculty. The Accounting and Finance Department faculty harbors individuals with tremendous experience in the field, and even who have attended and taught at private universities. Bridgewater State University's program was built from the ground up from professors who care so much about their students and is held at a higher standard today because

of their hard work and the current professors. BSU offers an undergraduate degree in accounting and finance with a concentration in accounting and an accredited Masters of Science in Accountancy (MSA) program, which can be completed in three semesters. Recently, Bridgewater's Accounting Program achieved the highest CPA exam pass rate for "first-time test taking graduate students" of any institution in Massachusetts, public or private. This makes Bridgewater State University extremely competitive when comparing it to big name schools.

When asked what skills and attributes are important for accounting students to possess, professors from the Bridgewater State University Accounting and Finance Department agreed with recruiters and human resources personnel. BSU professors agree that a strong foundation in accounting, a high GPA, a strong work ethic and the ability to work independently, the desire to pursue a CPA license, and involvement on and off campus set one student apart from another, and set Bridgewater State University students apart from other university students.¹⁰ One professor noted that "What will differentiate students is critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, communication skills, both written and verbal, spreadsheet analysis skills, and collaboration skills."¹⁰ Companies want to hire individuals who can identify an issue, analyze it, and propose a solution. This is why in the classroom, professors utilize case studies and team projects to help students strengthen their critical thinking and problem solving skills. Along with any accounting position must come the skill of using Microsoft Office. In almost every class, a professor requires a project or case study be completed using Microsoft Excel, Word, or PowerPoint. Students must be able to learn beyond their university education. They must be trainable on the job, and especially be willing to grow with the advancement of technology. Within the next ten years in the accounting world, technology will become more advanced. The individuals who adopt and embrace technology will get ahead and do well. Bridgewater State

University professors teach in a way that helps the student understand their own way of learning, which translates to their future. So, students are able to and must prepare for a “life long education.”

Bridgewater State University prepares students for their future by giving them the recourses and the education needed to compete in the workforce. A professor noted “Bridgewater State University’s Accounting and Finance program is rigorous and challenges students to develop their accounting knowledge and many of the differentiating skills that are in high demand in the CPA profession - critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, communication skills, both written and verbal, spreadsheet analysis skills, and collaboration skills.” One part-time instructor and 1998 Bridgewater State University graduate’s experiences, is proof of this. He was only the second BSU student to accept a position with Pricewaterhouse Coopers. He spent five years specializing in accounting for not-for-profit companies and then worked for a not-for-profit university as their associate director for accounting operations. Through his experience, he learned that Bridgewater State University students are well prepared for the workforce and that a core part of its curriculum, writing and researching, is often missed from other business programs, which sets a Bridgewater graduate apart from the rest.

He has the experience of both a recruiter and a professor. He continues to work as a comptroller while being a part time professor. He looks for candidates with communication skills and a strong work ethic. He also looks to see if a candidate fits the minimum qualifications for the position and does not weigh the university an individual graduated from as heavily because he graduated from a state school. Since this is the case, He has said, “sometimes those big ticket degrees aren’t worth what you are paying for it. If you look at statistics, both Bridgewater State University and Rhode Island College [another university he teaches at part time] are in the top

10% accounting programs in the country.”¹⁰ This reinforces that Bridgewater State University has an extremely strong accounting program.

Professors are willing to stay extra hours beyond class time and office hours to help a student in need. They do not hesitate to write letters of recommendations for students when asked. Professors also aid in internship search. The Chairman of the Accounting and Finance Department, receives notifications about job and internship postings weekly. He forwards them to students, clubs, and also posts them on the Accounting and Finance Department bulletin board outside their office. Professors also give students valuable advice on steps they should be taking to succeed. Some advice professors have given students is to try to get involved in extracurricular activities, try to maintain a good GPA, obtain internship experience before graduation, take the CPA exam as soon as possible, network with other professionals, be open minded with different career opportunities coming their way, and try to develop their skills and learn something new every day. Professors are one of the greatest influences on students during their college career. They have also experienced the accounting world first hand, so their advice holds weight and meaning, which can be translated to success if followed.

Students should also know how to conduct themselves in an interview and during and internship in a professional manner; this is where Career Services comes in to play. Bridgewater State University Career Services provides so many amazing opportunities to place students on the right path when preparing for their career. Depending on the student’s goal, their approach may vary. This is why the Career Services Assistant Director, said that

“[Career Services] likes to have one-on-one appointments with students to review their goals, assess where they are in their plan and help guide them on next steps and ways that we can assist in the process. While getting a job is important, we want to be sure first and foremost

that they find an appropriate career path for them that will be good, meaningful work for their future.”¹¹

A students’ success in a career they enjoy is Career Services’ priority. Each year, they meet with the Employer Advisor Board where they receive updates and trends in their industry. They also receive professional information from different associations like the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) and Eastern Association of Colleges and Employers (EACE).¹¹ Using this information, they are able to gear their events towards what recruiters look for. The need for Bridgewater State University accounting students is shown through the Career Service Job Fair. Companies seeking accounting students are in abundance, and there is a plethora of companies who are specifically looking for Bridgewater State University students because of their outstanding reputation. Career Services helps students in the three stages of looking for an internship or job, the preparation and search, the preparation and interview, and the follow-up and acceptance.

To aid students during their search phase, they hold two Career Fairs each academic school year: one in the Spring and one in the Fall semesters.¹² To prepare students for the Career Fair, Career Services provides more than four different kinds of workshops the weeks before ranging from a “Resume Writing Workshop” to a “How to Work a Job Fair Workshop.”¹² This provides students with the means and knowledge on how one should introduce and present themselves to future employers to leave the best impression. They also provide a website dedicated to connecting students with employers called the CareerLink. On the CareerLink, employers and students create profiles. Employers may list the job title, position, and any other supplemental information needed to give the student a good idea of what a company is looking for. Students upload resumes and may apply for the position directly from the website. Students may also

refine their search to internships only and specify which industry or field. Before a student uploads their resume, Career Services often has open hours for resume reviews and they also invite recruiters from various companies to perform resume reviews, specific to the industry.¹² The employers in residence conduct resume and cover letter critiques, present workshops, and offer students advice from the industry perspective.¹¹ They also offer a Job Shadow program where a student may spend the day shadowing an employee from a company in their field of study. This helps the student gain knowledge on what type of career they could see themselves in before actually accepting a position.

After applying for the position, Career Services helps you through the toughest part: preparing for the interview and the interview itself. They help by providing tools, tips, and experiences that students can bring into the actual interview. There is an “Effective Interviewing Workshop” which provides students with tips on what to do in an interview.¹² For example, they teach students how to maintain good eye contact, shake hands firmly, and arrive fifteen minutes early, and show students how important it is to research the company before the interview. Career Services also provides another workshop type of event called the “Etiquette Dinner.” During this event, students are served a four-course meal and throughout the meal they are taught how to eat, sit, and engage in conversation properly. This is especially important for business interviews that have a lunch or networking portion. Once the event is completed, they send student attendees home with a padfolio. This padfolio is the finishing touch to any suit in an interview. Another great program offered is the on campus interviews for seniors every fall semester in which employers are able to hold interviews on campus. This makes it especially convenient for students with busy schedules.

This brings us to the third and most undervalued aid that Career Service offers, the follow-up and acceptance. Inside the padfolio given at the Etiquette Dinner, there are cards for an individual to write a “Thank You” note after an interview to the employer. They stress the importance of “Thank You” notes and thanking the employer for their time. This tip alone can make a student stand out in a crowd and be remembered. This will also help lead towards the company extending an offer to the student after the interview and ultimately the student accepting.

Career Services’ goal is to help transition an individual from student to professional by educating, mentoring, and assisting students with their career development process to enable them to manage their careers in the future when they leave Bridgewater State University. The skills they instill in students are important because employers look to an individual’s attitude and personality in an interview to see how well the individual would fit in with the company culture. As said by the Career Services Career Development Coordinator, “The students who focus on gaining industry specific skills and experiences through internships, research, volunteerism, study abroad, leadership, and more are the ones who will much more easily find a job verses the student who just goes to class and walks away with the diploma.”¹¹ Career Services stresses the importance of taking advantage of their services early in a student’s college career so that they have success after graduation.

Bridgewater State University sets their students up for success with all the tools and recourses they provide for their students. Although a student may not graduate from an extremely well known business school or university, during a students college career, they have assets they may access and take advantage of to give them the same opportunities as other

students. Bridgewater State University educators and Career Services do an excellent job encouraging students to reach their full potential.

Sub Topic 4: Does the average accounting student feel secure in their current standing?

All the information gathered above is meaningless without an individual to make use of it. The accounting student is the beneficiary of this study. As stated earlier, Bridgewater State University is a university of which one gets out of the education what they put in to the education. If an individual is a hard worker, motivated, and dedicated, they will succeed. So, confidence is subjective to the individual. Most are confident with a GPA of 3.0 or above. Others strive for excellence and will dedicate themselves to achieving a GPA of 3.8 or above. After interviewing Bridgewater State University students, the results were staggering.

I spoke with seven Bridgewater State University undergraduate and graduate accounting students and received their feedback. The students were administered a survey and questionnaire after having read the findings on what type of career in accounting they may get, what employers look for, and what Bridgewater State University does for the student to reach their goal. Four undergraduate and three graduate accounting students were chosen at random to participate in this questionnaire. The interview was held to see just how many BSU students possess the traits companies look for and what their thoughts on how well positioned they are.

Overall, when it comes to what employers look for in a potential employee, Bridgewater State University students felt that they were in great shape. They were extremely confident in their standing. All the participants surveyed have obtained a GPA above a 3.0. This alone puts them ahead of the game when searching for accounting positions. If GPA is not enough proof, the majority are hard workers who also engage in extra curricular activities. Some students are a part of the university Accounting and Finance Club and student members of the Massachusetts

Society of Certified Public Accountants. Others have jobs on campus such as driving busses, being a graduate assistant, tutoring, and jobs off campus. Quite a few students do not engage in extra curricular activities other than working. This may be because most BSU accounting students are commuters and this makes it hard to get involved in on campus clubs and events. One way some students have tried to stay connected is through Accounting and Finance Club email lists. This way, if they cannot make the weekly meeting due to work, they are able to keep up to date with meeting topics. Students have realized that they do lack attributes that recruiters look for, but they are actively working to improve and diversify their resumes and engage in more extracurricular activities.

Students feel confident because of the effort professors make to help them. They feel that professors have prepared them for the workforce by giving them advice on their future careers, how to approach the CPA exam, writing letters of recommendation for almost every student, and by telling students their own personal experience in accounting. Bridgewater State University professors go out of their way to help students on multiple occasions, and the students are extremely grateful for it. One professor helped a student study for his first section of the CPA exam. When the student was stressed and doubted his own abilities, a professor took the time to meet with him; “He met with [him] outside of his office hours and had no intention of leaving until [he] felt confident with the material. His excitement after [he] told him that [he] passed just shows how much he cared about [his] success!”¹³ If a student does not understand any material, or needs extra help, a professor will be there for them. Another instance is that when a student could not afford the textbooks he needed for his classes, a professor helped him when he mentioned it to her and offered her spare textbook to use for the semester. Professors even help students when they are on vacation; a student was “working on a project over spring break and

[she] emailed him to check to make sure [she] was on the right track. Apparently [she] wasn't because he emailed [her] back and told [her] to call him. He spent an hour of his personal time talking [her] through what [she] was struggling on."¹³ These are huge acts of kindness, that show that professors do care and want their students to succeed. This is what professors are all about. They go out of their way to make sure their students are taken care of. This has not been overlooked. Bridgewater State University students know how lucky they are to have professors who care so much for them.

They feel that Career Services has prepared them for the workforce by guiding them through the job search and interview process. A survey participant said: "[she] spent hours with Career Services' Assistant Director gaining insight from her on how to ask different questions and called her for advise once I started looking for jobs. Career Services along with all the professors [she] has have prepared [her] to go into the accounting workforce."¹³ This participant is not alone; many other participants said that they have taken advantage of Career Services events and that they were extremely helpful. By taking advantage of the employer interview program held on campus, many students received internships and full time employment that is set to take place starting this fall.

Finally, students have seen their hard work pay off. Bridgewater State University students are confident in their future because they have received help with their personal and professional development.

"BSU has provided me with many opportunities and more specifically, my job that I am grateful for that provides me with experience in regard to managerial and communication skills that I will be able to apply in the future. Career Services has helped me perfect my resume. Lastly, my professors have spoken to me about the future, given me some tips,

helped with potential class schedules, and never gave a grade without an explanation in order to help me continue to learn from any mistakes.”¹³

Bridgewater State University students surveyed have accepted positions in public accounting firms like GT Riley, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, and BDO. The position is waiting for them and all they have to do is graduate. Current Bridgewater State University students in the workforce today continue to grow and make a name for BSU. This years’ graduates will continue on with their legacy.

Conclusion:

In summary, accountants are in high demand and hold the knowledge needed to perform many important functions throughout a business, so there is a need for accountants in almost every industry. The roles of accountants are not just to perform bookkeeping tasks; they also perform fraud auditing, payroll reporting, and accurately report financial information to the government and shareholders. Accountants and auditors usually complete financial statements, examine financial statements, compute taxes owed, prepare tax returns, assess financial operations, and suggest ways to reduce cost while enhancing revenues. The Bureau of Labor Statistics examines six different types of accountants and auditors, public accountants, management accountants, government accountants, internal auditors, external auditors, and information technology auditors.

With so many opportunities for advancement and job growth within these different accounting fields, an accounting student has many options. An individual will have a successful career whether they just receive a bachelor’s degree or if they continue on to a master’s. Aiming for a CPA license is a great idea, which will make the student more marketable and better equipped to do various jobs. Accountants are always on the go, working alone or in teams, and

often more than forty hours a week, so students must see that any position they are vying for needs to work with their ideal work life balance, especially because they will be very well compensated. If an individual is looking for a long stable career with a competitive salary, accounting is the way to go.

When studying accounting, a student's ultimate goal is to obtain a career. Different companies and career paths look for different attributes and characteristics in an individual. It is important that students are aware of company hiring criteria so that they may fit it.

Human resources personnel have confirmed what is important when looking at a resume and the attributes that make a prospect desirable. Across the board, no matter if there is a large or small accounting firm, the most appealing characteristics one possesses is that they are eligible and willing to sit for the CPA exam, they have a 3.0 GPA or higher, and that the individual has past working experience. An individual must also have a strong personality, possess communication skills, work well with others, and be computer savvy.

Bridgewater State University educators set their students up for success with the tools and resources they provide during a student's college career. BSU's accounting program is just as competitive as any other. The Accounting and Finance Department faculty harbors individuals with tremendous experience in the field. Bridgewater State University professors agree that a strong foundation in accounting, a high GPA, a strong work ethic and the ability to work independently, the desire to pursue a CPA license, and involvement on and off campus sets one student apart from another, and sets BSU students apart from other universities. This is because professors utilize case studies, team projects, and Microsoft Office in almost every class. Students have learned to be self-sufficient and are prepared for "life long education" in the ever-changing workforce. BSU students are well prepared for the workforce because a core part of

Bridgewater State University's curriculum, writing and researching, is often missed from other business programs. Professors are also willing to go out of their way to aid students whether it be job search, letter of recommendation, or advice.

Career Services' goal is to help transition an individual from student to professional. Career Services provides so many amazing opportunities that fit into the student's goal. They provide one on one consulting and various different events for the three stages of looking for an internship or job: the preparation and search, the preparation and interview, and the follow-up and acceptance. They hold two Career Fairs each academic school year, and provide more than four different kinds of workshops. They also have a website dedicated to connecting students with employers. They host open hours for resume reviews, offer a Job Shadow program, and an "Etiquette Dinner" program. When utilized correctly, students will have a successful and stress-free graduation.

Bridgewater State University students are extremely confident in their standing. They work hard to keep their GPA above a 3.0 and get involved in on campus clubs and events. Students are working every day to obtain the attributes that recruiters look for. Students feel confident because of the energy professors and Career Services staff invest in them. They have prepared them in every way by providing tools and resources for whatever, whenever, no matter what. The future is bright for Bridgewater State University accounting students as we continue to grow and obtain positions once thought impossible, but now, within arms reach.

As my research shows, the goal of this thesis is to leave the reader more knowledgeable about accounting careers in general and how Bridgewater State University students obtain them. When finished reading, the reader should know what kind of careers one may find in accounting, what traits employers look for when looking at accounting students, what Bridgewater State

University does for students to keep them up to par with what employers look for, and how well they, if they are an accounting student, stand in the eyes of an employer. If a student does not know what job they may obtain with an accounting degree, after reading this paper, the hope is that the student sees that their possibilities are endless when looking at what career path they may take, and also has clear cut information to guide their desire for a position off of.

Accounting students have an important place in the job market.

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