



UW Accounting: Preparing the Next Generation of Wyoming CPAs

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The accounting discipline at the University of Wyoming is entering the 2026-27 academic year with strong enrollment, new pathways into the profession, and an increasing focus on how accounting education must evolve with the CPA profession. Fall 2026 enrollment in the BSB in Accounting is 301 students, up from 286 in Fall 2025. Enrollment in the MS in Accounting has grown from 29 to 33 students. Our accounting graduates continue to enter the profession at a high rate: our most recently compiled accounting job-placement rate is 93%.

One of our most significant developments this fall is the launch of the MS in Accounting Pathway Track, with nine students in its inaugural cohort. The track is designed for students who did not earn a bachelor's degree in accounting but want to build the accounting background needed for graduate study, CPA preparation, and professional practice. The 31-credit pathway integrates foundational graduate-level accounting work into the MSA curriculum, including Individual Taxation, Financial Reporting I, Financial Reporting II, Accounting Systems and Analytics, and Auditing I. This creates a more direct route into accounting for students coming from business and other disciplines while maintaining the technical depth expected of an MSA graduate.

CPA preparation remains central to both our undergraduate and graduate programs. Wyoming-jurisdiction candidates posted a 54.7% overall CPA Exam section pass rate in 2024, ranking seventh nationally. Section pass rates were 58.1% for AUD, 34.0% for FAR, 76.9% for REG, 50.0% for BAR, 66.7% for ISC, and 100.0% for TCP; the discipline-section results are based on relatively small candidate counts and therefore can vary substantially from year to year. These results reinforce the importance of aligning our curriculum closely with the CPA Exam's Core and Discipline structure and helping students take sections while the related coursework is still fresh.

We are also reviewing the accounting curriculum in light of changes occurring in CPA licensure and the profession more broadly. As the profession adopts alternative licensure pathways and Wyoming evaluates its own requirements, our priority is to ensure that UW graduates remain well prepared not only to meet a credit-hour threshold, but to succeed on the CPA Exam and in practice. That means preserving strong preparation in financial reporting, audit, tax, systems and analytics, while continuing to develop professional judgment, communication, and technology skills. To support that goal, eligible students in the MS in Accounting and MBA Advanced Accounting Concentration have access to Gleim CPA Exam preparation materials, allowing them to move directly from graduate coursework into a structured review process and exam preparation.

Experiential learning is another important part of that preparation. During the most recent VITA season, 23 UW student volunteers prepared approximately 760 tax returns - the largest number in the Albany County site's more than 20-year history - and contributed approximately 1,473 hours of service. Our Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic provides another level of hands-on learning. Since its launch in Spring 2022, the clinic has served more than 400 clients across 10 states and secured more than \$546,800 in refunds and corrected tax liabilities. In both programs, students learn that becoming an accounting professional requires much more than technical knowledge; it requires listening to clients, explaining complex issues clearly, exercising judgment, and serving the public.

Our faculty are also contributing research of direct relevance to the changing profession. This September, Professor Leo Yang presented his coauthored study, "Innovating the Audit Function: Evidence from Auditor Technology Patents" at the 2026 PCAOB Conference on Auditing and Capital Markets in Washington, D.C., jointly organized with *Contemporary Accounting Research*. The conference selected only 10 papers from 108 submissions. The study examines how major audit firms use internally developed technologies, including AI and automation, and finds evidence of changes in audit labor, greater demand for specialized technical talent, and improvements in audit quality. This research connects accounting scholarship with questions raised by practitioners and regulators.

Across these initiatives, our goal is straightforward: to keep UW Accounting closely connected to the CPA profession and to prepare graduates who can contribute immediately while adapting to innovations in the profession. We are grateful for the continued engagement of Wyoming CPAs as employers, mentors, recruiters, volunteers, and partners in that work.