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ETSU's Accounting Program: Creating CPAs

By

Christopher Bryant Jones

An Undergraduate Thesis Submitted in Partial to Fulfill the Requirements for the Midway

Honors Scholars Program

East Tennessee State University

Christopher Bryant Jones Date

Dr. Michelle Freeman, Mentor Date

Dr. Joel Faidley, Reader Date

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Abstract

Becoming a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) is the goal of many aspiring accountants. Universities and colleges prepare students to gain the necessary skills to pass this certification exam; however, the CPA exam is increasingly difficult, and students continuously struggle trying to pass all four parts of the CPA exam. The goal of this research project is to gain a better understanding of how ETSU can better prepare students to become CPA exam ready, since this certification leads to increased job opportunities, pay, etc. A survey was sent out to 90 previous graduate students at ETSU with both multiple choice and open-ended response questions. The data was analyzed qualitatively since 16 people responded, and broad conclusions of the results were assessed. Questions in the survey asked students to give their input on how ETSU can improve the Master of Accountancy (M.Acc.) program, identify parts of the CPA exam that were troublesome and easy, how prepared students felt for the CPA exam, etc. The findings of this survey presented a wide range of opinions on ETSU's ability to prepare students for the CPA exam and offered valuable insight to be considered.

Background

The pinnacle goal of many aspiring accountants is to become a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) because this certification showcases honesty, flexible job options, academic achievement, and serves as a symbol for being a qualified professional in the field of accountancy. Universities prepare accounting students for the CPA exam with a rigorous curriculum and are successful in this regard; however, students across the nation continuously struggle with this exam. The goal of this research is to gain a better understanding of new ways that East Tennessee State University's College of Business and Technology can help prepare students for the CPA exam. This study will focus on former accounting graduate students to gain their perspectives of how prepared they felt for the CPA exam, and the barriers of the exam that most concerned them. To conduct this research, I surveyed previous accounting graduate students from ETSU with various questions to provide more insight into solving this ongoing dilemma.

Literature Review

Accountants are involved in all aspects of a business. Accountants help create financial statements, audit companies, analyze cost processes, provide tax services, and give consulting advice to clients. Accountants on television are portrayed as individuals who like structured work tasks and are detail oriented. Being an accountant, however, is not simply a black and white number crunching job but is instead a career that requires a lot of professional judgement. Becoming a CPA gives accountants the ability to have a multitude of career options outside of just simply working in a cubicle. For example, CPAs can enjoy working in a variety of jobs including being an IT auditor, forensic accountant, personal financial advisor to celebrities,

sports accountant, and state auditor. The job possibilities are endless for a CPA but gaining that CPA credential is much easier said than done.

Becoming a Certified Public Accountant is a long process consisting of four criteria in Tennessee: 150 hours of college coursework with a fixed amount of required accounting classes, a passing grade on all four parts of the CPA exam, a year of experience in public accounting or other approved experience, and a 90% or better on an ethics exam (Aghimien, 2010). The rationale for the 150 hours of course credit is that further education helps give an accounting student more knowledge in an ever-changing field, thus preparing the individual for not only the CPA exam but also for the workplace (Rail et al., 2019). After these educational requirements are met, a candidate may apply for the CPA license in his or her state and pay a fixed fee for that licensure. Certain states now allow students to sit for the CPA exam with a minimum of 120 hours of education, but 150 hours are still required to receive a CPA license (Booker et al., 2013). Providing students with the opportunity to sit for the exam by having only 120 credit hours allows test takers to complete sections of the exam while certain material is still fresh on their mind and gives candidates more flexible options to meet the requirements for becoming a CPA.

Accounting salaries vary in degree depending on experience and certification. New accounting graduates starting median salary is in the mid-\$50,000 range, and in 2017 more experienced accountants received a wage of approximately \$69,350 ("How Much," 2018). Higher pay levels, such as the top 10% of accountants, earned approximately \$122,000, which is a result of both experience and becoming a CPA ("How Much," 2018). The main distinction between a CPA and an accountant is that a CPA has the authority to sign his or her name on an

audit report, which indicates that a public company follows accounting standards (Kranacher, 2006).

The CPA exam has four parts—Auditing and Attestation (AUD), Financial Accounting and Reporting (FAR), Business Environment and Concepts (BEC), and Regulation (REG)—all sections have a four-hour window, and each section must be completed within 18 months with a passing grade (“CPA Exam,” 2019). The CPA exam consists of a multitude of multiple-choice questions and task-based simulation exercises, which are real-life type situation questions used as critical thinking exercises for a student to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the material presented. Only the BEC part of the CPA exam currently has a written communication task unlike the rest of the test (“CPA Exam: CPA Exam Schedule,” n.d.). According to the AICPA, the 2020 pass rates in the first quarter of the year for each individual exam include the following: AUD 47.97%, BEC 61.76%, FAR 46.37%, and REG 55.42% (“CPA Exam Pass Rates,” n.d.). This dataset acknowledges the difficulty of the CPA exam, and the rigorous amount of time it takes to pass all four parts of the exam.

As of January 12, 2021, the Becker CPA review Pro version costs \$3,499 with unlimited access to systematic coaching to all parts of the exam. Because of costs like this, many students may be unable to afford proper study resources. ETSU currently partners with Gleim CPA Review to alleviate this cost burden with a partnership deal for \$995. The rationale for the 150-hour education requirement could be a significant factor in why the number of accounting majors and CPA exam test takers continue to decline (Schroeder, 2004). The total amount of time studying for the CPA exam varies. If an individual has been out of school for quite some time, then an additional 10-15% of studying may be required (O. Callaghan et al., 2010). If a person wants to study a total of 450 hours for the exam within the 78-week time limit, then each week

would require 6 hours of studying (O. 'Callaghan et al., 2010). The total amount of studying time most recommended consists of anywhere from 330-440 hours of prep consisting of the following: FAR 120-160 hours, AUD 60-90 hours, REG 90-110 hours, and BEC 60-80 hours (Ng, 2013). FAR is often seen by most students as being the most difficult because of the vast amount of material this section covers and thus is the reason why it is recommended for candidates to prepare the most for this section. The CPA exam is so challenging that only approximately 20 percent of participants pass all four sections of the exam on their first try (Ng, 2013). Candidates who truly put forth the time and energy to pass all four sections of the CPA exam even after failure, however, had a success rating of approximately seven to eight out of ten (Ng, 2013).

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding as to what former ETSU graduate accounting students believe that the accounting program could do to better prepare students to pass the CPA exam. As of this moment, based on the current information available that I found, no research has been conducted, at least in the Appalachian Highlands, that evaluates this topic.

Methodology

A survey was the tool chosen to gather data from former graduate accounting students who graduated between Fall 2016 and Summer 2020 to help answer the following question: What can ETSU do to effectively prepare students for the CPA exam? After receiving IRB approval, the survey was distributed at the beginning of the Fall 2020 semester to participants via email using ETSU REDCap to conduct the survey. All participants were asked to verify that they

were graduates of ETSU's Master of Accountancy program and at least 18 years of age or older [Appendix B].

Survey questions listed in Appendix A were developed to gain a better perspective into the needs of ETSU's accounting students. All the questions asked alumni to choose one or more answer choices, depending on the format of the question, that best describes their situation. Certain questions asked the participant to explain their reasoning so that a basis of comparison could be made. Other questions such as age and gender were asked for clarification of factors that could influence the results. The survey was given to 90 former graduates without any direct identifiers to ensure privacy and confidentiality, because the goal of this survey is to come to broad conclusions about the data itself.

Results

Of the 90 participants that the survey was distributed to, 21 people agreed to take the survey. Only 16 of these people completed the survey, and the other five participants did not answer any of the questions except for the consensus question. Because of this, those five results were not used in the data analysis of this survey.

The demographic questions 18-19 [Appendix A] asked participants about their age and gender. The purpose of these questions was to better understand the target audience of the survey so reasonable conclusions could be made. Seven males and nine females completed the survey. Eleven participants were between the ages of 25-29, two between 30-34, two between 35-40, and one participant was between the ages of 40-44.

The first question asked whether previous graduate students at ETSU had taken the CPA exam. Twelve participants marked the answer choice yes and four chose no. Of these four

participants, one person stated that she took the Chinese version of the exam. To gain a clearer consensus of the data, this research will treat her answer choice as if she selected yes to the question. Two of the remaining three participants gave the following reason for why they still have not taken the CPA exam:

- “I was a full time employee while in school. I did not feel prepared to take the test and have not dedicated the time to studying after graduation to feel prepared.”
- “I have taken 2 parts and failed because I didn't study. Plan to begin the process again in 2021.”

The second question asked participants to clarify whether they felt prepared for the CPA exam prior to taking the exam. The results for this question were mixed with seven choosing yes, seven no, one other, and one choosing not to answer this question. The person who marked other as their answer said, “I have not taken any exam because I didn't feel prepared.” Five out of the seven people that marked yes gave the following reason for why they felt prepared:

- “I took the sections roughly at the end of the master's seminars in each area (ie I took FIN in late April while finishing up the Financial seminar). I also used an online MC review.”
- “Additional preparation programs from Becker.”
- “Using Becker study material.”
- “I used the Becker Review course. However, I felt that the ETSU M.Acc program appropriately prepared me, because there wasn't any material in Becker that I hadn't been exposed to at ETSU.”
- “I have learned about one year for the exam.”

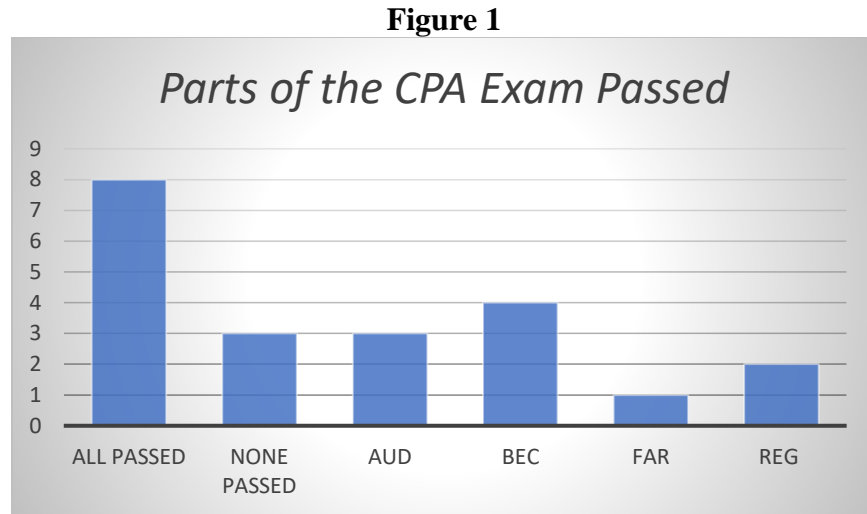
The people that marked no had the following responses:

- “Volume on information cannot be covered in classes, but also the classes did not mirror the exam.”
- “I didn't study initially lol.”
- “There's no past experience to prepare you for this type of exam. There's no idea of what to actually expect. I took Becker's practice exams, which actually were tougher than the real exam, but it still doesn't let you feel prepared going into the first one.”
- “Really had no idea what to expect as far as difficulty goes and wasn't sure my ‘study plan’ was enough to get the job done.”
- “Can you really be prepared?”
- “Overall, I felt pretty unprepared for the first exam I took (FAR). I went through all the material in Becker Self Study & Final Review programs, but I felt like I still didn't have everything nailed down like I was hoping at that point.”
- “I didn't study much.”

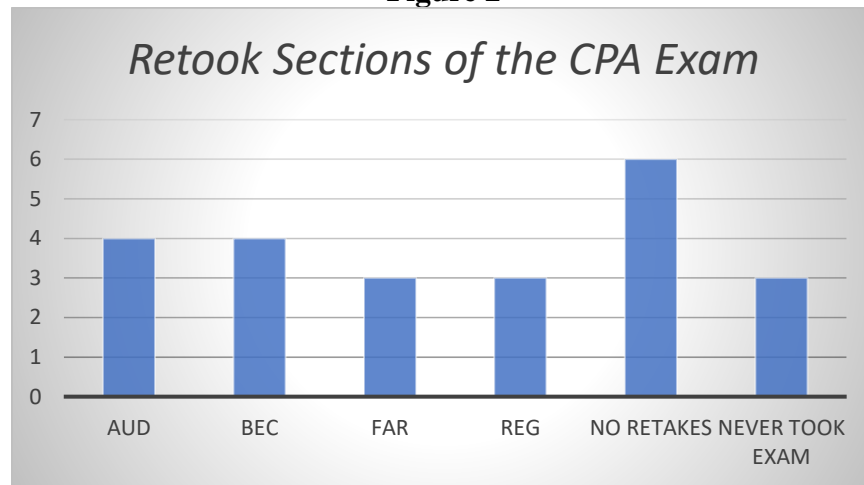
The third question asked participants to mark all parts of the CPA exam that they have passed (see Figure 1). Of the 16 participants who completed the survey, half have passed all four sections of the CPA exam. Three participants have yet to pass any section of the CPA exam, and of the remaining sections, BEC was the most passed section. The remaining five participants have successfully passed the following sections of the CPA exam:

- Participant one: AUD, BEC, and REG
- Participant two: BEC
- Participant three: REG
- Participant four: AUD, BEC, and FAR
- Participant five: AUD and BEC

The results surveyed show that FAR is the least passed section of the exam. This can be most likely attributed to the fact that FAR is widely considered the most difficult section of the exam due to the volume of material it covers.



The fourth question was asked to expand upon the responses of the third question to gain insight into what sections of the CPA exam that students have had the most difficult time passing (see Figure 2). This question allowed participants to mark as many answer choices that apply, and based on the data collected, both BEC and AUD were the most retaken sections of the CPA exam. According to the data collected, six participants who took the CPA exam did not have to repeat any sections, and three participants never took any sections of the CPA exam.

Figure 2

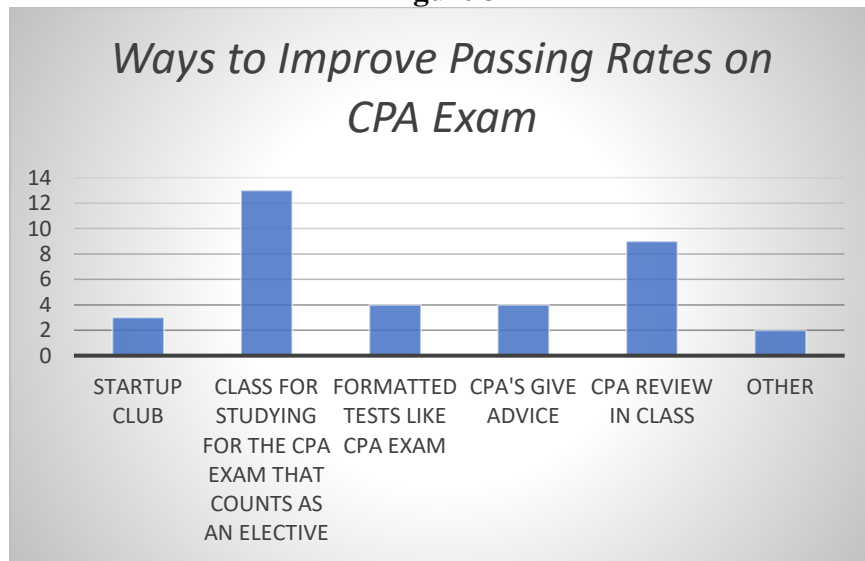
The fifth question was asked to gauge previous graduate students on whether they would have been interested if ETSU had other opportunities outside of the classroom to help students prepare for the CPA exam. Eight participants stated that they would have been very interested, seven participants responded that they would have been somewhat interested, and one stated no interest.

Participants of the survey were then asked to give a recommendation as to ways that ETSU could better prepare students for the CPA exam. This question allowed participants to mark as many answer choices that apply, as well as an option to give an open-ended response. Based on the 16 survey results, located in Figure 3, one participant did not answer this question. Thirteen of the remaining fifteen who answered this question responded that ETSU should consider creating an elective class with the sole purpose of helping accounting students prepare for the CPA exam. The second most desired choice for ETSU to improve passing rates for the CPA Exam would be to include a CPA review in all or most M.Acc. classes. By including a designated CPA review in M.Acc. classes, graduate students are in effect meeting the 150-hour education requirements and preparing for the CPA exam simultaneously. Only four people

responded that they would be interested in having tests formatted like the CPA exam, along with four people being interested in receiving advice from CPAs. Surprisingly, only three people marked that they would be interested in ETSU having a start-up club whose sole purpose is to assist struggling students on certain portions of the CPA exam. Two participants gave the following suggestions to help improve the passing rates on the CPA exam:

- “Please get rid of the course that mainly consists of Gleim quizzes. That class actually made it impossible for me to study for the CPA exam during the semester. It does nothing to prepare you.”
- “Provide some information about just applying for and preparing for the exams. Don't assume everyone in an Accounting class has that knowledge. Older students may be returning after a long absence from school and needs guidance for the basic stuff of the CPA exam.”

Figure 3



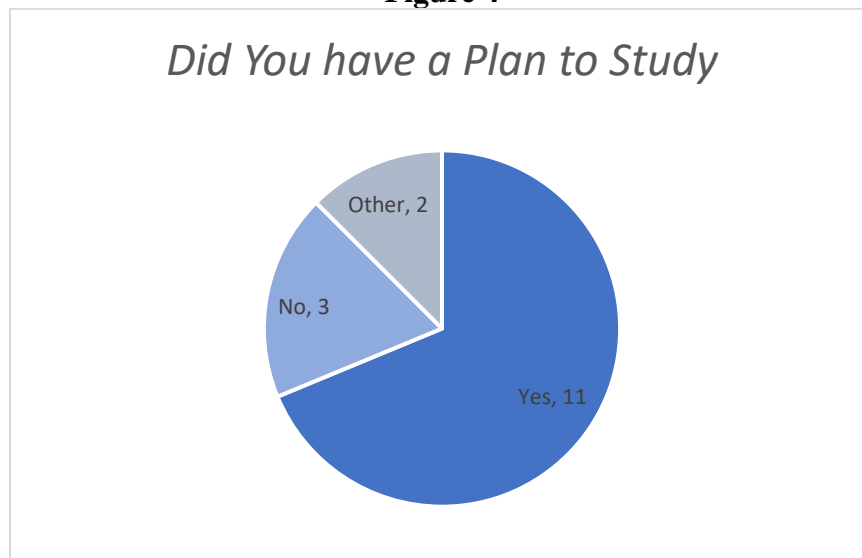
The seventh survey question asked participants to give a recommendation on whether ETSU should have one professor dedicated to offering students' knowledge about the CPA exam

and answering any questions a student has regarding the CPA exam. The goal of this question was to see whether ETSU could give students a clearer understanding of the challenges in becoming a CPA. Thirteen out of sixteen responses indicated that ETSU should have a one stop shop faculty member whose goal is to help students better understand/prepare for the CPA exam.

Participants were then asked to state whether they had a plan for studying for the CPA exam or if they did not know how/when to study (see Figure 4). Eleven participants stated that they did in fact know how to prepare for the CPA exam, while three participants did not know how/when to study for the CPA exam. None of the sixteen responses chose undecided as an answer but two people gave other insight to this question as follows:

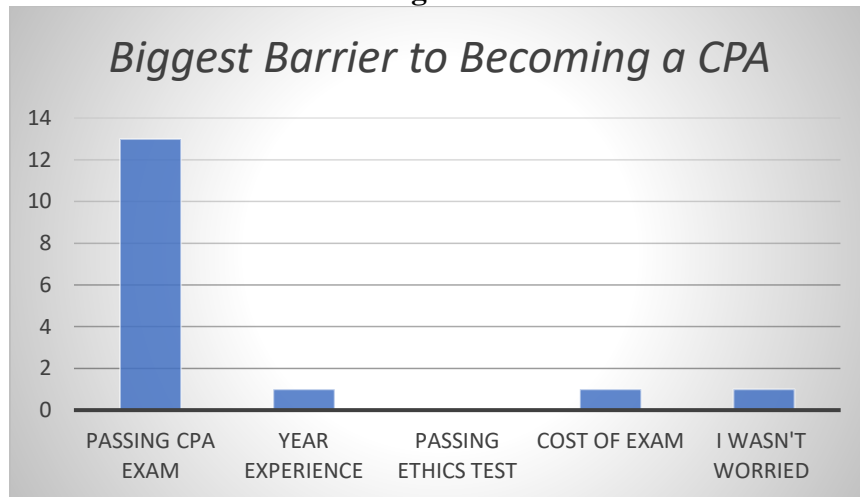
- “I had a plan, but the course that Gleim quizzes for every section took up so much time that it was impossible to seriously study for the exam using my Becker study materials.”
- “Studying for the exam on top of studying for all my other classes was just too overwhelming for me.”

Figure 4

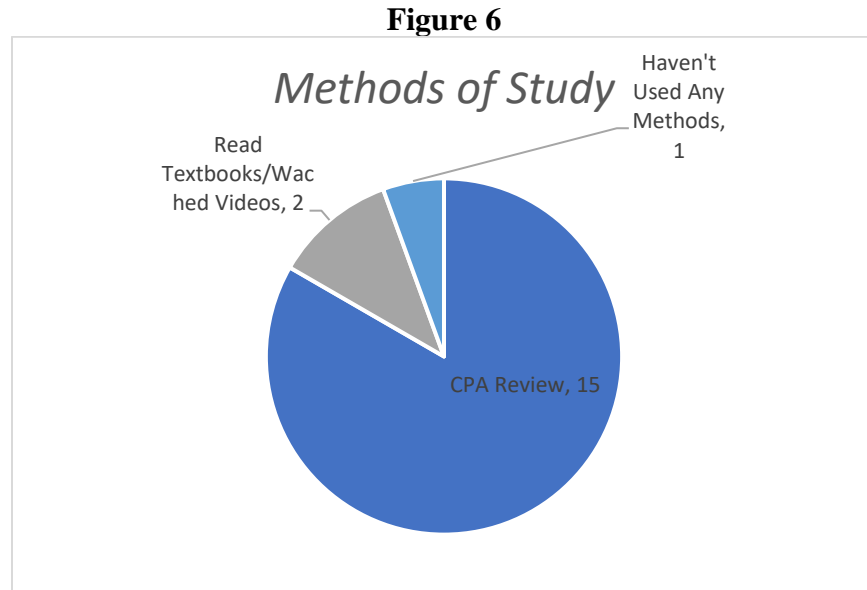


The ninth question asked students to state the most difficult aspect about trying to become a CPA (see Figure 5). Thirteen participants acknowledged that passing all four parts of the CPA exam causes the most stress to aspiring accountants. The remaining participants each had differing answers: one being worried about the cost of the exam, one gaining a year of qualified experience, and another not being worried about any aspects in becoming a CPA.

Figure 5

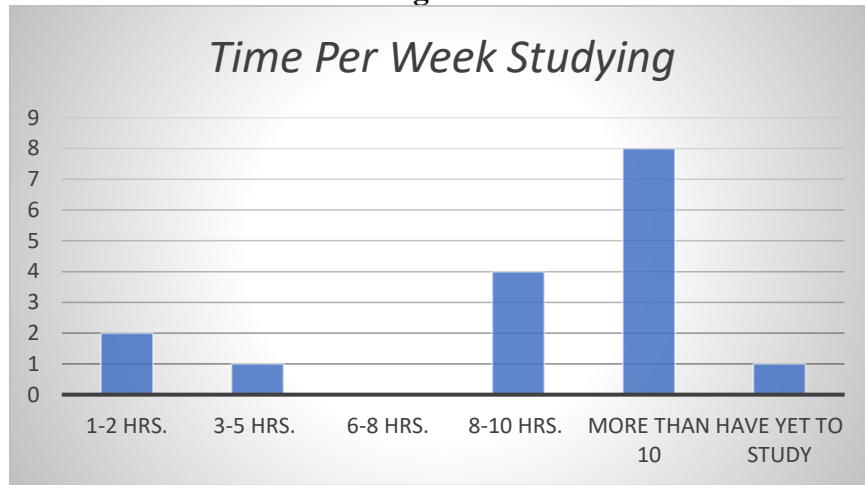


Participants were then asked to acknowledge what methods they used to prepare for the CPA exam by marking all answer choices that apply. The results of this question, located in Figure 6, show that the majority of previous graduate students from ETSU used Becker, Gleim, or some other form of CPA review to study for the exam. Only two people stated that they used accounting textbooks and one person has yet to prepare for the CPA exam. The eight individuals who passed all four sections of the CPA exam only used a dedicated CPA review such as Becker or Gleim to study.



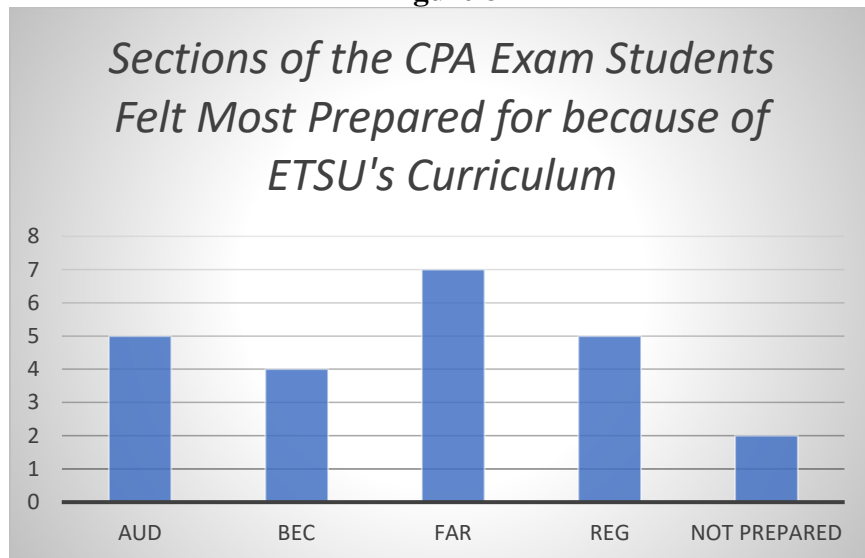
The eleventh question asked participants to select how long they spent preparing for the CPA exam on a weekly basis once they began studying (see Figure 7). The results displayed that eight participants spent on average 10 hours or more each week studying for the CPA exam. Four participants spent 8-10 hours per week, two spent 1-2 hours per week, one spent 3-5 hours per week, and one participant has yet to study for the CPA exam. The eight participants who have passed all four sections of the CPA exam had five students who spent more than ten hours a week studying, two who spent between 8-10 hours, and one participant spent between 3-5 hours per week studying.

Figure 7



Participants were then asked to state which part of the CPA exam they felt the most prepared for because of ETSU's curriculum. Students were asked to mark as many answer choices that applied and give justification for their answer. Based on the data collected, located in Figure 8, most responses acknowledged that ETSU's curriculum most suitably prepares students for the FAR section of the CPA Exam. Both AUD and REG were tied with five total responses, followed by BEC with four responses, and two participants stated that they did not feel prepared for the CPA exam at all because of ETSU's curriculum.

Figure 8



Of these results collected, four people did not explain their answer, but twelve participants elaborated, as can be seen below:

Which part(s) of the CPA exam did you feel most prepared for because of ETSU's curriculum, and the studying you did for the CPA exam?

FAR Reasoning

- 1) "Intermediate, Advanced, Cost, and Financial MAcc course all consist of material covered on the exam."
- 2) "I feel like the financial accounting courses at ETSU did a good job of covering most of the topics that were on the FAR exam."

BEC Reasoning

- 1) "Believe it or not Dr. Becker teaches the majority of what is on BEC."

REG Reasoning

- 1) "I earned a MAcc with a concentration in Tax, so I was familiar with all of the concepts reviewed by Becker and covered in the exam."
- 2) "I had three tax related internships."
- 3) "Schneider's tax classes were the most in depth."

AUD and FAR

- 1) "Easy."

AUD and BEC

- 1) "Audit and BEC were my strongest because they took the least amount of time in Becker to complete. I was really able to hone in on my weakest areas for these exams."
- 2) "The curriculum from classes at ETSU correlated most closely with prep curriculum for these sections."

FAR and REG

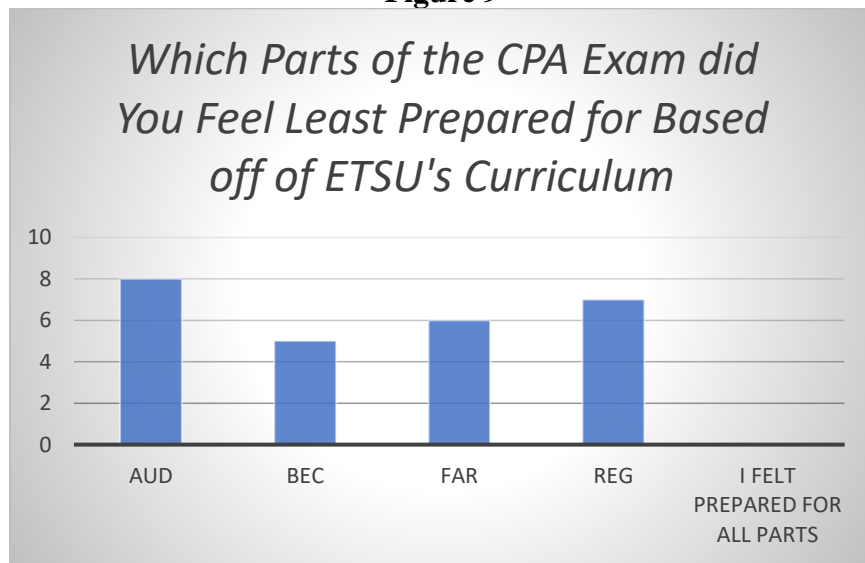
- 1) "Took FAR right after the class and tax class was well rounded."
- 2) "These two had specific seminars I remember thinking were good preparation."

AUD, BEC, and FAR

- 1) "The course materials from Dr. Freeman's Seminar in Financial Accounting, Dr. Becker's Cost Accounting, and Dr. Burkette's Audit 1 prepared me the most."

Survey participants were then asked to mark all sections of the CPA exam that they felt the least prepared for because of ETSU's curriculum (see Figure 9). The goal of this question was to gain insight into problematic areas of the CPA exam and have participants give feedback to support their answer. The results of this question showed that students felt the least prepared for the AUD section of the CPA exam with eight total responses. AUD was closely followed with REG having seven responses, FAR six, and BEC with five responses. Zero people felt prepared for all four parts of the CPA exam.

Figure 9



Participants were then asked to give an explanation behind their answer so that the constructive feedback can be used to better improve ETSU's M.Acc. program, as can be seen below:

What Parts of the CPA Exam Did You Feel Least Prepared for?

AUD

- 1) "The AUD section of the exam was more technical than the audit classes that I had taken."
- 2) "We have very little exposure to auditing in both the undergrad and grad program and I didn't think ETSU's audit courses really taught me much of what I was expected to know on the exam, with the exception of learning the auditing vernacular."

BEC

- 1) "Complex."
- 2) "I had not seen most of it."

REG

- 1) "Dr. Masino's final semester as a professor."
- 2) "I find tax to be confusing all around."
- 3) "I only took 2 tax classes."

AUD, BEC, FAR, REG

- 1) "I didn't study."
- 2) "It has been so long since I had the undergrad courses that I struggled just to do the graduate classes. I couldn't imagine doing the exam straight out of school."

FAR, REG

- 1) "FAR was my first exam I took so I was naturally very concerned about my first exam. REG contains Tax, which is definitely my weakest area. REG - I was not required to take a pass-through taxation course which was a significant portion of the exam. There were other complications with taxation instructor that were not the fault of ETSU's M.Acc program. I felt unprepared for FAR because I took it too long after my coursework. Additionally a government accounting class would have been helpful."

AUD, BEC

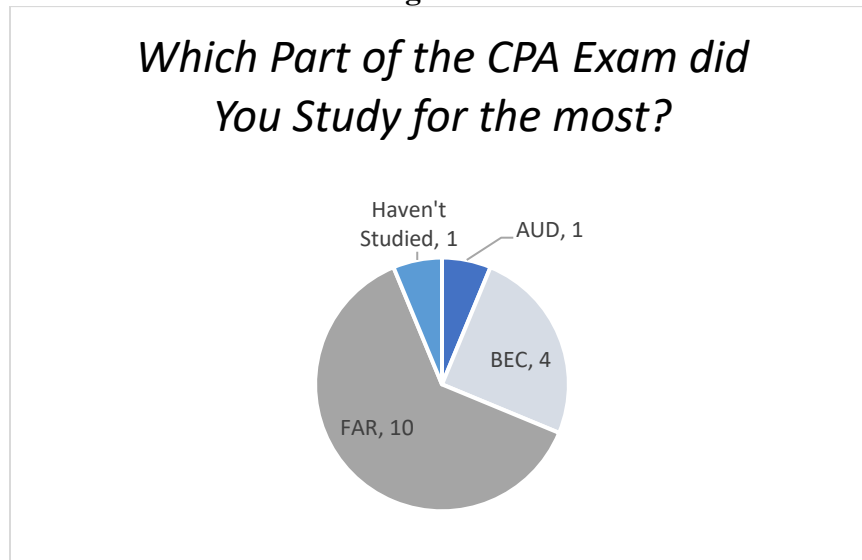
- 1) "I remember the audit seminar being more cases, and that wasn't particularly good prep I didn't think. BEC was my last one and I just did not take much time for the material."

AUD, FAR

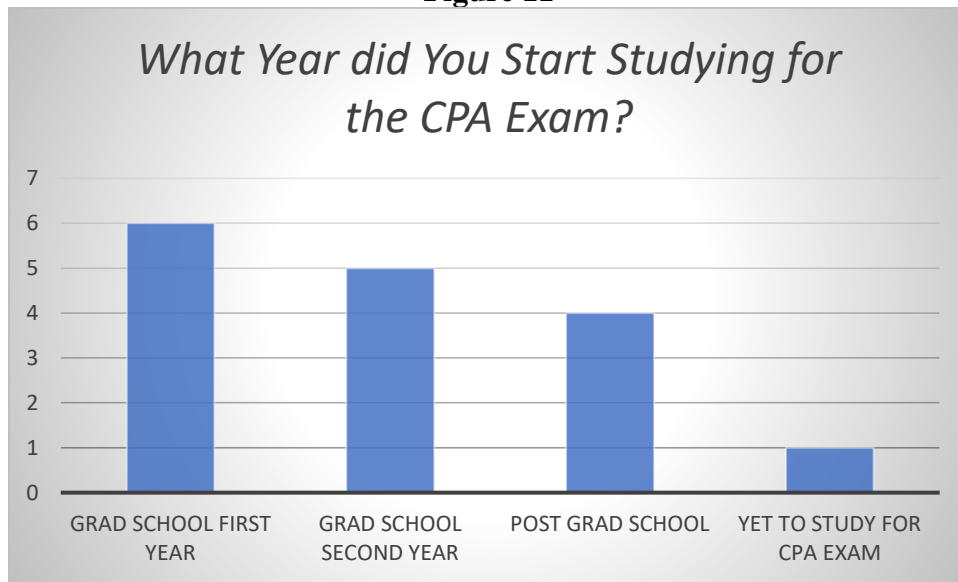
- 1) "The material was not covered well in the current MAcc curriculum."

The next analytical question asked students to select which part of the CPA exam they studied for the most (see Figure 10). Ten students chose FAR, which is most likely because of the amount of material this section covers. Four students selected that BEC was the next most studied part of the CPA exam; followed with one noting AUD, and one person has yet to study for the CPA exam.

Figure 10



The seventeenth question asked participants to state when they began studying for the CPA exam (see Figure 11). None of the participants began studying for the CPA exam during the undergraduate program at ETSU or at a different university. Only one person who completed the survey has yet to study for the CPA exam, but six people selected that they began studying for the CPA exam during the first year of graduate school. Five participants began studying for the CPA exam during the second year of graduate school and everyone else began studying for the CPA exam after graduate school.

Figure 11

The final question asked participants to give any comments/thoughts on the survey. This question only had seven total responses but gave students a chance to add their perspective on their own experiences at ETSU. The results are as follows:

- “Do more practice quiz.”
- “I started studying for the CPA exam during Summer 2018 in my M.Acc program. I basically just used Becker for studying because I feel like my classes at ETSU didn't really prepare me for the exam other than some general knowledge. The only thing I remember the classes specifically doing for CPA exam prep was assign us quizzes from Gleim that were mock exam questions. However, we were not given access to gleim lecture/review software to actually help answer the quizzes, so everyone was flying blind trying to answer the questions. We never reviewed the quizzes in-class, so they really were a waste of time in my opinion. I fortunately passed all 4 parts of the exam with an average of 90, but the prep work for the exam in my classes helped very little.”

- “I do not feel that the Gleim review that was mandatory during my time in the M.Acc program was beneficial. If anything, it deterred me from wanting to take the CPA exam. In conjunction with an otherwise full grad school course load, I could not give the Gleim course the time necessary to actually feel prepared for the exams. I got through the class, then purchased and prepared using Becker to actually study for the exams.”
- “ETSU needs to match up to UTs CPA requirements for students.”
- “I think a 1-hour class each semester on a CPA test section would be very helpful. I think all masters students need both corporate and pass-through tax regardless of concentration selected, especially if the program continues to feeding students to local firms.”
- “I took BEC and AUD to get a baseline score with no studying initially. Since then I have been more serious about the process. FYI there is a class in grad school dedicated to the CPA. Good luck with your paper!”
- “Incorporating the exam into the classes would be to beneficial. Possibly having an outline of classes and the corresponding exam that could be laid out at the beginning of the program to guide students.”

Limitations and Discussion

Certain limitations of this proposal include the sample size and the fact this sample was only distributed once to former ETSU students. Other limitations such as honesty of answering each question could also skew the data. The overall purpose of this proposal is to help not only ETSU's College of Business and Technology in preparing students for the CPA exam but also to provide a guide to other universities in assessing their CPA program as well.

The CPA exam is a difficult endeavor for accounting students to tackle and exploring new ways to help students pass the CPA exam is significant. Instead of just asking professors what they believe could help, this research was conducted to gain only the student's perspective. Because of the sample size, data collected was studied using qualitative analysis only; however, if this topic was to be examined further, using quantitative analysis could provide additional insight into refining the results. Further research could be conducted to gain a better understanding of ways to improve the passing rates of the CPA exam by surveying current accounting students instead of former accounting students. By surveying current accounting students and their misconceptions about the CPA exam, a college will be able to pinpoint other areas for improvement.

Overall, the findings of this survey give a wide perspective of ETSU's M.Acc. program. According to the results, FAR is the least passed section of the exam but the sections BEC and AUD had the most retakes. Most participants began studying for the CPA exam as a freshman in graduate school, spent over ten hours a week in preparation, and used a CPA review to prepare for the exam. Students felt the most prepared for the FAR section of the CPA exam because of ETSU's curriculum and the least prepared for AUD.

This research was conducted to answer the question of how ETSU can better prepare students for the CPA exam. The eight participants who passed all four parts of the CPA exam used Becker/Gleim to study and nothing else. Because of this, ETSU's M.Acc. program should consider communicating with current students their thoughts on Becker/Gleim, since several survey participants had mixed assessments on these CPA review courses.

A lot of the students demonstrated that it was hard for them to find time to study for the exam because of the course load that a graduate degree requires. The survey responses show that

ETSU could potentially mitigate this problem by finding innovative ways to incorporate the CPA exam. Accounting is a diverse major with a large amount of material. The more students consistently utilize the knowledge they learn in the classroom, the easier it can be retained. Thirteen of 16 participants responded that ETSU should consider creating an elective class with the sole purpose of helping accounting students prepare for the CPA exam. Having students give open ended comments and suggestions gives a unique perspective to this research that should be considered further in evaluating ETSU's M.Acc. program.

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Appendix A

1. Have you taken the CPA exam?
 - Yes, I have taken the exam
 - No (Please explain why you haven't taken the exam yet)

2. Did you feel prepared for the CPA exam upon your first time taking the exam?
 - Yes (Please explain why or what contributed the most to you feeling prepared for the exam)
 - Maybe
 - No (Please explain why or what contributed the most to you not feeling prepared for the exam)
 - Other (Please explain)

3. What parts of the CPA exam have you passed? (Mark all that apply)
 - AUD
 - BEC
 - FAR
 - REG
 - I have not passed any parts of the CPA exam

4. Did you have to retake sections of the CPA exam and if so which ones? (Mark all that apply)
 - AUD
 - BEC
 - FAR
 - REG
 - I did not have to repeat any parts of the exam
 - I have not taken the CPA exam yet

5. Would you have been interested if ETSU had other opportunities outside of class to help students pass the CPA exam?
 - Very Interested
 - Somewhat Interested
 - Neutral
 - Slightly Interested
 - Not Interested

6. Which method of studying prep do you believe ETSU could do to help students pass the exam? (Mark all that apply)
 - A startup club that in depth reviews a certain section of the CPA exam that most students struggle with (AUD, BEC, FAR, REG)
 - A class that could count as elective credit hours that its sole purpose is to prepare you for the CPA exam

- Tests you have in the accounting department are formatted like the CPA exam with a computer-based design and multiple-choice questions with application problems
 - Have CPA's come to ETSU to give advice about the exam
 - Using a dedicated CPA review system in all or most M.Acc. classes
 - Other (Please explain)
7. Do you believe that it would be a good idea for ETSU to have a specific accounting faculty member that is a one stop shop for anything to do with the CPA exam regarding answering CPA exam accounting questions and providing suggestions about the test?
- Yes
 - No
8. When at ETSU, did you have a plan for studying for the CPA exam or did you not know when or how to study for the exam?
- Yes, I had a plan
 - No, I did not know when or how to begin studying for the test
 - Undecided
 - Other (Please explain)
9. What do you believe was the biggest barrier to you when you decided to try and become a CPA?
- The 150-hour education requirement
 - Passing all four parts of the CPA exam
 - Gaining a year of qualified experience
 - Passing the ethics test with a 90% or better
 - The cost of the exam
 - I was not worried about any of these barriers
10. What did you do to prepare for the CPA exam? (Mark as many that apply)
- CPA Review materials such as Gleim, Becker, etc.
 - A CPA tutor helped me study
 - Watched accounting videos and read from accounting textbooks
 - I used other methods (Please explain)
 - I have not used any methods yet
11. How much time each week when you started studying did you prepare for this exam?
- 1-2 hours
 - 3-5 hours
 - 6-8 hours
 - 8-10 hours
 - More than 10 hours
 - I have not started studying for the exam

12. Which part(s) of the CPA exam did you feel most prepared for because of ETSU's curriculum and the studying you did for the CPA exam? (Mark as many that apply)
- AUD
 - BEC
 - FAR
 - REG
 - I did not feel prepared for any of the parts of the exam
13. Why did you feel the most prepared for this part(s) of the exam?
14. Which part(s) of the CPA exam did you feel the least prepared for? (Mark as many that apply)
- AUD
 - BEC
 - FAR
 - REG
 - I felt prepared for all parts
15. Why did you feel the least prepared for this part(s) of the exam?
16. Which part of the CPA exam did you spend the most amount of time studying for?
- AUD
 - BEC
 - FAR
 - REG
 - I have not started studying for the CPA exam yet
17. What year did you start studying for the CPA exam?
- Freshman
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior
 - Grad school first year
 - Grad school second year
 - I have not started studying for the CPA exam
 - Other (Please explain)
18. What is your age?
- 18-19
 - 20-24
 - 25-29
 - 30-34

- 35-39
- 40-44
- 45-over

19. Are you male or female?

- Male
- Female

20. Do you have any comments about this survey or anything to add?

Appendix B

Dear Participant:

My name is Christopher Jones and I am a student at East Tennessee State University. I am working on my undergraduate thesis in accounting in order to finish my bachelor's degree. The name of my research study is ETSU's Accounting Program: Creating CPA's.

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding into new ways that ETSU's College of Business and Technology can help prepare students for the CPA exam by gaining a former accounting graduate student's perspective on how prepared they felt for the CPA exam, as well as barriers that concerned students. I would like to give a brief online survey to former 18 years of age or older ETSU accounting graduate students who presently live in the United States using ETSU REDCap. It should only take about five minutes to finish. You will be asked questions about methods that ETSU can undertake to help more students pass the exam, concerns of the CPA exam, the hours of studying you prepared for the exam, etc. Since this study deals with general questions without direct identifiers of the individual answering the questions, there are no known risks that could occur. There are no benefits such as money or reward incentives for participating in the study. Participants in the study also won't be gaining any new knowledge for completing the study but instead their knowledge will be used to benefit society as a whole.

Your confidentiality will be protected as best we can. Since we are using technology, no guarantees can be made about the interception of data sent over the Internet by any third parties, just like with emails. We will make every effort to make sure that your name is not linked with your answers. ETSU REDCap has security features that will be used: IP addresses will not be collected, and the survey will be anonymous. Although your rights and privacy will be protected, ETSU IRB and the people working on this research, Christopher Jones and Dr. Michelle Freeman, can view the study records.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to take part in this study. You can quit at any time. You may skip any questions you do not want to answer, or you can exit the online survey form if you want to stop completely. If you quit or decide not to take part, the benefits or treatment that you would otherwise get will not be changed.

If you have any research-related questions or problems, you may contact me, Christopher Jones, at jonescb1@etsu.edu. I am working on this project together with my teacher, Dr. Michelle Freeman. You may reach her at freemanms@mail.etsu.edu. Also, you may call the chairperson of the IRB at ETSU at (423) 439-6054 if you have questions about your rights as a research subject. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone who is not with the research team or if you cannot reach the research team, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423/439-6055 or 423/439-6002.

Sincerely,

Christopher Jones

Clicking the AGREE button below indicates

- I have read the above information
 - I agree to volunteer
 - I am at least 18 years old
 - I am a former graduate of the program
- I AGREE
- I DO NOT AGREE