

CPA LANDS IN LEBANON

The CPA exam has finally landed in Lebanon! Seize this opportunity to learn more about how it can assist you in your career. Craig Mills, AICPA Vice President of Examinations and CPE, AICPA, and Colleen Conrad, Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer, NASBA, talk to The Gate in an exclusive one-on-one.

By Dalla Saad



COLLEEN CONRAD



CRAIG MILLS

TG: WHAT KIND OF BACKGROUND SHOULD ONE HAVE IN ORDER TO TAKE THE CPA EXAM?

CM: Candidates who wish to pursue a career as a U.S. CPA must obtain licensure. The Uniform CPA Examination is one of the "Three Es" – Education, Examination, and Experience – that make up the requirements for CPA licensure. As a result, passing the CPA Examination is not sufficient – in itself – to qualify for licensure. Of the three requirements, only the CPA Examination is uniform and accepted for CPA licensure by all U.S. jurisdictions. Education and experience requirements may vary from one jurisdiction to another. Typically, states require 120 or 150 hours of education, with a certain number of hours in accounting and one or more years of work experience. Before candidates take the exam, they should pick the state or jurisdiction they wish to be-

come licensed in and then contact that state's Board of Accountancy for details on their requirements.

TG: HOW DOES THE CPA HELP ONE'S CAREER?

CM: The U.S. CPA license is the premier accounting credential in the United States, backed by a rigorous exam, strict licensing requirements and a code of ethics, and is very highly regarded throughout the world. The CPA pathway prepares professionals for today's global business environment and expands career opportunities. Being a CPA provides employers with an objective measurement of an applicant's skills and knowledge in finance and accounting, and also demonstrates proficiency in English and an international mind for business. Additionally, research has shown that the job market for CPAs is stronger than it is for non-licensed accountants and that traditionally they earn up to 10% more than non-CPAs.

TG: TO WHOM DO YOU RECOMMEND THIS EXAM MOSTLY?

CM: Current students of accounting who wish to join a thriving global profession and wish to convey their dedication and expertise to potential employers. Additionally, the U.S. CPA is a valuable credential for those currently employed as accountants, both in Lebanon and throughout the

world, who wish to advance their careers and demonstrate their commitment to their chosen profession.

TG: WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO PREPARE FOR THIS EXAM?

CM: There are a number of review course providers who have material, which will help you prepare for the exam; however, AICPA and NASBA do not endorse any specific review course providers. The AICPA website has a tutorial which serves as a guided tour of the CPA Examination. It demonstrates the functionality of question types, tools, resources and navigation found in the Uniform CPA Examination. There are also sample tests that provide candidates with a preview of the CPA Examination experience. It is a functional replica of the CPA Examination through which candidates can become familiar with the Examination's format, in an interactive environment. In addition, the AICPA's This Way to CPA website has a mobile application, available for both Apple and Android devices, which makes preparing for the exam easier for candidates.

TG: DO YOU RECOMMEND FRESH UNDERGRADS TO TAKE THE EXAM RIGHT AWAY, OR TO GAIN SOME WORK EXPERIENCE FIRST?

CM: Since every licensing jurisdiction in the U.S. except Puerto Rico has an experience requirement in

place for initial licensure, it is crucial that those who wish to become CPAs have a plan in place to gain some work experience before they can become licensed. Roughly half the states have a one-year "general experience" requirement, which can be met with experience in government, industry, academia or public practice verified by a licensee. The additional states have experience requirements in place, which vary in some significant ways from the one-year of general experience.

TG: HOW MUCH DOES TAKING THE EXAM COST?

CC: The total cost includes application and administration fees, in addition to the examination fees. The cost varies for each jurisdiction. Refer to your jurisdiction's application materials for additional information. The majority of candidates from the Middle East apply to the states of New Hampshire and Colorado. Regardless of which Board of Accountancy has declared you eligible for the examination, in addition to paying any domestic testing fees, you must pay additional fees for each examination section you plan to take internationally.

TG: IS THE CPA LICENSE EQUIVALENT IN VALUE TO A MASTER'S DEGREE?

CC: The CPA license is a professional credential and is not an educational degree. Individuals that obtain a Master's Degree and do not obtain a CPA license will not be able to hold themselves out as a CPA and perform accounting services as a licensed CPA.

TG: WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE EXAM?

CC: Your residency status determines the test centers in which you are eligible to take the Uniform CPA Examination. The educational requirements for applying to take the CPA Exam vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

TG: WHAT HAPPENS IF AN APPLICANT FAILS THE EXAM?

CM: Candidates are required to successfully complete all four sections of the Exam within 18 months. The 18-month rolling period begins when a candidate successfully passes their initial part.

TG: THE PASSING SCORE FOR EACH ONE OF THE EXAM'S FOUR SECTIONS IS 75. IS THIS HARD TO ACHIEVE?

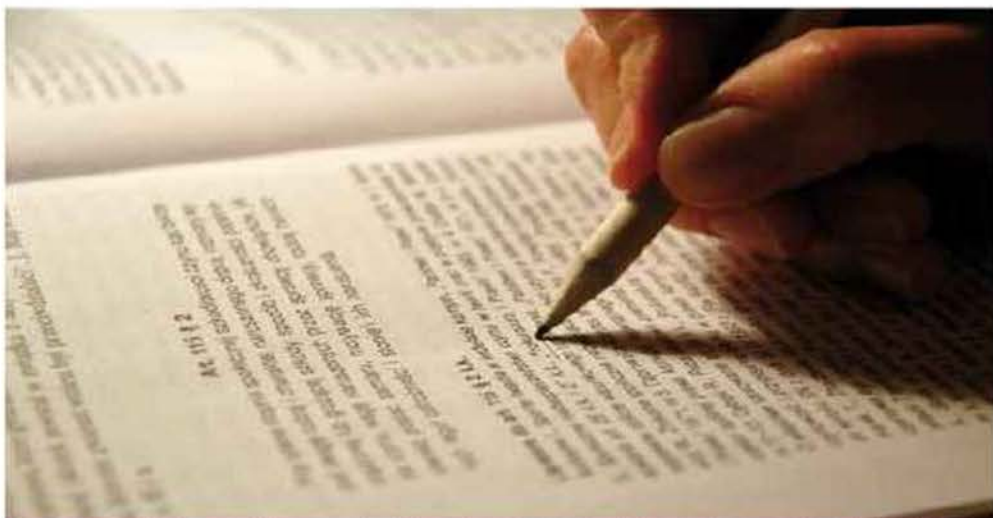
CM: The CPA Examination protects the public interest by helping to ensure that only qualified individuals become licensed as U.S. CPAs – so you need to have a great deal of knowledge in order to pass. Although a challenging process, it is worth the effort. Candidates must pass all four sections: Auditing and Attestation (AUD), Business Environment and Concepts (BEC), Financial Accounting and Reporting (FAR), and Regulation (REG). These four sections represent a total of 14 hours of testing and must all be completed within a 18 month testing window.

TG: WHAT IS THE PASSING PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO TAKE THE EXAM?

CM: Passing percentage for candidates in the Middle East are: AUD 35.8%, FAR 40.8%, REG 38.6% and BEC 37.0%.

TG: THE EXAM IS FOUR PARTS, SPLIT OVER TWO DAYS. HOW LONG IS EACH EXAM?

CC: The Exam is four parts and under computerization, the exam is no longer administered over a two-day period. Candidates may take one part of the Exam at a time and do not have to take all four parts of the Exam during a two-day period. The total Exam consists of 14 hours of testing. The hours per section are: AUD 4 hours, BEC 3 hours, FAR 4 hours and REG 3 hours.



THE AICPA WEBSITE HAS A TUTORIAL WHICH SERVES AS A GUIDED TOUR OF THE CPA

The computer-based Uniform CPA Examination is offered the first two months of each calendar quarter. These months of testing are known as the "testing windows": January 1 – February 28 (or 29), April 1 – May 31, July 1 – August 31 and October 1 – November 30. It is important that you plan accordingly; it is your responsibility to schedule the sections of the examination you have yet to pass so you do not lose credit for previously passed sections. You can take any or all sections of the examination during any testing window and in any order. However, you may not take the same section more than once during any one testing window.