

# Florida Atlantic University

## School of Accounting

### Job Search Best Practices

Students often find the process of interviewing with companies for internships or permanent employment confusing. In an effort to provide guidance, the School of Accounting (SOA) faculty, the SOA Advisory Council, and employers developed the following set of best practices. Students and firms are encouraged to follow these guidelines.

#### Guidance for Employers Extending Offers to SOA Students

Guidance for Employers		
Offer Type	Semester to Recruit	Suggested Minimum Academic Requirements
Summer Leadership Programs (SLP)	Spring	ACG3131 and ACG3341 <sup>1</sup>
Internships without SLP	Fall or Spring	TAX4001 and ACG4651 <sup>1</sup>
Internships with SLP	Summer or Fall	TAX4001 and ACG4651 <sup>1</sup>
Permanent Employment	Fall or Spring	Within one year of completion of undergraduate degree requirements
Multi-year non-accounting internships for minority students	Spring	ACG2021 <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Students are strongly encouraged to have courses in progress or completed prior to recruiting season and completed prior to the start of the SLP or internship.

#### Best Practice 1: Establish early relationships with employers.

Students should begin to build relationships with members of the profession and prospective employers well before graduation.

Employer sponsored Summer Leadership Programs (SLPs) are an excellent way to build relationships with accounting firms. The programs are typically two to three day retreats where students focus on learning about the culture of the profession. SLPs typically include team building, networking, professionalism, etiquette, and client service.

Recruiting for SLPs takes place during the spring and typically involves a full campus interview. SLPs are generally available to students who have completed Intermediate Theory I (ACG3131) and Cost Accounting (ACG3341) prior to the start of the SLP.

#### Best Practice 2: Complete an accounting internship.

Students should be encouraged to complete an accounting internship.

The internship experience provides a student with the opportunity to apply the accounting concepts he/she has studied in the classroom. It develops practical skills that will be required of entry-level professionals. Finally, an internship exposes the student to the culture of the profession and reinforces the importance of communication and interpersonal skills.

To foster ethnic inclusiveness, some firms offer non-accounting minority internships. These multiyear internships allow lower division students to observe a variety of aspects of an accounting firm without actually engaging in client service. Students interested in these internships should attend Career Day during the spring semester of their sophomore year (after the completion of ACG 2021 Introduction to Financial Accounting).

### **Best Practice 3: Complete a single accounting internship.**

Students should complete a single accounting internship.

As a state-supported and taxpayer-subsidized school, we are encouraged to graduate students in a timely fashion. Multiple accounting internships can delay a student's graduation and do little to enhance the student's skills beyond those skills developed during the student's first internship experience. Accordingly, students are generally expected to complete no more than one accounting internship. Exceptions can be made if the second internship is in a different line of business (e.g. assurance and advisory) or offers significantly different experiences (e.g. public accounting and corporate accounting). In all cases, the student should disclose the intent to participate in multiple internships to the prospective employers.

### **Best Practice 4: Complete the internship after taking tax and auditing.**

Students should not complete an accounting internship prior to having completed the first tax and auditing courses (TAX4001 and ACG4651).

The academic value derived from an accounting internship is a function of applying existing knowledge during his/her accounting internship. The most meaningful internship experience occurs after the student has completed his/her first tax and first auditing courses (generally during the Fall semester of the senior year). At that point, the student has the requisite knowledge to be a productive member of the firm. Therefore, the second semester of the senior year (spring semester) becomes the optimal time to complete an internship. Due to a high level of work during the first quarter of the calendar year, spring internships in public accounting and industry give the student a true representation of the typical workload experienced in the accounting profession. Summer internships are also an option.

### **Best Practice 5: Search for an internship the fall of your senior year.**

The best time for a student to actively recruit for an accounting internship is during the fall of the student's senior year.

Because recruiting efforts on campus take place during school hours, students may need to miss some classes, but prospective employers should provide alternative accommodations for interviews or visits that conflict with exams. It is in the student's best interest that the amount of class time missed because of recruiting be minimized.

### **Best Practice 6: When to expect an offer of permanent employment.**

The timing of offers of permanent employment depends upon the student's goals and whether or not he/she has completed an accounting internship.

- a. For the student who has completed an accounting internship during the spring or summer semester of his/her senior year, an offer of permanent employment is best made immediately upon the completion of the internship.
- b. For the student not completing an accounting internship, an offer of permanent employment is best made no earlier than one year prior to the student's expected undergraduate graduation date.

Following this practice sends a clear signal to the student about his/her prospects for permanent employment and allows those not receiving offers ample time to continue their search. These timelines provide reasonable assurance that employers have made an offer to a student who has completed sufficient academic coursework to be able to successfully complete the duties required of an entry-level staff accountant.

### **Best Practice 7: Encourage students to complete their education at FAU.**

Firms recruiting students in our accounting program should encourage them to complete their fifth-year of accounting education at Florida Atlantic University. Most students on internship pursue either a Master of Accounting or Master of Taxation degree immediately after completing their undergraduate programs. High-achieving students have the option of enrolling in graduate classes during their last semester of undergraduate studies enabling them to efficiently meet the 150 hour education requirement for CPA licensure in most jurisdictions.

Firms under pressure to staff vacant positions sometimes encourage interns to begin full-time employment and take their remaining 30 credit hours needed for CPA licensure in the evening while working on a full-time basis. This plan frequently extends the time for successful completion of the CPA exam and the time to meet the educational requirements for CPA licensure in most jurisdictions.

### **Best Practice 8: Recruiters will follow the Best Practices guidelines.**

Firms recruiting accounting students should staff their recruiting activities with representatives who are familiar with the School's best practices guidelines.

### **Best Practice 9: Encourage students to develop professionalism.**

Firms recruiting accounting students should encourage students to be involved in activities that develop: professionalism, communications skills, and interpersonal skills.

Firms that sell services depend upon effective communications and group-related activities for their success. Participation in student organizations such as Beta Alpha Psi, Accounting Students Association, and other university and community organizations help develop these skills and demonstrate a commitment to service. Without input from the firms, students frequently do not realize the importance of engaging in these activities.

### **Best Practice 10: Encourage students to follow etiquette recruiting practices.**

During the recruiting process, students frequently are in positions of receiving multiple interviews and multiple job offers. The following are considered best practices in recruiting etiquette.

1. A phone call is appropriate for notifying employers a decision to accept or decline job or internship offers. Paperwork will likely be required for acceptances.
2. It is appropriate to ask for an extension on an offer that expires prior to completing scheduled or pending interviews. Be specific about the amount of time needed to make a decision. Students and employers are encouraged to work together to determine a mutually acceptable timeframe.
3. It is not appropriate to continue interviewing after a job or internship offer is accepted. After accepting a job or internship offer, immediately notify potential employers and withdraw yourself from further consideration. This is only necessary for potential employers who are currently considering you for a job or internship position.