

# Declining Enrollments in Accounting: Challenges and Opportunities

Laurie Burney, CMA, CSCA, CPA (TN-inactive), Ph.D.

January 12, 2024



The Association of  
Accountants and  
Financial Professionals  
in Business

# Featured Presenter

**Laurie Burney, CMA, CSCA, Ph.D.**  
Associate Professor  
JE Bush Professor of Accounting  
Baylor University  
IMA Professor in Residence



The Association of  
Accountants and  
Financial Professionals  
in Business

# Assisting with the Discussion

**Kimberly Swanson Church**  
Associate Professor of Accounting  
FORVIS Professor of Leadership  
Missouri State University



The Association of  
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in Business

## Poll Question 1:

What do you believe is the primary reason for the decline in accounting enrollments?

- A. Perception of accounting as a less exciting field
- B. Increase in alternative career options
- C. Lack of awareness about the role of accountants
- D. The perceived difficulty of accounting courses

Question from: OpenAI. (2024). *ChatGPT* [Large language model].  
<https://chat.openai.com>

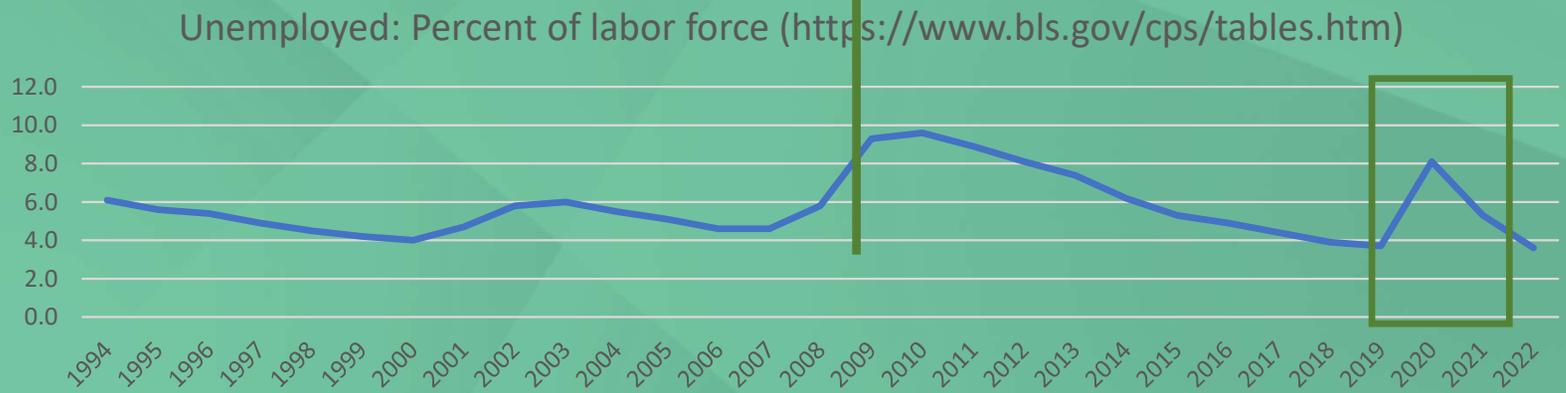
# Poll Question 1 Results: (Placeholder)

# Agenda

The Economy  
Career Opportunities  
Cost of Education  
Perception of Accountants  
Technological Advancements  
Lack of Diversity & Inclusion  
Branding



It's the  
Economy?



Accounting Degree Completions Bachelor's + Master's  
Per AICPA's 2023 Trends Report

## Making the Jump to Industry Might Be Harder to Do Next Year Per This CPA Survey

 Going Concern News Desk

3 weeks ago



**Twelve percent of business executives said they had too many employees**, up four percentage points from last quarter. **Some 38% said they have too few employees**, but the percentage who said they were hesitant to hire because of economic uncertainty increased from 14% to 16%.

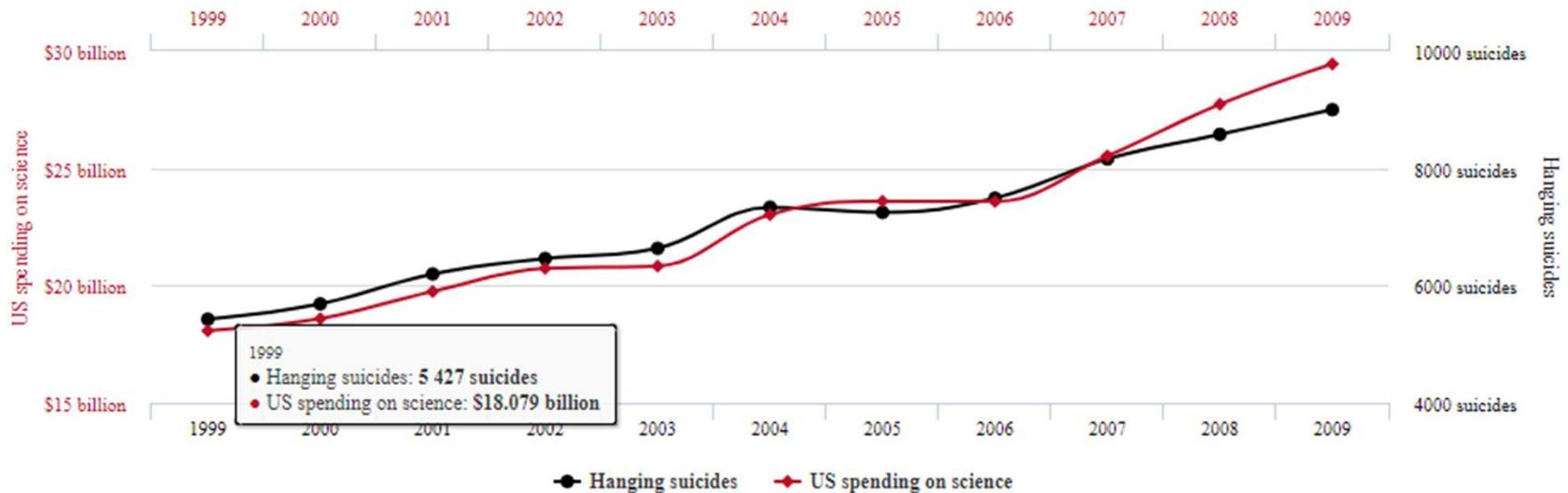
Other key findings of the Q4 survey:

- Expansion plans fell slightly from 50% to 48% this quarter
- Business executives less optimistic about their own company's prospects over the next 12 months (43% vs. 45% last quarter), although they are still ahead of where they were a year ago (35%).
- Some 28% of business executives said they expected their companies to raise prices by year end, down from 37% last quarter. Sixty-three percent said they expected no change, while 2% said they anticipated decreases.

<https://www.goingconcern.com/making-the-jump-to-industry-might-be-harder-to-do-next-year-per-this-cpa-survey/amp/>

## US spending on science, space, and technology correlates with Suicides by hanging, strangulation and suffocation

Correlation: 99.79% ( $r=0.99789126$ )



tylervigen.com

Data sources: U.S. Office of Management and Budget and Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

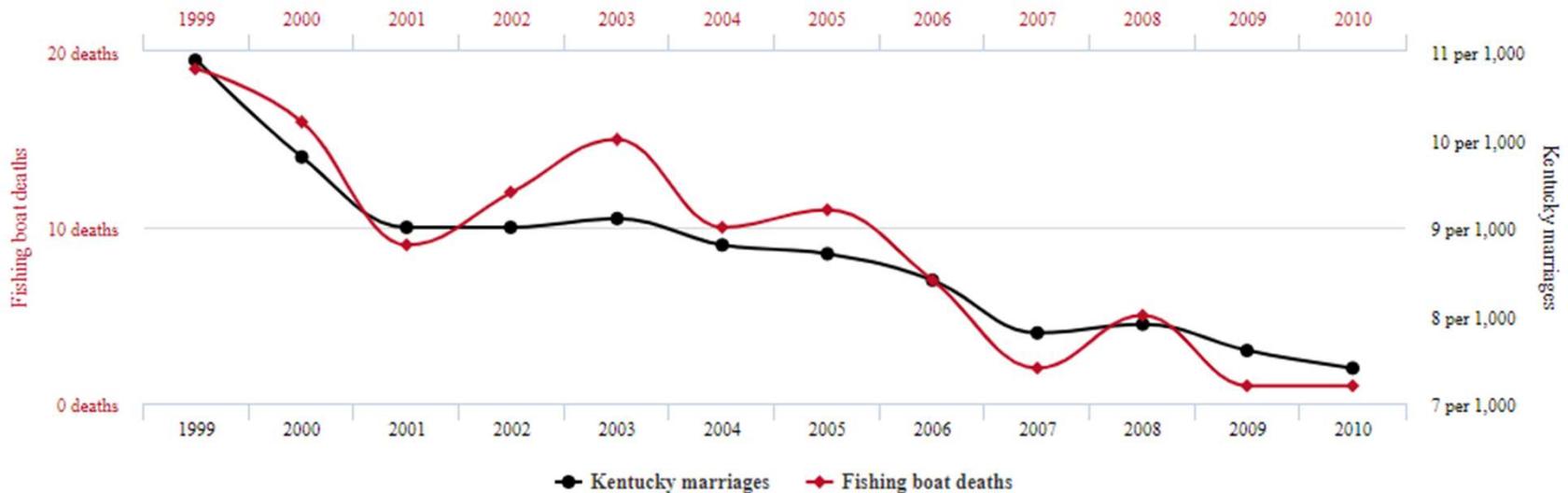
<https://www.tylervigen.com/spurious-correlations>  
**Correlation  $\neq$  Causation**

## People who drowned after falling out of a fishing boat

correlates with

## Marriage rate in Kentucky

Correlation: 95.24% ( $r=0.952407$ )



tylervigen.com

Data sources: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention and National Vital Statistics Reports

<https://www.tylervigen.com/spurious-correlations>

# Correlation $\neq$ Causation

# Perception of Limited Career Growth or Earning Potential

<https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes132011.htm>

## National estimates for Accountants and Auditors:

Employment estimate and mean wage estimates for Accountants and Auditors:

Employment (1)	Employment RSE (3)	Mean hourly wage	Mean annual wage (2)	Wage RSE (3)
1,402,420	0.5 %	\$ 41.70	\$ 86,740	0.4 %

## National estimates for Financial and Investment Analysts:

Employment estimate and mean wage estimates for Financial and Investment Analysts:

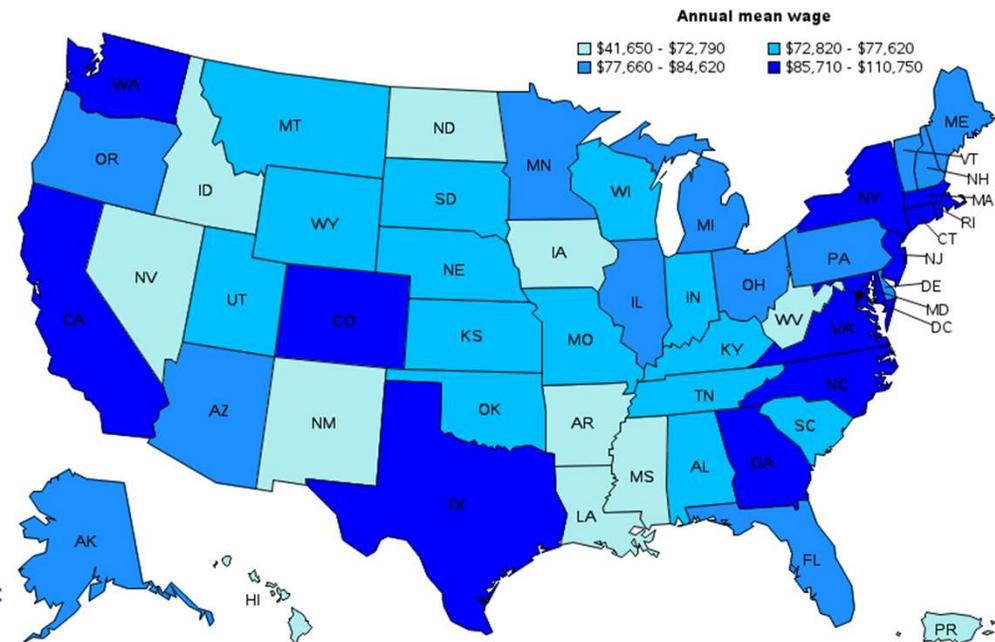
Employment (1)	Employment RSE (3)	Mean hourly wage	Mean annual wage (2)	Wage RSE (3)
291,370	1.6 %	\$ 52.30	\$ 108,790	1.6 %

## National estimates for Computer and Information Systems Managers:

Employment estimate and mean wage estimates for Computer and Information Systems Managers:

Employment (1)	Employment RSE (3)	Mean hourly wage	Mean annual wage (2)	Wage RSE (3)
533,220	1.2 %	\$ 83.49	\$ 173,670	0.4 %

Annual mean wage of accountants and auditors, by state, May 2022



Blank areas indicate data not available.

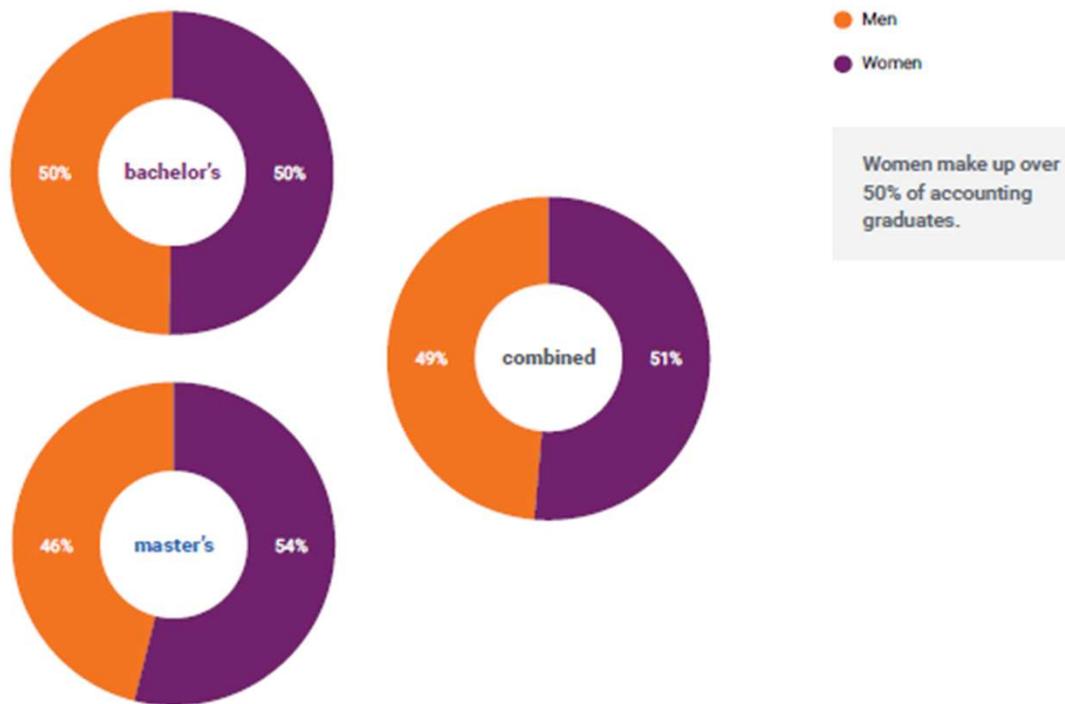
# Diversity & Inclusion



Source: Krys Burnette, "Belonging: A Conversation about Equity, Diversity and Inclusion," Jan. 21, 2019

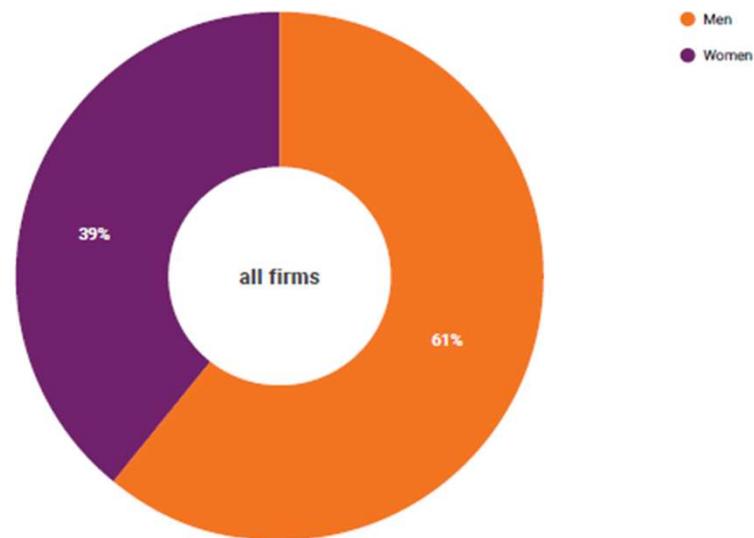
# Diversity & Inclusion – Race/Ethnicity

1.2 New accounting completions by gender – bachelor's and master's | 2019–20



Source: IPEDS

4.6 Partners in accounting/finance functions of U.S. CPA firms by gender | 2020

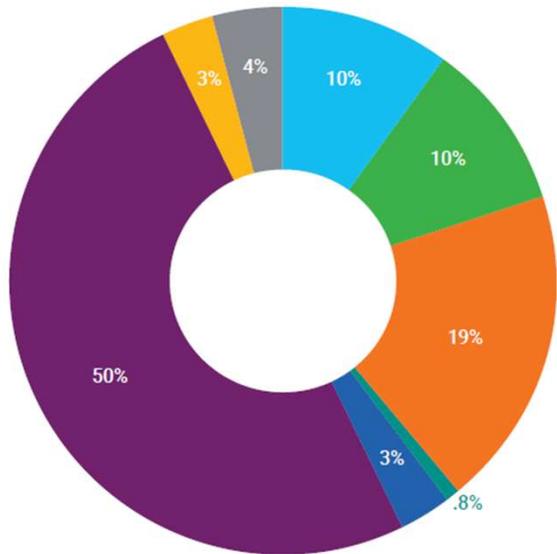


See note C on page 58

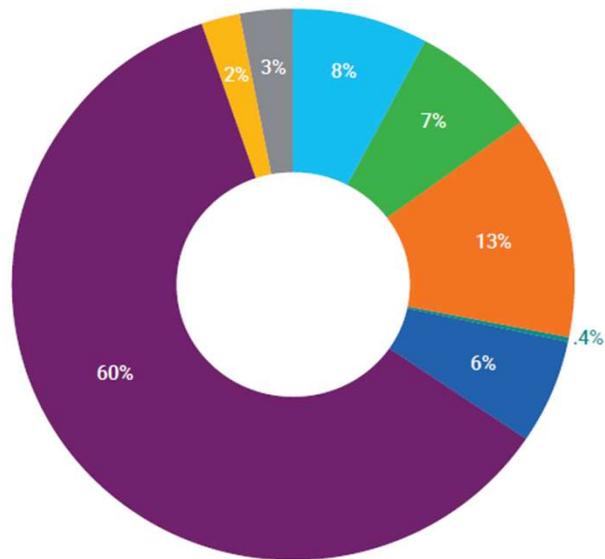
# Diversity & Inclusion – Race/Ethnicity

Accounting degree completions by race/ethnicity – associate’s (2020)

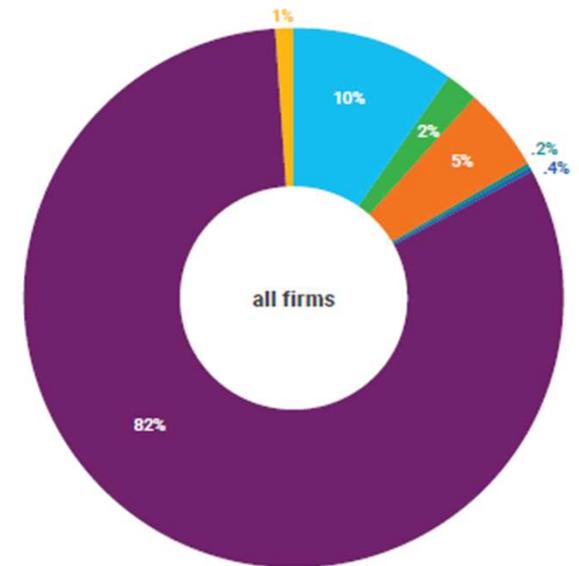
22 2021 TRENDS REPORT



Accounting degree completions by race/ethnicity – bachelor’s (2020)



Partners in accounting/finance functions of U.S. CPA firms by race/ethnicity (2020)



Due to rounding, data may not equal 100%

Source: IPEDS. See note A on page 58

Source: IPEDS. See note A on page 58

- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American or Alaska Native
- Nonresident alien
- White
- Multiethnic
- Did Not Disclose or Unknown

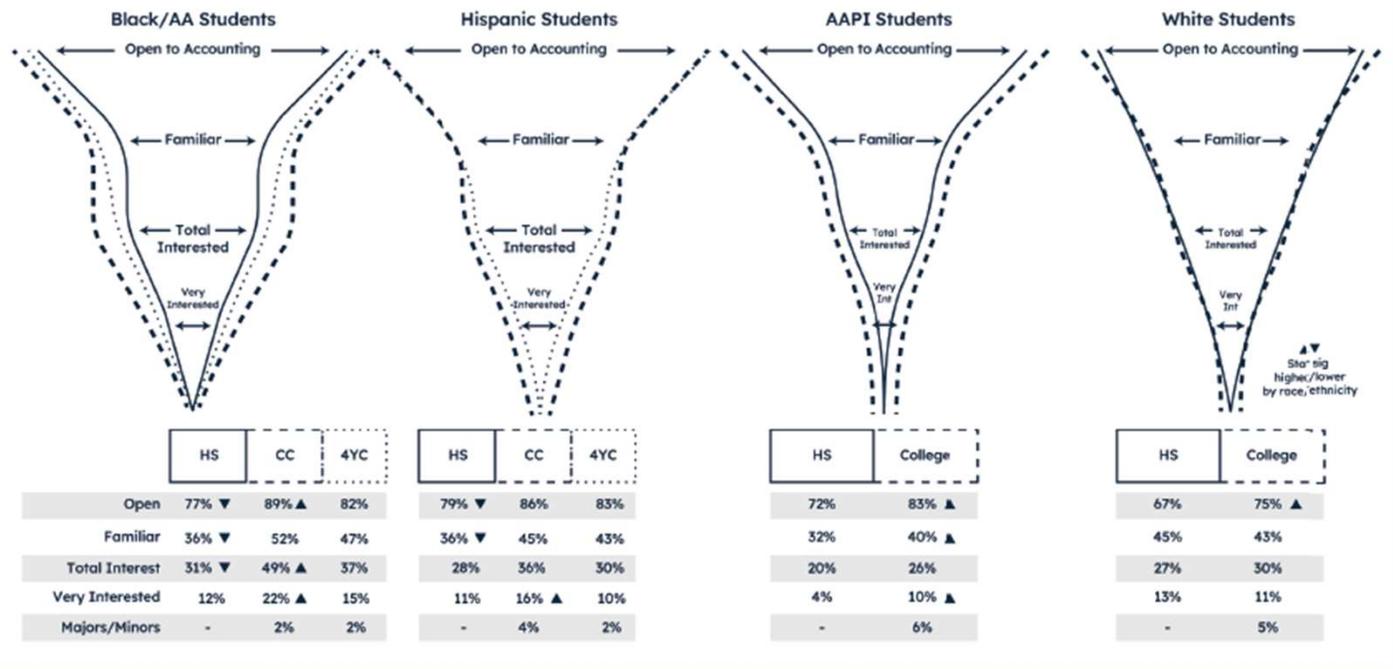
# Diversity & Inclusion – Race/Ethnicity

## Increasing Diversity in the Accounting Profession Pipeline: Challenges and Opportunities



Chart E

Engaging Black and Hispanic students – in HS and CC particularly - are opportunities to convert more students into accounting majors



# Diversity & Inclusion – Population

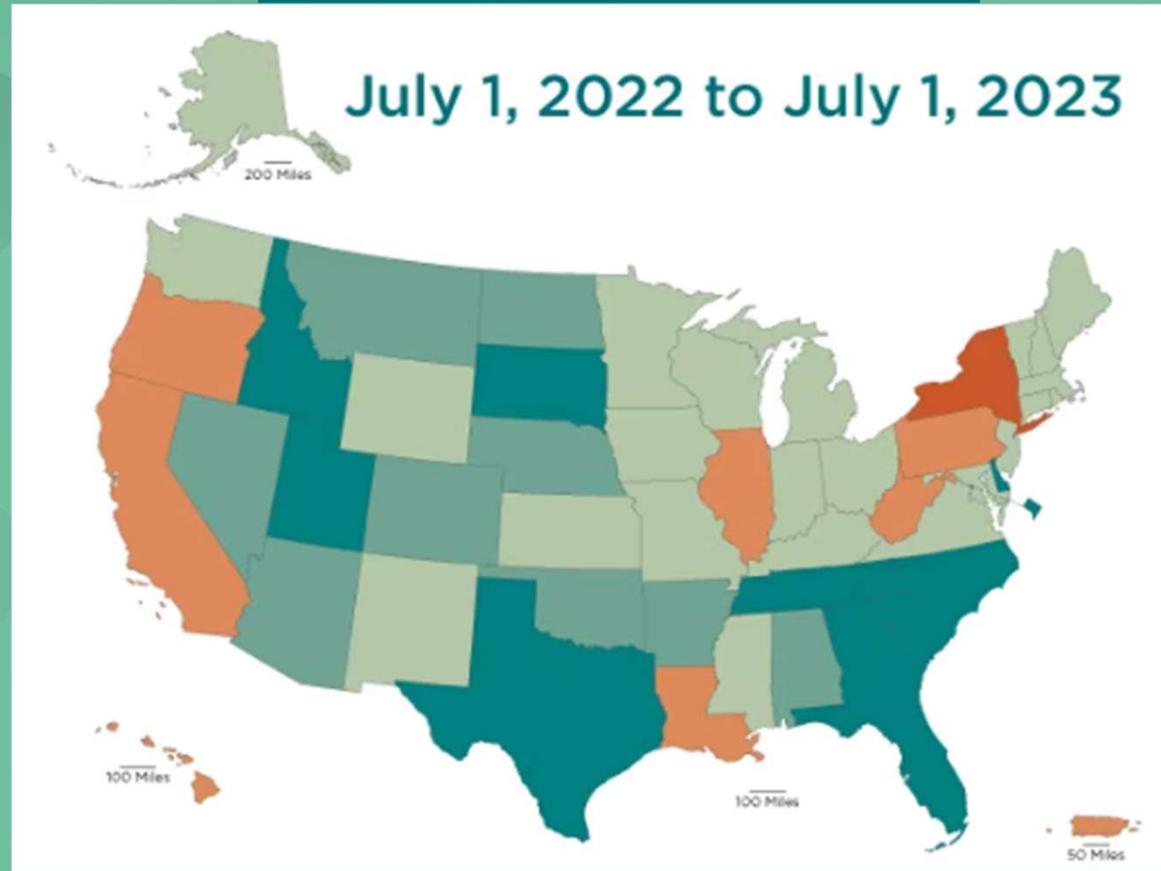
Source: Vintage 2023 Population Estimates

United States®  
**Census**  
Bureau

U.S. Department of Commerce  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
*census.gov*

## Percent Change in State Population

### Percent change



<https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2023/3/comm/percent-change-state-population.html>

# U.S. population, by race/ethnicity

Estimated as of July 1, 2022

	2022	Change from 2000
Overall	333.3m	+18.4%
White	251.6m	+19.0%
Hispanic (any race)	63.7m	+80.3%
Black	45.4m	+31.0%
Asian	21m	+104.6%
Two or more races	10.1m	+47.5%
American Indian and Alaska Native	4.4m	+77.0%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	878.8k	+120.3%

Diversity & Inclusion – Population

Data: [U.S. Census](#); Note: Estimates include people reporting one race alone; Hispanic individuals are also included in other categories, as they may be of any race; Chart: Kavya Beheraj/Axios

<https://www.axios.com/2023/06/29/fastest-growing-demographics>

# Other Factors We Can't Control.....

accountingTODAY

ACCOUNTING

## Voices The cost of the 150-hour rule: \$2 billion

By [Blake Oliver](#) March 02, 2023, 9:00 a.m. EST 3 Min Read



To become a CPA in the United States, candidates must complete 150 semester credit hours of education, which is 30 credits beyond the typical 120 credit hours earned in a four-year undergraduate degree. As a result, most CPAs end up spending five years in college instead of four. Although this requirement has been in place for several decades, its impact on aspiring CPAs is still being felt.

As the number of accounting majors, graduates and CPA candidates continues to decline each year, some are questioning the wisdom of the current requirement. A movement is underway to undo it. The Minnesota CPA Society is lobbying in favor of [legislation that would create alternative pathways](#), allowing candidates to replace the fifth year of education with additional work experience, or work experience and CPE. However, the American Institute of CPAs and the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy oppose this measure vociferously.

Tuition & Fees (AZ State, in state)	\$	30,000
Room & Board (EducationData.org)		12,000
Textbook & Course Materials (ASU)		1,000
Opportunity Cost (Salary.com)		
(Acct I with no experience)		60,000
<b>Cost per year</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>103,000</b>
<b>Students completing MACC 2019-20</b>		<b>20,442</b>
<b>Total cost</b>		<b><u>\$ 2,105,526,000</u></b>

(does not include other paths to 150 hours)



[https://www.dailymerald.com/news/a-great-barrier-in-educational-success-leads-to-a-decline-in-college-enrollment-across-oregon/article\\_29581c0a-3ab8-11eb-b7c9-bbcf130fcd08.html](https://www.dailymerald.com/news/a-great-barrier-in-educational-success-leads-to-a-decline-in-college-enrollment-across-oregon/article_29581c0a-3ab8-11eb-b7c9-bbcf130fcd08.html)

## Poll Question 2:

How significantly do you think the current public image of accountants affects student interest in pursuing a career in accounting?

- A. Highly significant - A more dynamic image could greatly increase interest
- B. Moderately significant - It has some impact, but not the only factor
- C. Slightly significant - It has a minor influence on student decisions
- D. Not significant - Student interest is driven by other factors more than the image of the profession

Question from: OpenAI. (2024). *ChatGPT* [Large language model].  
<https://chat.openai.com>

## Poll Question 2 Results: (Placeholder)

# How the “world” stereotypes an accountant?

FORBES > MONEY > TAXES

## Tax Auditor Dies At His Desk, Not Found For Two Days

Kelly Phillips Erb Forbes Staff

*I write about tax news, tax policy and tax information.*

Follow

Mar 13, 2015, 08:02am EDT

 This article is more than 8 years old.

2004

 Working in the tax profession can sometimes be lonely - with long hours and lots of document intensive, as opposed to people intensive, work to do - but a Finnish tax office found out just how lonely it can be. A tax official in Finland died at his desk while checking tax returns - and nobody noticed for two days.

The unidentified man, who was in his 60s, died in his Helsinki office while checking tax returns. He had his office door closed at the time. According to a government official at the office, "People thought he wanted to work in peace and no-one disturbed him."

So they didn't.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/kellyphillipserb/2015/03/13/tax-auditor-dies-at-his-desk-not-found-for-two-days/?sh=797c15331869>

## Long lunch: Spanish civil servant skips work for years without anyone noticing

Joaquín García failed to show up for his job at the water board for at least six years - and possibly as many as 14



📷 Joaquín García admitted he may not have kept regular business hours. Photograph: Volker Moehrke/Corbis

Only when Joaquín García, a Spanish civil servant, was due to collect an award for two decades of loyal and dedicated service did anyone realise that he had not, in fact, shown up to work for at least six years - and possibly as many as 14. ←

García, a 69-year-old engineer, began working for the local authority in the south-western city of Cádiz in 1990, **according to el Mundo**, and in 1996 was posted to the municipal water board, Agua de Cadiz, where his job was to supervise a waste water treatment plant.

## How the “world” stereotypes an accountant?

(Or in this case our “cousin”, the engineer)

The engineer made the most of the confusion, becoming an avid reader of philosophy and an expert on the works of Spinoza, the Dutch philosopher credited with laying the foundations of the Enlightenment.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/12/long-lunch-spanish-civil-servant-skips-work-for-years-without-anyone-noticing>



**TheBig4Accountant**  
@TheBig4Tweets

i love the flexibility of public accounting - getting to chose which 18 hours of the day you want to work

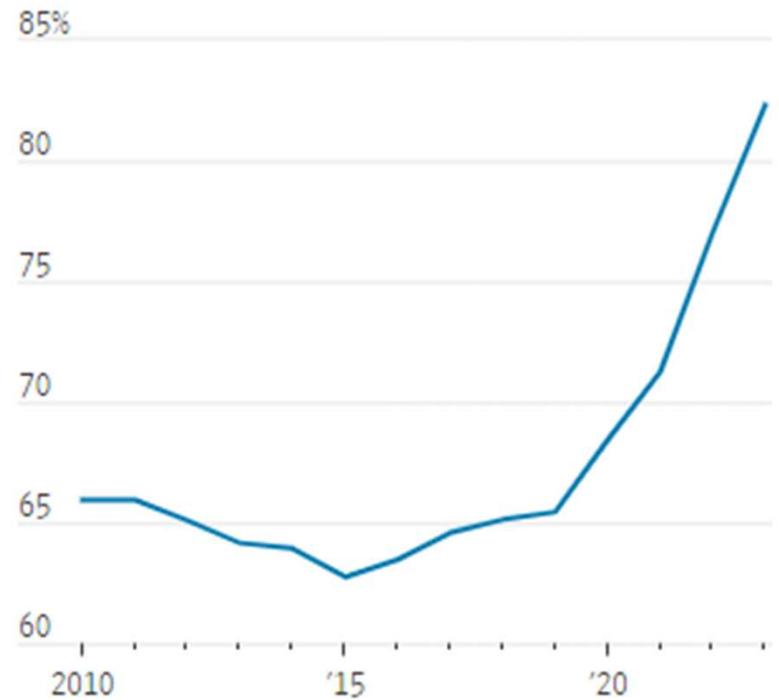


**TB4A.com** @TheBig4Tweets · Sep 15, 2022  
new coffin office chair designed to target the accounting industry



## CPA Exits

The percentage of U.S. accountants who quit that had at least six years in the profession



Note: 2023 figures are as of Sept. 1.

Source: Live Data Technologies

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/accounting-quit-job-security-675fc28f>

## How the “world” stereotypes an accountant?



Louis Heckerling  
Movie– “Look Who’s Talking” (1989)



<http://www.communicate-blue.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Bean-Counter.jpg>

## How the “world” stereotypes an accountant?

## How do we shift that image?



Louis Heckerling  
Movie– “Look Who’s Talking” (1989)



<http://www.communicate-blue.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Bean-Counter.jpg>

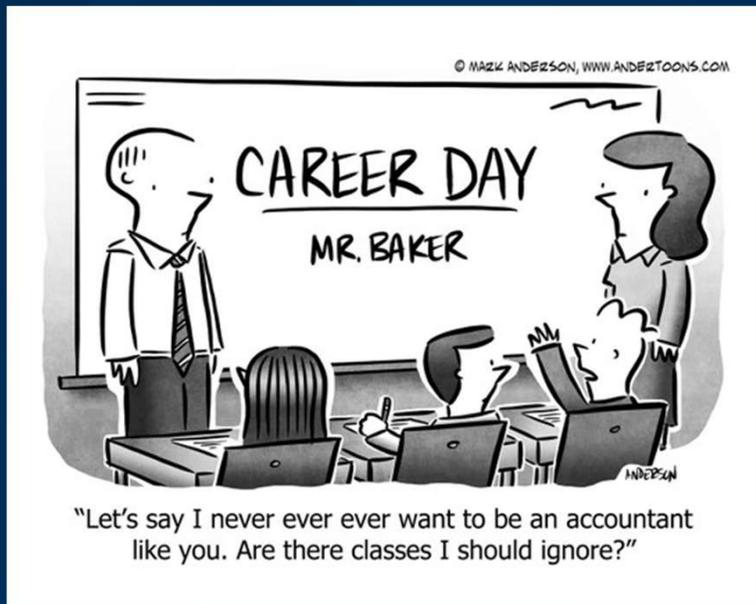
- Mick Jagger – Rolling Stones Musician (London School of Economics)
  - Bob Newhart – Comedian - accountant at USG Corp
  - John Grisham – Author (Mississippi State Univ.)
  - Kenny G – Musician (Univ. of Washington)
  - Gibby Haynes – Lead Singer (Trinity University)
  - Peter Falk – “Columbo”
  - Chuck Liddell – MMA Fighter (Cal Polytechnic Univ.)
- (<https://www.monroecollege.edu/news/35-famous-accountants-surprise-inspire>)



<http://kclr96fm.com/media/2016/11/ben-affleck-accountant.jpg>

How the “world” stereotypes an accountant?

How do we shift that image?

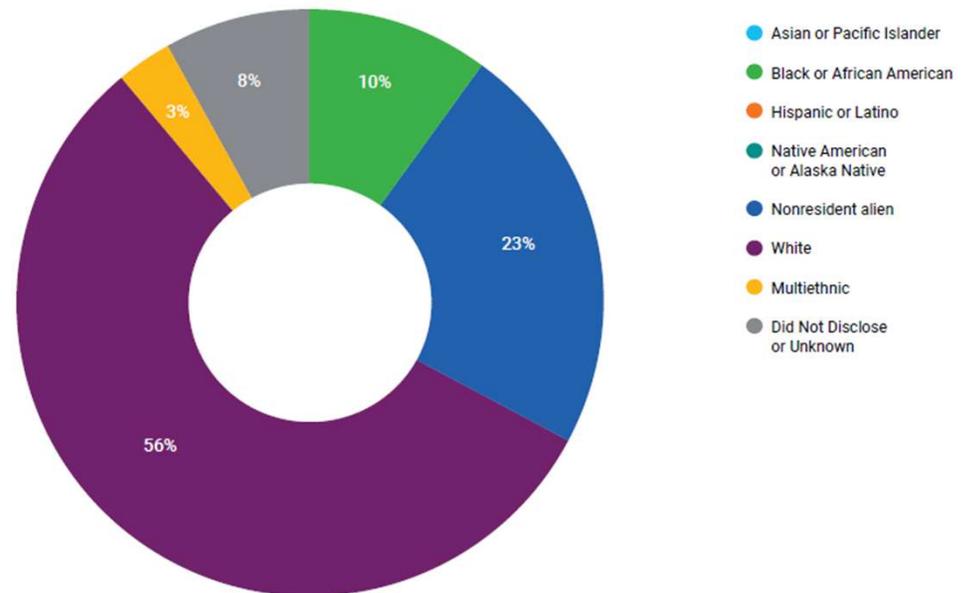


# How do we shift the trend?

## As Faculty.....

+ Strengthen Faculty Representation & Expertise

2.15 Accounting degree completions by race/ethnicity – doctorate | 2020



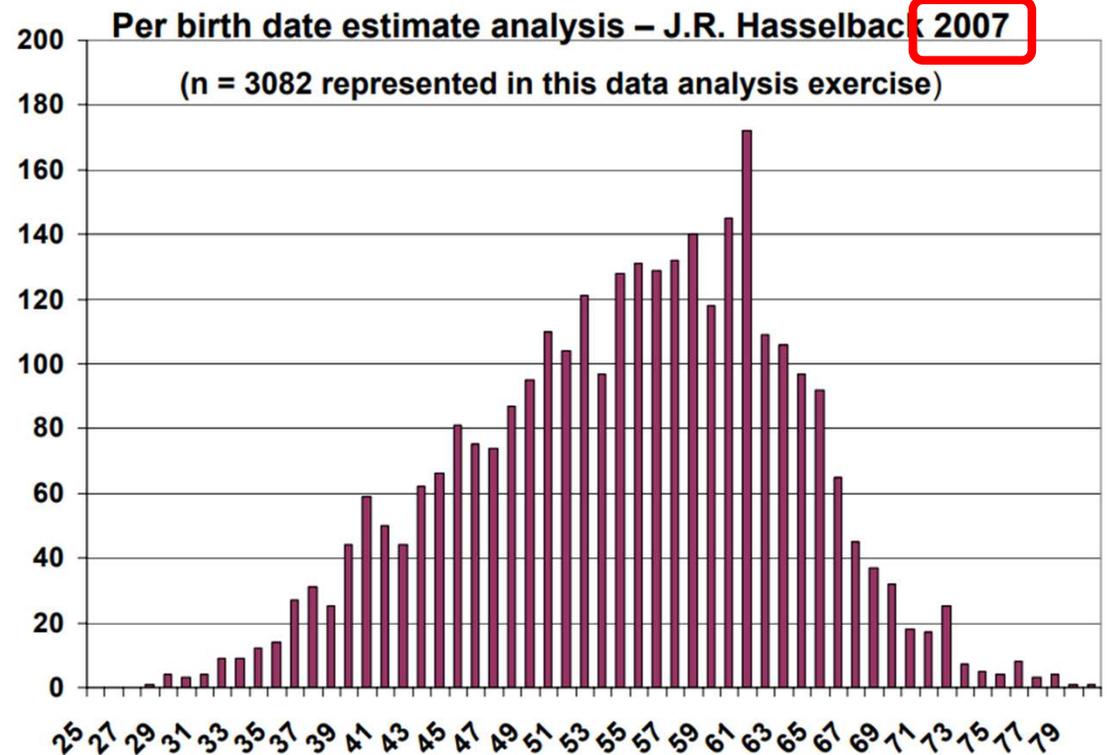
Source: IPEDS. See note A on page 58

# How do we shift the trend?

As Faculty.....

- + Strengthen Faculty Representation & Expertise

## U.S. Accounting Academics -- 53.4% are 55 or older

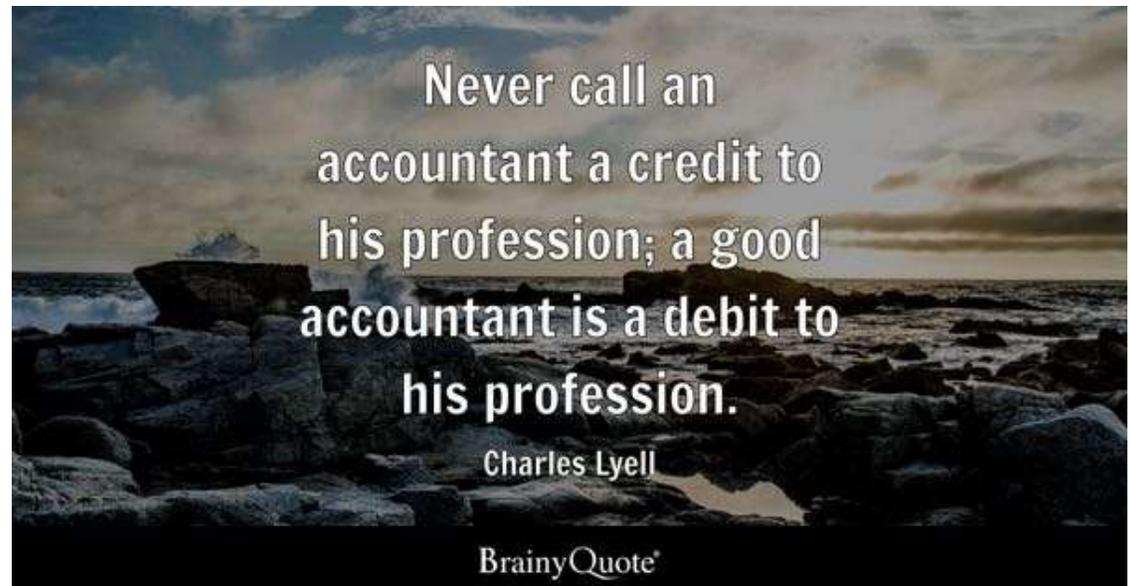


[https://aaahq.org/portals/0/documents/resources/jim\\_hasselbackbirthdateslide.pdf](https://aaahq.org/portals/0/documents/resources/jim_hasselbackbirthdateslide.pdf)

# How do we shift the trend?

As Faculty.....

- + Strengthen Faculty Representation & Expertise
- + Embrace our Role as Mentors
  - + Beyond debits & credits



# How do we shift the trend?

As Faculty.....

- + Strengthen Faculty Representation & Expertise
- + Embrace our Role as Mentors
  - + Beyond debits & credits
- + Embrace Technology



"I know this accounting in the cloud is supposed to make things easier, but how do we know which one is ours?"

## Poll Question 3:

How do you think advancements in technology (like AI and automation) are affecting student interest in accounting?

- A. Significantly reducing interest
- B. Slightly reducing interest
- C. No impact on interest
- D. Increasing interest

Question from: OpenAI. (2024). *ChatGPT* [Large language model].  
<https://chat.openai.com>

## Poll Question 3 Results: (Placeholder)

# How do we shift the trend?

As Faculty.....

- + Strengthen Faculty Representation & Expertise
- + Embrace our Role as Mentors
  - + Beyond debits & credits
- + Embrace Technology
- + Enhance Relevance of Curriculum
  - + Management Accounting Principles as First Course?
  - + Real-World Examples



[www.leansystems.org](http://www.leansystems.org)  
<https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/231583605808955500/visual-search/>

# How do we shift the trend?

As Faculty.....

- + Strengthen Faculty Representation & Expertise
- + Embrace our Role as Mentors
  - + Beyond debits & credits
- + Embrace Technology
- + Enhance Relevance of Curriculum
  - + Management Accounting Principles as First Course?
  - + Real-World Examples



- + Join the STEM Field Movement

# How do we shift the trend?

In Partnership with Industry.....

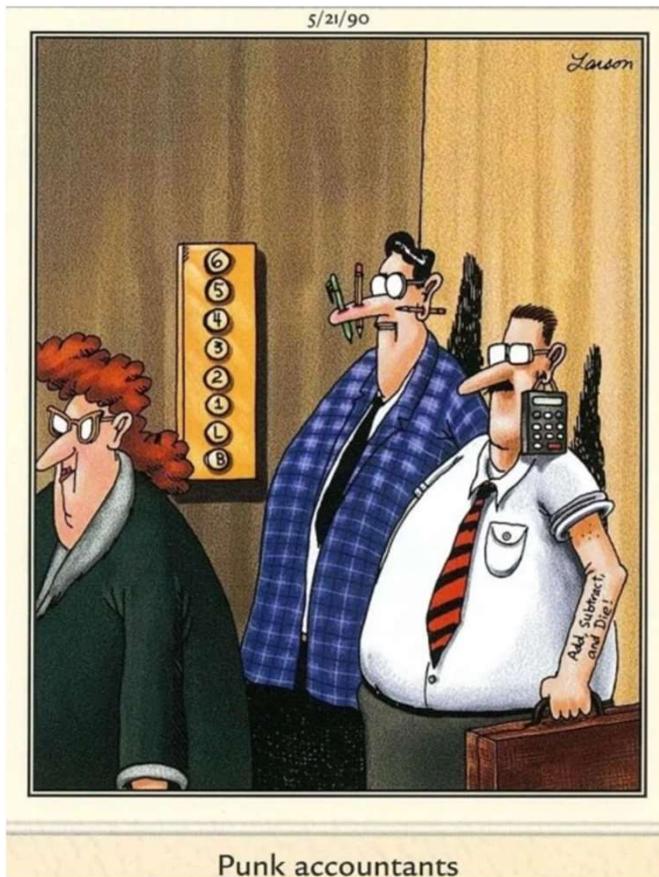


"Look Who's Talking" movie (1989)

- + Broaden the term "Accountant" & Raise Awareness of Alternatives
  - + Required Skillset (Not Good at Math!)
  - + Internship Opportunities
  - + Knowledge of Various Career Paths
  - + Diversity & Inclusion

# How do we shift the trend?

In Partnership with Industry.....



- + Broaden the term “Accountant” & Raise Awareness of Alternatives
  - + Required Skillset (Not Good at Math!)
  - + Internship Opportunities
  - + Knowledge of Various Career Paths
  - + Diversity & Inclusion
- + Guest Lecturers/ Campus

# How do we shift the trend? In Partnership with Industry....

## + Improve Branding

Defining "Purpose" of Accounting

"Is that what you want on your gravestone when you die -- that you raised the dividend to three dollars or four or even five or six or seven?"



# How do we shift the trend? In Partnership with Industry....

+ **Improve Branding**

Success Stories



## Poll Question 4:

Which strategy do you think would be most effective in boosting enrollments in accounting programs?

- A. Enhancing the curriculum with more practical, real-world skills
- B. Increasing awareness of diverse career paths in accounting
- C. Offering more scholarships and financial incentives
- D. Collaborating with industry for internships and job placements

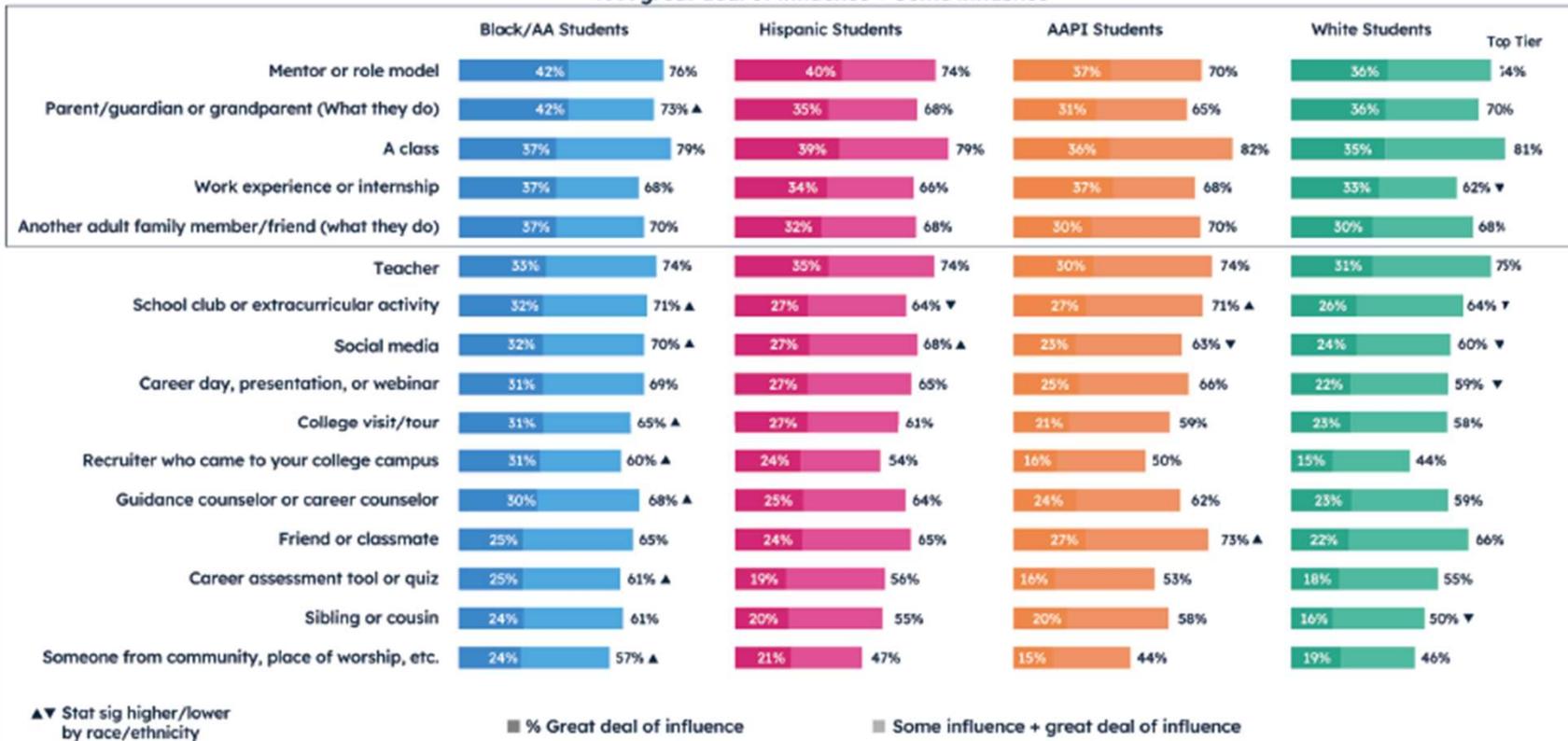
Question from: OpenAI. (2024). *ChatGPT* [Large language model].  
<https://chat.openai.com>

## Poll Question 4 Results: (Placeholder)

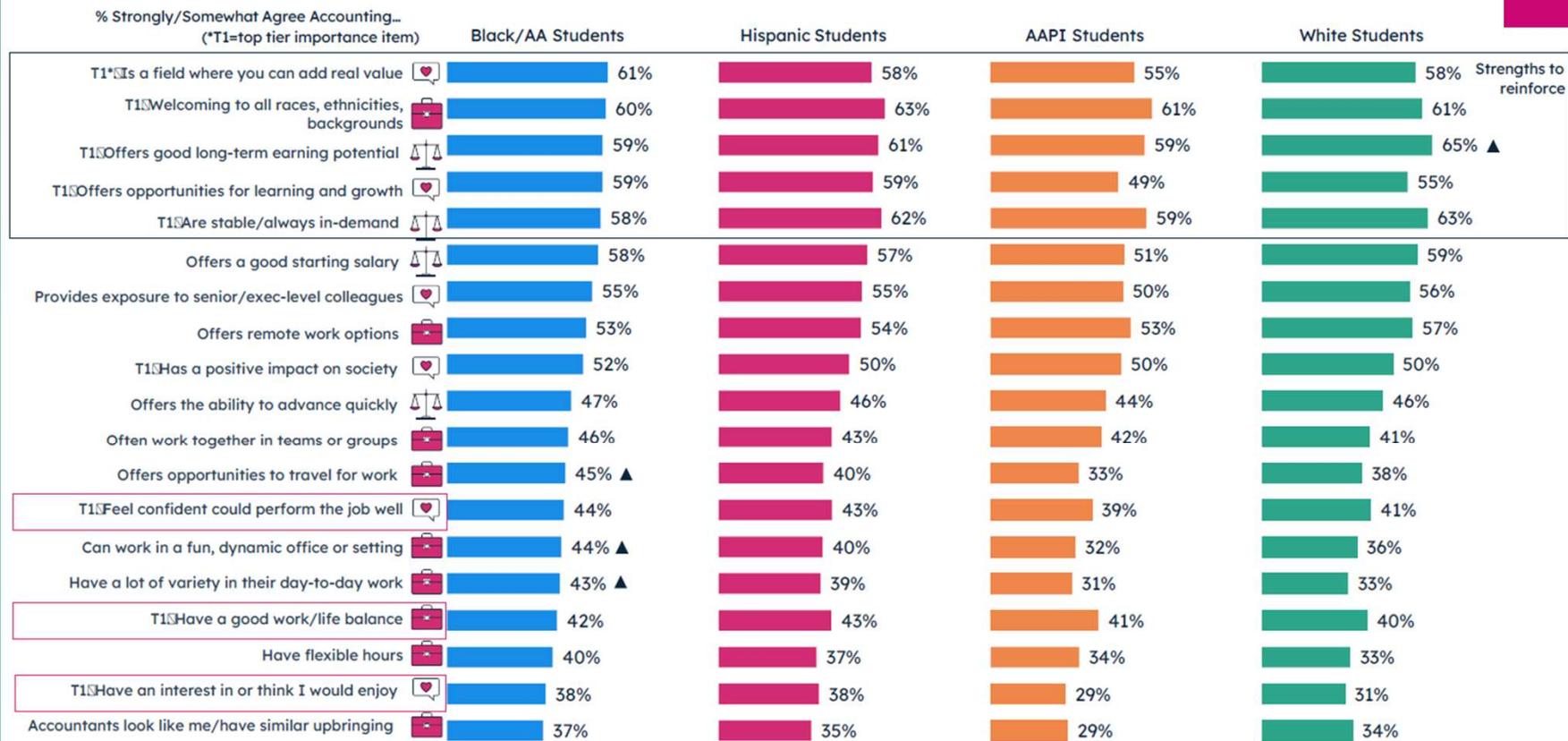
**Chart H**

Survey data confirms family, work experiences and classes are powerful influences across groups; many of the external sources tested have more impact with Black students

Thinking about the job or career you are most interested in, how much influence have each of the following had on you  
% A great deal of influence + Some influence



## Data confirms perceptions are lagging about interest, work/life balance and aptitude for career in accounting.



# Today's Learning Objectives

1. Identify reasons for declining enrollment in accounting programs across the globe.
2. Describe the impact of declining enrollments in accounting programs on higher education institutions, the accounting profession, and society.
3. Explain how to implement strategies that contribute to the reversal of the declining enrollment trend in accounting programs.





"I THINK WE'RE ALL GOING TO HAVE TO GO BACK AND GET A MASTERS IN MARKETING."

Trygve Olson  
2021 The Forum

How can we work together to be proactive in addressing the declines?



Cartoon by Trygve Olson

# The Academic Forum on the myIMAnetwork

myIMA Network®

## My Communities

26 total

All Community Types

Communities to which I belong

Alphabetical

20 per page

Create a New Community

### Academic Forum

Academic Forum

member last person joined 5 days ago

Discussions 90

Libraries 60

Members 2.5K

How can we work together to be proactive in addressing the declines?



# IMA Student Series: Accounting and Finance Career Panel



Next Webinar: February 28, 2024  
7-8pm EDT

Join us for a virtual panel of successful professionals representing a variety of industries and diverse backgrounds!

Learn about:

- Career paths in management accounting
- CMA Certification
- Career advice for young professionals

J&J MedTech

iSpot.tv



Johnson & Johnson

McKinsey & Company



BOSE



amazon



Cargill

Campbell's



KPMG

LUMEN

LIMBACH

TESLA



# IMA Educator Toolkit

## Supplement Your Courses with IMA Resources

- Comprehensive digital resource tool tailored for accounting and finance faculty
- Aligned with CMA exam content
- Enhance learning experience in the classroom and engage students



[IMA Educator Toolkit Demo](#)

# IMA Educator Toolkit



## IMA EDUCATOR TOOLKIT



The Association of  
Accountants and  
Financial Professionals  
in Business

Which topic would you like to explore?

### Part 1: Financial Planning, Performance, and Analytics

External Financial Reporting Decisions  
Planning, Budgeting, and Forecasting  
Performance Management  
Cost Management  
Internal Controls  
Technology & Analytics

### Part 2: Strategic Financial Management

Financial Statement Analysis  
Corporate Finance  
Decision Analysis  
Risk Management  
Investment Decisions  
Professional Ethics



Contact us with questions and requests at [campus@imanel.org](mailto:campus@imanel.org)

[IMA Educator Toolkit Demo](#)

# IMA Educator Toolkit



## IMA EDUCATOR TOOLKIT

### Performance Management

Cost and variance measures

Responsibility centers and reporting segments

Performance measures

## IMA EDUCATOR TOOLKIT



### Performance measures

What type of resource would you like to search?

Online  
Courses

Strategic  
Finance  
Articles

Count Me In  
® Podcast

Teaching  
Cases

[IMA Educator Toolkit Demo](#)



## ChatGPT

In the realm of accounts, a tale unfolds,  
Of a vocation, both esteemed and old.  
Yet, in classrooms once lively and bright,  
Now dwindle the numbers, like stars at night.

The ledgers, they whisper a silent call,  
For minds to decode their ciphured scrawl.  
In this quiet, lies a golden chance,  
For new ideas and visions to advance.

A moment ripe to reshape and renew,  
To draw fresh minds to financial view.  
Where technology meets age-old facts,  
New paths emerge, less beaten tracks.

# The Wisdom of ChatGPT

A call to the youth, creative and bold,  
To see in numbers, stories to be told.  
In every debit, a narrative hides,  
In every credit, adventure resides.

Arise, young stewards of balance and fee,  
In you, the future of finance, we see.  
The accounting world, with opportunities vast,  
Awaits your spirit, your role to cast.

# See You Next Year!

Hyatt Regency in Anaheim, California | November 7-9, 2024



# Questions and Answers

[Laurie\\_Burney@Baylor.edu](mailto:Laurie_Burney@Baylor.edu)



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IMA Professor in Residence

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**Kimberly Swanson Church**  
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# Thank you!



The Association of  
Accountants and  
Financial Professionals  
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