**Talking to College Students About Accounting**

Thank you for taking the Pipeline Pledge! Your commitment to growing awareness of accounting careers is invaluable. To assist you in this important work, we created this guide to help you connect with college students, share the value of the accounting profession, and serve as a resource as they start their career journey. For additional materials, visit [www.accountingpipeline.org/pledge](http://www.accountingpipeline.org/pledge).

**Remember: All outreach is important**

Whether you want to speak to a class of prospective accountants, participate in a career day, be a resource for students looking to learn more about the profession, or even mentor individual students, the key is to **pick the type of outreach that is right for you and your community’s students.** Making a connection with even one student can result in a meaningful difference that positively impacts their lives and strengthens the profession in an important way.

**Make connections in your community**

This [email template](https://www.accountingpipeline.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Pipeline-Pledge-Outreach-Emails.docx) can help you reach out to your alma mater’s career center or a college in your community. Feel free to customize it as you see fit, or conduct a different form of outreach — for example, a phone call or in-person conversation where appropriate — if that is right for you.

**Once you’ve secured an invitation from a school faculty leader to present to students, it’s important to remember the following best practices.**

**Meet your audience where they are**

Whether presenting to a group of students or offering yourself as a mentor, be sure to learn about your audience in advance, including education level and experience with accounting. By meeting students at their level, you’ll be more likely to get them to share their interests and career goals, and be a more effective advocate for the profession.

* **Most college students who you would interact with will have studied some accounting.** While they may not understand all of the differences between CPAs and accountants, they will likely know that CPAs must pass a licensing exam.
* However, depending on whether you’re talking to first year or upper-level students, their knowledge and experience will vary.
	+ **First-year and sophomore students are often just starting to choose a major or taking related classes.** They will likely get more out of a general overview about the profession and information about internships.
	+ **Many juniors and seniors will have already had an internship and are thinking about life post-graduation.** They will benefit more from information about the CPA Exam and licensure process, as well as what to expect as they start their careers.

Regardless of where students are in their educational journey, you can deliver unique insights into what accountants do each day, the core skills they use in their work, and the ways in which accounting serves a larger purpose — protecting the public, underpinning the stability of businesses, helping people manage their money, and much more.

**Key considerations for effective presentations and mentorship**

**Consider stepping outside the classroom.**

* Meet college students and CPA Exam candidates where they’re most comfortable, like in the student union or at an on-campus coffee shop, if volunteering in that kind of setting is allowed by the campus.

**Understand that students have different learning styles.**

* Try to incorporate different elements into your presentation, such as videos, handouts and group discussions, to engage more students.

**Get there early and be approachable.**

* Greet students as they arrive and casually converse before getting started. Be sure to make your presentation personal and have fun with it! Students will pick up on your enthusiasm.

**Be relatable, candid, and informative**

As you prepare to speak with students, try to think about what interested you when you were in college and what you wish you had known then. By putting yourself in their shoes, you’ll be a more relatable, effective, and engaging advocate for the profession.

**Ask lots of questions.**

* Ask your audience questions to help you understand where they are on their educational journeys and what they want to know.

**Help students find meaning in accounting.**

* Many see the purpose of their future job as important as its salary or title. So be sure to talk about the ways accounting has a positive impact.

**Illustrate your points with current events or stories.**

* It’s easier for students to connect with things that are relatable to what’s happening in the world or relevant to them.

**Be genuine, forthright and tell your whole story.**

* Don’t be afraid to talk about the challenges of your job or a time when you failed. Your candidness can help students make better-informed decisions about their future.

**Broaden their perception of accounting.**

* Make sure to spotlight some of the interesting work you get to do and the different subjects you get to focus on.
* Depending on the level of familiarity that students have with accounting, they may not be aware of the many different roles and career paths available to today’s accountants.

**Introduce students to the AICPA and your state CPA society.**

* The AICPA offers [free Student Affiliate membership](https://www.thiswaytocpa.com/join_aicpa/) for community college/university students, and a low-cost membership for Exam candidates.
* Find out in advance if your state CPA society offers a student membership so you can share any details.

**Follow up and keep the connection going**

**Ask for feedback.** Reach out to the presentation coordinator for insights into how things went. It will only make your future engagements better.

**Share resources with students that reflect where they are in their educational journey.** [ThisWaytoCPA](https://www.thiswaytocpa.com/) has helpful information for college students.

**Follow up with the faculty leader.** Continue to offer yourself as a resource or mentor to interested students who may have follow-up questions about accounting.

**Additional outreach resources**

* [CPA pipeline resources and PowerPoint presentations](https://www.thiswaytocpa.com/segmented-landing/cpa-pipeline-resources/)
* [Your how-to guide for inspiring students to become CPAs](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YgJVIhwCVmwDkwlOEjtoXeojP5Rx2fEM/view)
* [Crafting Your Career: An actionable plan for a rewarding work life](https://www.thiswaytocpa.com/request_resources/details/crafting-your-career-actionable-plan-rewarding-work-life)
* [Potential, Prestige & Purpose: An introduction to the accounting profession](https://www.thiswaytocpa.com/request_resources/details/potential-prestige-purpose-primer-accounting-profession)
* [Student FAQs](https://www.thiswaytocpa.com/collectedmedia/files/volunteer-resource-faqs.pdf)