

SPRING 2014

# capitalize

Introducing Alberta Students to the Accounting Profession

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LIKE  
A PRO  
FROM  
HEAD  
TO TOE**

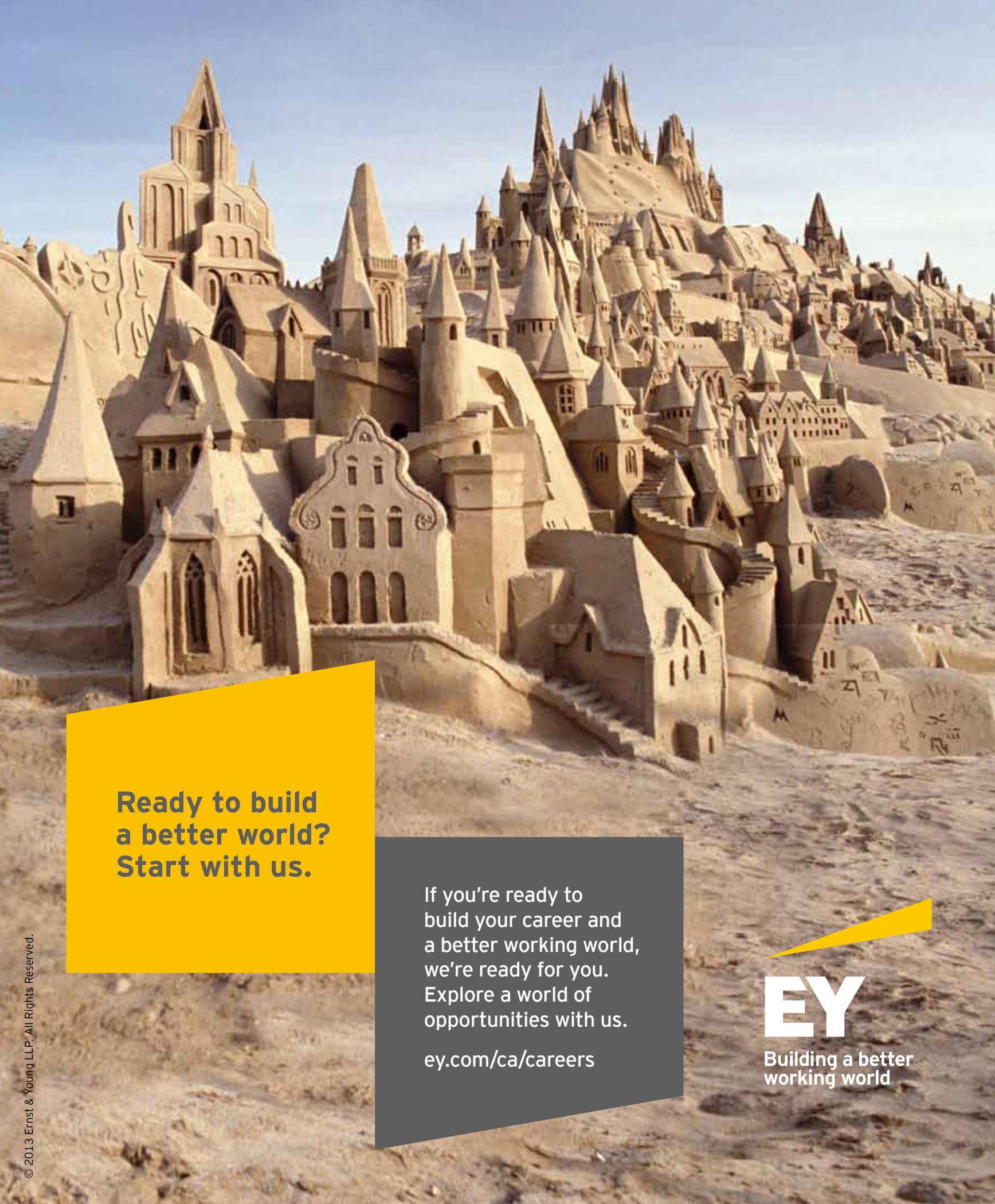
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As many readers know, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Alberta, CMA Alberta and CGA Alberta are part of national movement toward unification under the Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) banner. As the three organizations are now working in partnership as the Alberta Accountants Unification Agency, readers will see some new faces (and designations) represented in the pages of *Capitalize* magazine. A unified Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) profession will provide future accountants with a clear path to becoming a professional accountant in Alberta. For *Capitalize*, it also provides the opportunity to showcase the talents and experience of a larger pool of designated accountants from across the province. The math is simple: three heads are better than one!

By publishing important information about the CPA Professional Education Program, developments in the profession, and key events targeting students with their eyes set on a future in business, *Capitalize* will continue to be a key resource for students interested in pursuing an accounting career.

*Capitalize* is a semi-annual magazine designed to introduce students to the accounting profession in Alberta. Published by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Alberta, in cooperation with its partners in the Alberta Accountants Unification Agency, the magazine is distributed to more than 4,500 readers, including university, college, and high school students, as well as career counselling and other student-oriented centres.

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A unified accounting profession



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# events CALENDAR

From career fairs to conferences to information and networking sessions, included below is a comprehensive list of events and activities for post-secondary business students across Alberta.

## February

- 12 Alberta Accountants Advantage Dinner, Edmonton (The Matrix)
- 13 SAIT Career Fair
- 19 Lunch and Evening CPA General Information Sessions (Calgary, CMA Alberta Training Centre)
- 19 Lunch and Evening CPA General Information Sessions (Edmonton, Westin Downtown)

## March

- 5 Grant MacEwan University Student Business Conference (Shaw Conference Centre)
- 13 Online CPA General Information Session (AlbertaAccountants.org)
- 14 MacEwan Commerce Club: Dress for Success (Grant MacEwan University)
- 18 Lunch and Evening CPA General Information Sessions (Calgary, CMA Alberta Training Centre)
- 19 Lunch and Evening CPA General Information Sessions (Edmonton, Westin Downtown)
- 20 Management Students' Society, Year-end Gala (University of Lethbridge)
- 26 Get Connected!, Calgary (TELUS Convention Centre)

## April

- 2 Get Connected!, Edmonton (The Westin)
- 9 Online CPA General Information Session (AlbertaAccountants.org)
- 9 Lunch and Evening CPA General Information Sessions (Edmonton, Westin Downtown)
- 16 Lunch and Evening CPA General Information Sessions (Calgary, CMA Alberta Training Centre)

For more information about these events email: [yourpath@albertaaccountants.org](mailto:yourpath@albertaaccountants.org).

# HIGHLIGHTS

## 2014 Fall Recruitment Dates

In September 2014, the profession will once again facilitate the fall recruitment process for individuals planning to secure employment and enter the CPA Professional Education Program. As in prior years, the ICAA—and its partners in the Alberta Accountants Unification Agency—will host events to enable these prospective students to meet with a variety of potential employers. Details are pending, but events will be hosted in Calgary, Edmonton and Lethbridge. Once finalized, more information about these events, as well as other important dates—such as the application deadline for training positions—will be available online at [www.albertaCAs.ca](http://www.albertaCAs.ca) and [www.albertaaccountants.org](http://www.albertaaccountants.org).

## Alberta Accountants Advantage Dinner

Feast on a four-course meal and network with several Certified Management Accountants, Certified General Accountants and Chartered Accountants. Attendees can enter a draw for the chance to win a gift certificate to their campus bookstore! Visit [www.albertaaccountants.org](http://www.albertaaccountants.org) to reserve your seat.

## Grant MacEwan University Student Business Conference

The Student Business Conference is the premier event for the MacEwan School of Business and is designed to effectively connect students with business leaders and innovators. We are thrilled to be the lead sponsor of this year's event, being held on March 5!

## Get Connected! Information and Networking Sessions (Calgary and Edmonton)

The sixth annual Get Connected! events will be taking place in Calgary and Edmonton this spring. The evenings will include a panel discussion with several professional accountants, all of whom will share their student and career experiences. This event leaves students with a clearer picture of what a career as an accountant could mean for them. Following the panel discussion, students can interact with the panelists, accounting representatives from different organizations, business students and human resource representatives from various training offices.



## Message from the Editors

As another academic year accelerates toward the finish line, it's time for many students to start preparing for the shift from the classroom to the office. Whether on the threshold of entering the CPA Prerequisite Education Program (PREP) or the CPA Professional Education Program (PEP) and becoming a full-time business professional, or finding summer employment to get a taste of working life, this transition can be a challenging one.

In this issue of *Capitalize*, we're doing our best to support students through the evolution of "turning pro." In order to become a true professional, you have to look and feel like one. Thanks to Henry Singer, BLU's Women's Wear and four CPA Campus Ambassadors—Sarah Batchelor, Maisam Darabi, Eric Lajczak, and Kimberly Surmacz—this issue contains a comprehensive guide on how to dress in different business settings, from "casual Friday" to a formal corporate gala.

You'll also find features about defining your own career path, the entrepreneurial options open to designated accountants, and specific information about the CPA Professional Education Program.

Meanwhile, designated accountants in Alberta are heading towards "turning pro" themselves. The ICAA and its partners in the Alberta Accountants Unification Agency, CMA Alberta and CGA Alberta, are working together in a number of areas, with the highest priority placed on pursuing new provincial legislation that would create and recognize the Chartered Professional Accountant designation in Alberta. Our organizations are working with the Government of Alberta on this matter, and we are hopeful that this process will be completed during 2014.

Good luck with the rest of the academic year! If you have any questions about unification, embarking on a career as a professional accountant, or whether your shirt clashes with your tie, send us an email.

Sincerely,

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The program covers all aspects of the Canadian CPA competency map. Seminars and workshops build technical expertise as well as ethical behaviour, communications abilities, leadership and other professional skills.

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# He shoots, he scores

By Gitte Sorensen

Growing up in rural Alberta is synonymous with playing hockey, so it's no surprise that **Darwin Bozek CGA** had dreams of becoming a professional hockey player. While his passion for hockey was essentially inherent, he also developed an interest in accounting. "In Grade 10, I had a portfolio project where I had to write cheques, keep a ledger, interpret bank statements and produce financial statements," says Darwin. "And I found it fascinating."

Since then, Darwin had two aspirations: becoming a professional hockey player and an accountant. He excelled in both.

During his post-secondary studies, Darwin played hockey at Red Deer College and spent three years with the University of Alberta Golden Bears hockey team. This led to a stint playing with the New Haven Nighthawks in the American Hockey League (AHL) and a contract with the Los Angeles Kings in the National Hockey League (NHL). "One of my hockey career highlights was going to the L.A. Kings training camp with Wayne Gretzky and playing in an NHL exhibition game," says Darwin.

Darwin eventually took a buyout deal from the NHL contract, but he has no regrets. "Taking the buyout was purely a business decision," says Darwin. "Just getting an NHL contract is a great accomplishment, and not too many can say that."

Graduating with a Bachelor of Commerce with a major in accounting, Darwin had his alternate career path already mapped out. Focused on the CA designation, Darwin articled with the Office of the Auditor General of Alberta. As so often happens, life got in the way. "During my articling, I was starting a family and struggled with being able to focus on studying. I definitely wasn't ready to tackle the UFE," recalls Darwin. "A

colleague happened to mention the CGA program to me. I signed up and received my designation in 1999."

This turned out to be a smart play for Darwin, who was appointed controller for the Province of Alberta in July 2012.

"Working in the public sector challenges my accounting skills," says Darwin. "Being creative and finding solutions that meet the goals of the Province as well as complying with the standards and putting controls in place that work for Albertans is what I strive for every day."

While Darwin isn't playing hockey anymore, many of the skills he picked up throughout his hockey career contribute to his success as an accountant. "Learning how to be competitive, disciplined, a team player, and a leader have gone a long way in my career as an accountant," says Darwin.

Career-wise, Darwin is on a winning streak. After 21 years of working in the public sector, he's found his niche—and a few life lessons along with it. "You drive your own career. Don't wait for someone else to steer for you. Take the initiative yourself. It worked for me." Darwin admits he was lucky to have coaches and mentors who helped guide and influence his career and ranks this as one of his key learnings from his career.

Hockey is and will always be a big part of Darwin's life. He's coached hockey ever since he stopped playing himself and is the current head coach for a midget AAA female hockey team. "I have two teenaged children and coaching is how I like to give back and be involved in my children's lives," says Darwin. "Coaching is not work to me—it's a passion and a great stress relief from my day job." **C**

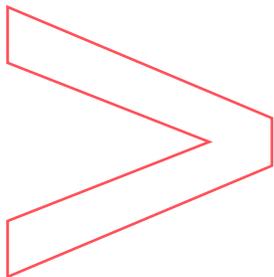


# Building a *brand*

“  
With my experience, I was able to bring a lot of change management ability and help build a strong foundation for growth. And I’m seeing it at Vintage, as well.  
”



Todd Korol Photography



## *Kara Claypool FCMA has been a driving force in the growth and establishment of three popular Alberta brands*

By Oscar Lamers

### **If variety is the spice of life, then Kara Claypool FCMA lives a very flavourful existence.**

Kara is the Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operating Officer of Calgary's Vintage Group, a restaurant collection that includes nine locations across five different brands: Vintage Chophouse and Tavern; Redwater Rustic Grille; Rush; Bookers BBQ and Crab Shack; and Rise Bakery and Café.

In her position, Kara plays a leadership role in all areas of the organization, and reports directly to Vintage Group's President and CEO. This breadth of involvement means that no day is quite like the next.

"A typical week might include meeting with the accounting team to approve financial statements for each restaurant and speaking with the regional operations directors about financials. As the marketing team reports to me, I may have to provide input on a new website design or out-of-home advertising campaign. I could also be at any of our member restaurants for a new menu tasting," said Kara, proving that "spice of life" also has a more literal application in her case.

Kara's accounting career stems from a personal interest she had in her youth.

"I have always been a very analytical person by nature," she explained. "As a child, I was always a saver, not a spender. When I was 10 years old I opened my first bank account, and I was about 15 or 16 when I first read *The Wealthy Barber*. Accounting was something that I was fascinated with, but, at that point, I hadn't made the connection to incorporate it into my career."

Upon enrolling in post-secondary, this passion bloomed into something Kara

could see herself doing professionally. She attended Grande Prairie Regional College for two years before moving away from home and transferring to the University of Calgary. Here, she completed her Bachelor of Commerce with majors in Accounting and Finance.

"My first job was as a general accountant at Big Rock Brewery. The CFO identified in me that I wanted to keep going, keep learning, and that I wouldn't be happy just counting numbers all day. For example, I was always corresponding with the marketing department to see how I could help out."

This keenness led to a suggestion from her boss: pursue a CMA designation. Kara did just that, with Big Rock's support, and has never looked back.

After completing her designation she was eventually promoted to Director of Finance and Strategic Planning. Then, after more than 10 years at Big Rock, Kara moved on to become the Senior Vice President of Jugo Juice. She spent about six years there before joining Vintage Group.

"I didn't have a focus on the restaurant or beverage industry out of school, but it has certainly developed. I recognized that I'm big on brands, and that's what I gravitate toward," said Kara.

Both Big Rock and Jugo Juice were at similar stages of evolution when Kara came onboard. In each scenario, the companies were at the cusp of rapid development—bringing significant opportunity, but not without risk.

"With my experience, I was able to bring a lot of change management ability and help build a strong foundation for growth. And I'm seeing it at Vintage, as well."

Kara said her experience in the CMA program—and, particularly, the group work required for the program's board report—has played an important role in her career. This sort of group work is also an important component of the CPA Professional Education Program.

"It's a unique experience, working with different personalities, different people, different opinions, different viewpoints. I gained a lot of empathy for another person's point of view. And that's a role in itself: people insight skills."

Outside of the office, Kara, who was previously named to *Avenue Calgary's* Top 40 under 40 list, manages—somehow—to find time for her other passions. A mother of two, she and her family spend time seeking adventure, whether it's skiing or snowboarding, golfing, or downhill mountain biking.

Another of Kara's passions is financial literacy, which she spreads to the community through volunteering for Junior Achievement in Calgary. These efforts to give back to the community are one of the reasons she was among 32 Canadians to receive an FCMA (Fellow Certified Management Accountant) designation in 2013. "I didn't think that I would be awarded the designation, because it's so coveted and there are many successful professionals in Alberta that would be eligible. I am so proud. To be nominated and ultimately recognized by my peers is incredible."

While Kara's list of accomplishments and activities sounds like it would drive most people to the brink of collapse, don't expect her to slow down anytime soon.

"If I'm not going 100 miles-per-hour, I feel like I'm standing still." **C**

# Decisions, decisions, decisions

Hindsight is 20/20, but, unfortunately, decision-making often has to occur on the fly (and without the luxury of time travel). So, how can someone improve their chances of making choices in the present that will positively impact their careers? Is there a strategy? Is it all about attitude? How can someone make a decision like a “pro?”

By Natasha Constantin

Many students, who are making these tough decisions for the first time, find the career decision making process overwhelming. As an expert in guiding people towards the best career options, Eric Pye, Career Services Advisor at the Alberta Accountants Unification Agency, always advises student to go back to the basics. “Only by understanding our motivators, values, interests and skills can we really look at a career, or job, or organization and figure out if it represents a good match for who we are. Incongruence, or mismatching, is one of the biggest causes of career stress, so it would seem like a no-brainer that we would take some time to explore who we are, and then use that information to make decisions going forward.”

That being said, Eric believes students should start out with at least a vague idea of the

direction to take before choosing what they want to do and where they want work. “This is best done through meeting with a career counselor where you can utilize an ‘interest survey.’ Career counselors can coach students about the potential career options to explore, either through research, informational interviews, job shadowing, or actually getting experience doing the job.”

Whether it’s taking time to think through a decision, or acting on a gut feeling, the one thing Eric would recommend to all students is that they should not think of these decisions as all-or-nothing propositions. “In a 2008 survey, the average job tenure with one employer was reported at 4.1 years, meaning about 10 job changes in a typical 40-year career,” said Eric.

Eric Pye, Career Services Advisor,  
Alberta Accountants Unification Agency



Curtis Palichuk CA is one professional accountant who has experience in shifting gears. Curtis has many career decisions that he can proudly look back on. Decisions like training and working in a national public accounting firm, spending six years in industry (both in public and private companies), and later moving back to work in a public accounting firm, this time as partner at Wilde & Company Chartered Accountants, a mid-sized firm of 30 staff and partners in Vegreville.

The big decision of going from industry back to public accounting was made when he came to the realization that he craved to recreate certain aspects of his early-career experience. "I missed the collegiality of an office full of accounting professionals providing business council to a variety of clients. And I missed tax. It was at that point that I wanted to return to public practice in a partner capacity. I wanted to utilize my CA background and the management skills I learned in industry while running a firm."

Working in smaller practice gave Curtis the ability to set the culture, direction, and character of the firm (all things very important to him). He also enjoys the entrepreneurial feel and nature of the work, the excitement of gaining new clients, and seeing all his clients succeed.

One tough decision many students face is whether to start their career at a large public accounting firm or a smaller one. While the right answer is different for everyone, Curtis said that students employed at a smaller firm will benefit from many opportunities during their training. "Students who train in a smaller practice will be exposed to diversity and responsibility early in their career," said Curtis. "They will receive early advanced leadership opportunities, and will often have the opportunity to see the big picture much earlier in their career."

While it's crucial to consider your options early in your career, making a choice that doesn't work out isn't necessarily a mistake.

*Students who train in a smaller practice will be exposed to diversity and responsibility early in their career...they will receive early advanced leadership opportunities, and will often have the opportunity to see the big picture much earlier in their career.*

Curtis Palichuk CA

Curtis Palichuk CA (centre) and colleagues at Wilde & Company Chartered Accountants in Vegreville.



Laughing Dog Photography

“Every career experience is a life experience. It would be rare not to experience something positive in any career decision, whether it feels right or wrong. All of my experience was invaluable to my career. Every stop provided different but relevant experience and training to be a great practitioner and trusted business advisor, business owner and leader in our firm, community and accounting profession,” said Curtis.

This desire for a leadership role has also been a driving force in the career of Bernadette Charan CMA. And in her case, that desire grew from her personal—as opposed to professional—experience. Bernadette’s father was an accountant

and entrepreneur, and throughout his career she watched him use accounting as an essential tool to operate his business and become a positive leader. It was clear to her that accounting would launch a successful career, so she decided to pursue her CMA designation.

Searching for the right job at the right time, in a booming economy, Bernadette was fortunate to be faced with numerous opportunities and job options. But having such a large list of options didn’t make the process any easier, and she knew she would have to make a game plan and take her time when making a decision on her employer. “I am a planner, so I think the most important thing I did was

take the extra time to prepare myself for interviews. You have to do research about the company, the kind of work they do, and what they value so you can assess whether this organization is the right fit for you. You can’t take the first job offer that comes your way.”

Newalta in Calgary was the right fit for Bernadette, and continues to be. The organization has enjoyed consistent growth, and Bernadette’s career has been able to follow a parallel trajectory. “By training in industry, and in the right company for me, the possibilities were endless,” said Bernadette. “I was able to get work experience in many different roles in the same organization, without

Bernadette Charan CMA on her trading card.

# The professionals are turning “pro”

The shift from three Canadian accounting designations to one united profession is a complicated one. To create awareness about the transition and encourage enrolment into new professional education programs, CPA Canada launched the “Go Pro” advertising campaign (see page 25), supplemented in Alberta with provincial-specific branding and marketing initiatives. The national campaign included print, out-of-home and television advertising, with the TV ads garnering attention for their sports-related themes.

“Both the national and provincial activities highlight that designated accountants are well-rounded business professionals who hold different positions in different industries and sectors,” said Quinta Asaah, Marketing Officer with the Alberta Accountants Unification Agency. “They come from diverse cultural backgrounds with a broad range of educational credentials.”

Advertising was placed in various mediums for several weeks in the fall of 2013, including radio, online, magazines,

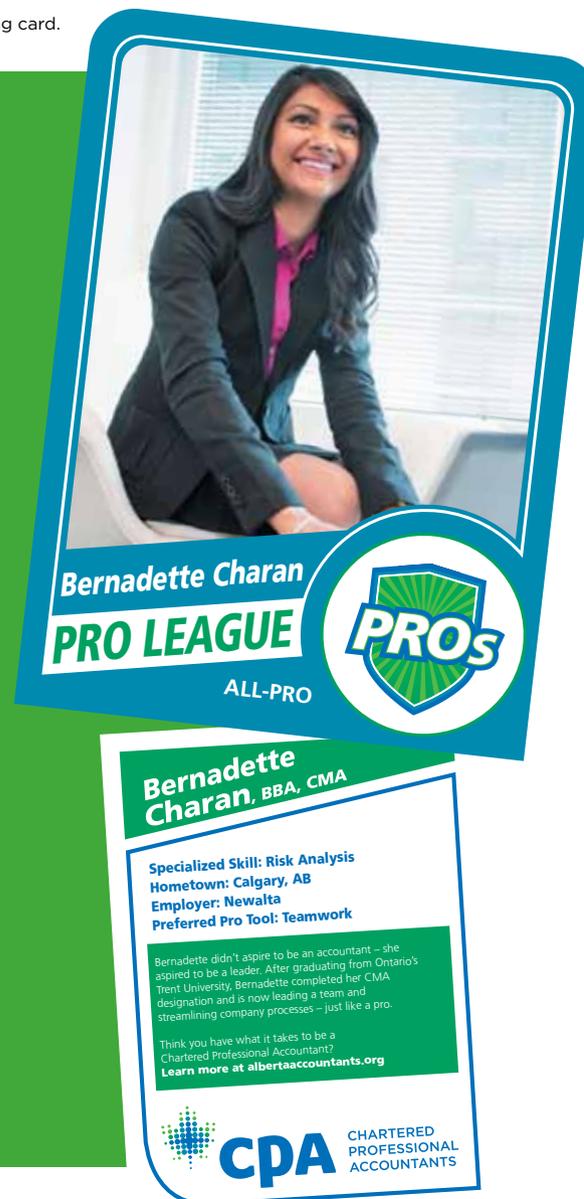
and out-of-home (i.e., transit stations and vehicles; and in professional buildings in washrooms and on revolving doors and elevator screens). A second wave of ads will be running in early 2014.

In Alberta, a series of trading cards, featuring Alberta designated accountants, were developed to help heighten the awareness of the CPA brand.

“For consistency, we wanted our provincial concept to align with the national athletic theme. But it was also important to humanize our ads, so we decided to profile our members,” said Quinta. “With unification in progress in Alberta, each pack of cards contains a CMA, CGA and CA. The fourth card is a post-secondary student who aspires to becoming a designated professional accountant.”

These cards are typically distributed at career information and networking events.

Quinta suggests students keep their eyes peeled for more exciting initiatives by the Alberta Accountants Unification Agency, with another wave of the campaign likely scheduled for Fall 2014.



losing all of my knowledge of the business. I felt like I could push beyond my limits and expand my perspective while staying with the same employer I enjoyed working for.”

Something Bernadette truly values in an organization is a focus on developing their employees. Now, as Manager in Risk Management, she’s witnessed her own success because of the combination of her skills, her drive, and a company who harnesses those qualities. “As I have grown my career, I have been able to increase my confidence and assertiveness. I wish I had been more this way earlier in my career, but everything comes with time.”

Like Bernadette, George Leung’s career has taken him to an industry setting, but, in George’s case, not before having the chance to cut his teeth in the world of public accounting.

For George, a Chartered Accountant and the Manager of Finance at Sherritt Coal, keeping his doors open to different opportunities early in his career was very important to him. By making the initial choice of a career in accounting, he knew he would earn long-term career opportunities by gaining deep insight into all aspects and areas of business. “I knew that this knowledge would be applicable to whatever I eventually chose to do and it would form the cornerstone of a successful career in business.”

Starting out his training as a wide-eyed student at Deloitte, George soon realized the many benefits of training in at a large firm. “The scope and variety of businesses and issues you come across is very difficult to replicate anywhere else. As the size of the firm increases, generally there’s a greater variety of clients, bigger peer group, and more technical resources for work and your professional certification program.”

It didn’t take long before George felt confident in not only his technical skills, but his soft skills as well. “Before you know it you’re meeting with clients and providing real-world recommendations on how they can improve their business, developing teams and managing projects from start to finish.” The experience he gained working with different clients and learning about their businesses gave him the opportunity to explore different areas of industry. George felt that moving to industry might be a possible career change for him. Getting a job offer

“  
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George Leung CA



George Leung CA

from a previous client, George took the career plunge and left public practice. “My experience working directly with this client gave me insight into their business, their team and their culture and values. It definitely made my transition from public practice into industry easier and ultimately successful.”

George considers himself very reflective and generally takes a while to make career decisions like these, regardless of whether they are an obvious fit or not. Seeking people he trusts, like family and friends, he will go to them for support and advice. “I feel decisions that affect your career should be given time and consideration, so I like to bounce ideas off people and weigh my options carefully before acting.”

Given the constant evolution of the business world, this ongoing career reflection

is important, said Eric. “Many occupations we now take for granted did not exist 20 or even 10 years ago, and even tasks that workers are asked to do in well-established jobs become so different they develop into new occupations.” With that in mind, Eric insists that it’s important to consider the long term when you think about your career and where you want to be. “Long-term planning informs short-term career decisions, and both require self-knowledge to ensure person-position congruence.”

There are many factors that go into making career decisions. The main thing is that you can see the big picture and know what it is you want out of your career. If your goal is to be a tax partner at one of the big four accounting firms, or a controller at an oil and gas organization, you can formulate a plan that takes you there. The decision is all yours. **C**



# Brain food

By Kelsey Masciola, Revive Wellness



Kelsey is a nutrition and fitness enthusiast who helps others live with vitality. As a registered dietitian, she'll transform your diet without depriving you of your favorite treats! Working with athletes and major sports teams in Edmonton, as well as lifting some heavy weights herself during crossfit workouts, she knows how to fuel an active lifestyle.



## **With regular classes, research, exams, and working, who has time to think about nutrition? Food often needs to be of the “grab and go” variety between all these activities!**

But if you're looking to gain an edge in your studies (and avoid the “freshman 15”), research shows higher quality foods and proper hydration can help to improve brain function and productivity. Being a student for over seven years, what I noticed was the more stressed I was, the worse my choices became. But unhealthy food choices can also contribute to your stress! And so a cycle begins...

One of the best strategies to reduce stress and improve your food choices is menu planning. Here are the steps you should follow:

1. Print off a weekly schedule.
2. Mark off any night you are out, studying, or don't have time to cook.
3. Highlight two or three nights a week that you do have time to cook.
4. Start with breakfast—plan a balanced high protein, high fibre breakfast (including all four food groups). For a busy schedule, plan to eat the same breakfast for the week, and make it ahead of time. Here are some examples:
  - Egg wrap: scramble eggs in the microwave (scramble the eggs in a coffee cup with one teaspoon of water, and place in microwave for 30-45 seconds). Put the eggs in a large whole wheat wrap, add some salsa and cheese, and off you go!
  - Yogurt parfait: Top vanilla Greek yogurt with a mixture of all bran buds and granola, finish it off with some fresh fruit.
  - Baked oatmeal: pre-bake oatmeal and

warm it up in the morning. Have it with some Greek yogurt and fresh berries.

5. Use leftovers for lunch. But if leftovers aren't your thing, try easy sandwiches, like tuna with sliced cucumbers, carrots, and cherry tomatoes on the side.
6. Plan your dinners and cook four-to-six portions. That way you will have enough for two or three lunches and dinners. To have a balanced lunch and dinner, make sure half of your plate is vegetables, one-quarter is protein, and one-quarter is grain, along with some healthy fats. Some easy dinners include:
  - Shrimp or chicken stir-fry with vegetables over rice
  - Beef, bison or turkey chili with a side salad or raw vegetables
  - Chicken, vegetables and cheese quesadilla with side salad, plain Greek yogurt (as sour cream), and salsa
7. Keep balanced snacks on hand, such as a fruit or vegetable paired with protein. Some examples include:
  - An apple with almond butter
  - One ounce of cheese and one piece of fruit

- Almonds (10-15) with a piece of fruit
- Hummus with raw vegetables

When working out your weekly menu, plan for three meals plus two or three snacks per day so you are eating every two-to-three hours. This will help to provide your body and brain with a consistent supply of energy and minimize your risk of over-eating at a meal or snack.

More tips to help you throw together easy meals:

- Keep vegetables on hand: Keep a container of ready-to-eat raw vegetables in the fridge that you can quickly access for meals and snacks.
- Keep protein on hand: When cooking protein, cook some extra to have available for the next few days. On busy weeks, buy a rotisserie chicken and pull the skin off. The chicken meat can easily be added to soups, quesadillas, fajitas, pasta, pita pizzas, or sandwiches.
- Keep your fridge stocked with small containers of yogurt and cheese sticks as they are great snacks. **c**

# Taking a mulligan

*Colin Brecht CA hit the reset button on his career, shifting from the links to the office*

By Oscar Lamers

There's no shortage of business professionals who daydream of trading in their BlackBerry for a five-iron. But in the case of **Colin Brecht CA**, the trade went the other direction—and it couldn't have worked out any better.

Colin's first career took place on the golf course. He grew up in the town of Barrhead, Alberta, located about 125 kilometres northwest of Edmonton, and was immediately drawn to the sport.

"As a kid I played a lot. The golf course was basically my second home," says Colin. "I'd spend 10 or more hours a day there sometimes, from sun up to sundown. I found out that I was actually somewhat good at the sport, better than the average kid."

With this discovery, Colin decided to pursue the course as a career. He completed the Professional Golf Management program at Grant MacEwan Community College (now Grant MacEwan University), and spent five years as a member of the Canadian Professional Golfers Association (CPGA), as an assistant golf professional at Kananaskis Country Golf Course and the Links at Spruce Grove.

"But it got to the point where I needed to have a career. I wanted a family and I wanted to, well, buy stuff, and golf doesn't really pay the bills."

So Colin decided to turn to accounting. He returned to school, attending NAIT and the University of Lethbridge's Edmonton campus, in order to complete the entry requirements for the CA School of Business.

"It was a little daunting going back to school because I was 25 or 26 years old at that time," says Colin. But he adds that he fit in quickly, particularly at the U of L, where the bulk of the students were experienced in the workforce and taking night classes to alter their career path.

Colin found an articling position at BDO Dunwoody LLP in Edmonton, now BDO Canada LLP, a mid-size firm where he found an immediate fit.

““  
*I really like the variety of clients, from small local businesses to larger clients. My dad is a small business owner, so I grew up in that atmosphere.*  
 ””

Colin earned his CA designation in 2006 and is now a senior manager with the firm.

And while his hobby for golf had to take a back seat during his articling years, his added seniority and responsibility have led to additional flexibility at the office, allowing him more time to pursue his passion.

Colin's kept his skills sharp by playing an estimated 50 to 60 rounds each summer—twice each weekend and once or twice during the week.

"During busy season, from January to April, I have to buckle down at the office. But it lets me leave the office at 2 p.m. on a Wednesday for men's night if I want to get in an extra round."

This extra time on the course has led to some additional success on the links. Colin became a member of the Blackhawk Golf Club after becoming designated and has since won their club championship on two occasions, including in 2013. This led to a spot in the Canadian Mid-Amateur Championship, hosted at his home club this past fall. And while Colin unfortunately didn't make the cut, he enjoyed the experience.

"It was pretty neat. I had never competed in a national championship or anything else on that scale. It's pretty serious competition. Everything counts; there aren't any foot wedges or gimmies, like when you're playing with your buddies on a Saturday or Sunday morning."

While it's not exactly the same as spending each and every day on the course, the balance Colin found when he exchanged his putter for his desk made the trade worthwhile. **c**







# The CPA Professional Education Program: what students need to know

*The CPA Certification Program, which has been developed on a national level and will be delivered regionally/provincially—is designed to combine the strengths of the each of the “legacy” (CA, CMA, CGA) bodies’ certification practices.*

## Degree & Prerequisites

The academic prerequisites to enter the CPA program will include holding an undergraduate degree, and coverage of specific subject areas. These subject areas will be covered through the completion of specific course requirements, with eligible courses defined at various Alberta post-secondary institutions.

Prerequisite listings for each of these post-secondary institutions are available here: [AlbertaAccountants.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/CourseMatrix-Oct2013.pdf](http://AlbertaAccountants.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/CourseMatrix-Oct2013.pdf)

Provisions are already in place for students who were on track to complete their undergraduate degree prior to the adoption of the post-secondary institution course requirements. The CPA profession has prepared two transitional bridging programs, which will allow these students to complete the necessary course requirements in a streamlined fashion.

### Module Zero

Students who had previously considered a career as a CA, CGA or CMA—and, therefore, are only able to meet the entry requirements for one of these legacy programs—will be able to enroll in “Mod Zero” to meet any outstanding prerequisites. Mod Zero ensures that students’ entry into the accounting profession is not delayed due to the transition to the CPA profession. In Mod Zero, students assess which topics they are required to complete, have access to all the course materials online, and self-evaluate each topic upon its completion. Mod Zero will be available for students in the months prior to beginning the first module of CPA Professional Education Program (PEP).

### CPA Prerequisite Education Program (CPA PREP)

CPA PREP is designed for those who have an undergraduate degree in a discipline other than accounting and lack some or all of the prerequisite courses required for admission to the CPA Professional Education Program. CPA PREP may also be relevant to post-secondary graduates, career changers, and new Canadians wishing to start a career in accountancy. CPA PREP is nationally developed and delivered on a part-time basis. To ensure maximum flexibility and accessibility, the program has been developed using a blended learning model combining online learning, self-study, and classroom learning.

## CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP)

The CPA Professional Education Program includes six modules designed to develop six technical competencies and five enabling competencies. While offered on a regional or provincial basis, the program has been developed nationally.

CPA PEP is a graduate-level program which is delivered part-time over two years. CPA candidates will take the program while simultaneously being employed in a relevant position. For students, their CPA PEP education coupled with practical experience will complement the development of CPA competencies.

Designed using a blended learning model, CPA PEP will combine online learning, self-study, classroom learning and teamwork to enable CPA candidates to develop the competencies expected of Canada's pre-eminent professional accountants.

**Modules:** Six modules will comprise the CPA PEP program. The program will begin with two core modules that are common to all CPA candidates, followed by two elective modules (of which there will be four options). Upon completion of these four modules, all candidates will be required to complete the "capstone" modules.

- **Two common core modules**, which all CPA candidates must take, focusing on the development of competencies in management and financial accounting, and the integration of the six core technical competency areas.
- **Two elective modules**, which allow CPA candidates to develop deeper skills in their areas of career interest; four electives will be offered: assurance, performance management, tax and finance. All candidates must choose two, and candidates pursuing careers in public accounting must choose assurance and tax.
- **A capstone integrative module** that focuses on the development of the enabling competencies such as leadership and professional skills and the integration of core competencies.
- **A capstone examination preparation module**, which prepares CPA candidates for the Common Final Examination.

## Practical Experience

All students will require 30 months of employment—the same term as the CA legacy requirements. CPA Canada has announced that practical experience will be gained through one of two routes:

1. **Approved Path:** These CPA candidates will be employed in training positions offered by organizations with training paths approved by the CPA profession. This route is very similar to the traditional CA model.
2. **Experience Verification:** These CPA candidates will be appropriately supervised and/or mentored, and submit detailed experience reports for approval by the CPA profession. This model will rely less on the employer and more on the supervisor/mentor to ensure candidates develop the necessary competencies. These students will be required to complete detailed practical experience reports which the profession will review in detail throughout the period of practical experience. This path will be designed to replicate the CGA and CMA legacy experience model.

## Common Final Evaluation

The CPA Program will have a multi-day Common Final Examination (CFE) to complete the CPA Professional Education Program. The evaluation will be similar in format to the CA profession's current Uniform Evaluation (UFE), known as one of the world's most rigorous professional examinations. Like the UFE, the CFE will challenge candidates to demonstrate their competence by responding to simulations and business scenarios representing the kinds of challenges they have faced during their work experience, or will soon be facing in their professional career. Regardless of their selected elective modules, all candidates will write the same CFE. **c**

# MPAcc: Emerging stronger than ever

By Kaili Xu, Acting Director of Graduate Programs, Edwards School of Business

The Canadian accounting profession is evolving as the country's three professional accounting designations—CA, CMA, and CGA—are merging into a single professional accounting designation: Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA).

The Edwards School of Business MPAcc (Master of Professional Accounting) program at the University of Saskatchewan has traditionally trained students for the CA designation. Edwards MPAcc proactively adjusted the program's curriculum to meet the requirements of the CPA Competency Map and has received accreditation from CPA Canada. The accreditation means that students who complete the Edwards MPAcc program will be given exemption for the first five modules of the CPA Professional Education Program (PEP) and will enroll in the last module, Capstone 2.

The Edwards MPAcc program has emerged from the merger stronger than ever and will continue as a great alternative to prepare students in Alberta and across Canada for their careers, not only as accounting professionals, but as business professionals. In addition, why not earn a Master's degree while studying for your CPA designation?

To find out more information about or apply for the Edwards MPAcc program, please visit [www.edwardsmppacc.ca](http://www.edwardsmppacc.ca). To contact the MPAcc program, please call 306-966-8410 or email [mpacc@edwards.usask.ca](mailto:mpacc@edwards.usask.ca).

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a black sleeveless top and a black ruffled skirt, stands in a clothing store. She is smiling and holding a small blue clutch bag. In the background, there are mannequins wearing sparkly dresses. The store has a green carpet and a curved ceiling with recessed lights.

# Going pro from head to toe

*Image is an important element for students launching their business careers*

By Oscar Lamers  
Photography by Laughing Dog



Four CPA Campus Ambassadors had the opportunity to learn how to dress like a “pro.” From left to right: Kimberley Surmacz (MacEwan University), Sarah Batchelor (University of Alberta), Eric Lajczak (MacEwan University), and Maisam Darabi (University of Lethbridge, Edmonton Campus).

Many careers come with built-in wardrobes; for example, doctors and nurses have scrubs, athletes have jerseys, and police officers have set uniforms. Meanwhile, professional accountants, and others in the business world, are expected to dress to a different standard. But, understandably, where that standard is set isn’t always apparent.

This riddle can be particularly intimidating for students and other individuals embarking on a new career and entering an office setting for a first time. Unlike in other fields, an accountant’s wardrobe can be filled with virtually limitless options. This can be both a blessing and a curse. Conveniently, a hockey player has the decision of whether to wear his road or home jersey made for him, but business professionals have the opportunity to project their own personality through their attire.

“How you dress helps establish your personal brand,” said Tracy Bradley, store manager of Blu’s Women’s Wear in Manulife Place in Edmonton. She adds that this never-ending process begins the second you introduce yourself to a new contact, client or colleague, and then must be reinforced over time. “Perception happens the second that people see you, and a successful image requires repeated messaging.”

Mark Gummer, Armani Collezioni Designated Selling Associate at Henry Singer in

Edmonton, echoed Tracy’s comments. “You should invest in your wardrobe because it really is an investment in your career.”

Students may be interested to know that they don’t have to take out a mortgage to buy these new clothes. Some retailers, including Henry Singer and Blu’s, offer interest-free payment plans so that young professionals can start wearing quality products without breaking the bank.

Building a professional wardrobe is essential for anyone with their sights set on a successful career in the business world, but, admittedly, it’s daunting and costly for students entering the workforce. Students shouldn’t feel obligated to fill their closet with rows of blouses and suits, or mountains of ties; it’s a process, and one that can start by finding a few key pieces that can be worn in different ways. “The key is creating a versatile wardrobe,” said Mark. For this reason, he suggests the first suit a man should purchase shouldn’t be black—a common myth—but instead navy or

HENRY SINGER **blu’s**

Henry Singer is the destination to find success through what you wear. For 75 years, Henry Singer, with stores in Edmonton and Calgary, has been providing shoppers with a unique assortment of modern menswear from the world’s finest brands.

Blu’s Women’s Wear is a high-end Alberta retailer with four stores in Edmonton and Calgary. At Blu’s Women’s Wear, our motto is “Love the Way You Look” and our experienced staff goes above and beyond to make sure you do exactly that.

charcoal. “Black is the least versatile,” he says, explaining that a black suit is most appropriate in very formal settings (including funerals).

Mark suggested the following as a starting point for a young male professional: one navy suit, one charcoal suit, one sports jacket with dress pants, six dress shirts, three ties, two pairs of shoes (one black, one brown), and a top coat. He stressed that having two suits pays off in the long run, as wearing one suit repeatedly will mean that, first of all, your options are limited, and, secondly, the life of the suit will be significantly shortened.

Among Tracy’s “must-haves” for women is three-piece suiting, which she suggested would be best in black-feather weight wool material, since it would be appropriate for all seasons. She would also recommend adding jackets that will work back to black, a dress, six tops, another skirt and pant to complement the suit, and two pairs of shoes. From there it’s all about accessorizing.



"Accessories are a great way to diversify without a huge budget; for example, you can really change things up with scarves," said Tracy, adding it's through these accessories that she would add colours to business attire. "I would start with more formal pieces, and then add 'pops' of colour (in tops and accessories)."

Mark said that there is one element that can change a man's ensemble more than any other. "A necktie has the ability to elevate your image more than any other piece of your outfit." Tracy said that a jacket or top, which adds texture and colour to any outfit, is the women's equivalent to a men's tie.

Having a versatile wardrobe will ensure a young professional is able to adapt to any situation that may arise in a given work week, from an average day meeting with clients, to a corporate gala, to "casual Friday." And while many people may look forward to undoing their tie or ditching their uncomfortable heels come the end of the week, casual Friday can be a pitfall for those still adapting to life in the office.

## Business Casual

"This photo features a soft silk Vince blouse, a skinny straight AG dark denim, a kitten heel black patent pump to dress it up a bit, and a structured Hugo Boss Black blazer for finishing the look."  
—Tracy Bradley, Blu's

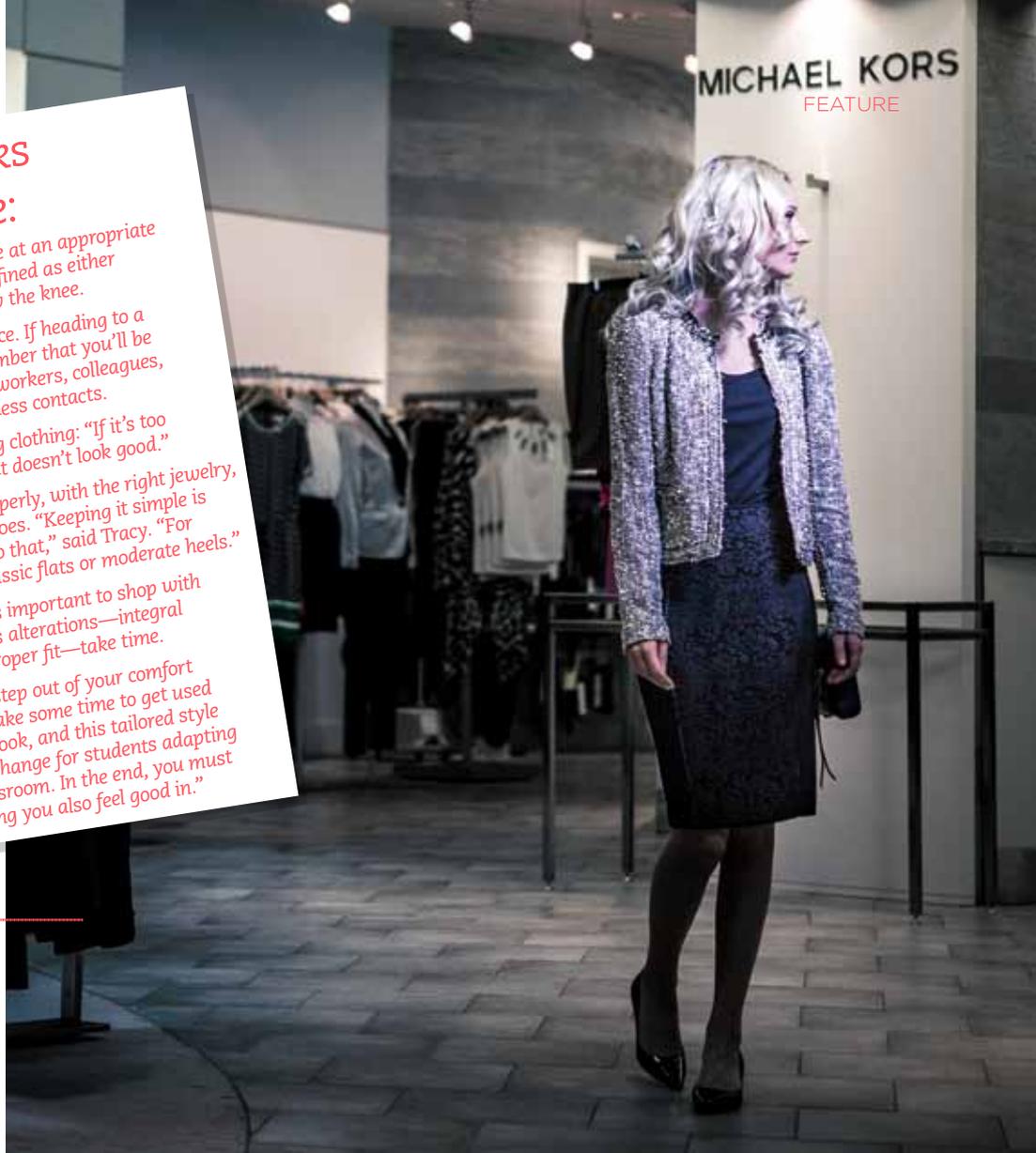
## Business

"This Hugo Boss Black suit is an essential business wardrobe starter. Pieces can be added and upgraded gradually without worrying about fabric and dye lot differences. A two-button blazer gives you a shapely fit, and a straight leg pant gives you a fantastic basic. A pop of print in an Equipment blouse provides a bit of interest, and gives you an opportunity to express your style."  
—Tracy



## Tracy's tricks of the trade:

- ✓ Do make sure skirts are at an appropriate length, which Tracy defined as either slightly above or below the knee.
- ✓ Do know your audience. If heading to a corporate gala, remember that you'll be networking with co-workers, colleagues, and important business contacts.
- ✗ Don't wear ill-fitting clothing: "If it's too tight or too baggy, it doesn't look good."
- ✓ Do accessorize properly, with the right jewelry, belt, jacket and shoes. "Keeping it simple is the best way to do that," said Tracy. "For example, with classic flats or moderate heels."
- ✗ Don't rush it. It's important to shop with time to spare, as alterations—integral in ensuring a proper fit—take time.
- ✓ Do prepare to step out of your comfort zone. "It will take some time to get used to a different look, and this tailored style will be a big change for students adapting from the classroom. In the end, you must find something you also feel good in."



## Business

"This Rebecca Taylor skirt suit features a three-season jacket which can be worked back to your basic black pieces. The knit skirt has a soft damask print, and great structure for a 'fitted-but-not-tight' piece that can be used with the silk blouse or the black suit jacket to create several different outfits."

—Tracy

## Gala

"This polished but playful dress by Marie Saint Pierre gives you an elegant, stylish look. Finished with a classic bracelet and earring combination, clutch handbag, and beautiful suede pump. The neckline and hemline are chic, and appropriate still for a work function."

—Tracy

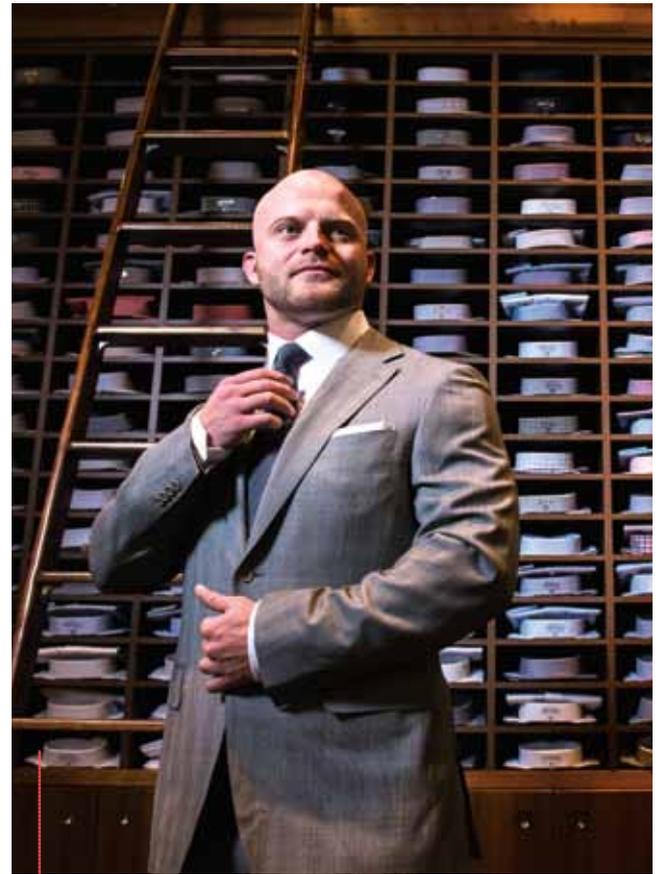




## Casual Friday

"It's essential you get the fit right on your jeans to achieve a crisp and professional look. Keep the denim dark and slim and make sure the hem is clean and not too long. Then try adding some color with a sweater or patterned shirt and seal it with a jacket for an easy go-to Friday look."

—Mark Gummer, Henry Singer



## Grey Suit

"As you look to further develop your wardrobe, step out of the box and begin incorporating subtle patterns and a heightened color palette into your suits. However, don't use Don Cherry as your guide, the key is still a sophisticated aesthetic and a tailored fit."

—Mark

### Mark's tricks of the trade:

- ✓ Do get pants and suits tailored. "Your tailor should be your best friend," he said. Along the same lines, Mark said that it's important to maintain proportions through an ensemble; for example, a slender male in a slim-tailored suit should opt for a skinnier tie as opposed to a wider option.
- ✗ Don't neglect your hair. Mark said: "Your hair should be as tailored as your suit." It's important to be cognizant of other areas of personal grooming as well. If in doubt, a clean shaven look is recommended, particularly if you're looking to impress an unfamiliar potential new boss or client.
- ✓ Do be open-minded. Putting yourself in some clothes and colours you wouldn't normally wear is recommended. "It's tough to achieve versatility if you wear the exact same colours and styles all the time," he said.
- ✗ Don't get too adventurous with your socks. Mark said that overly patterned or coloured socks are a trend that can easily be taken too far. On a similar note, avoid white ties and belts at all costs. "Don't wear anything white except for your shirt."
- ✓ Do stay in touch with trends. Shoulder pads, pant pleats and three-button suits are a thing of the past. Also, never do up the bottom button of a suit.
- ✓ Do take care of your products. It's important to hang up your suit—on a proper hanger—when coming home from work. Also, get a shoe tree for your shoes. These practices will help keep your clothes looking great and lengthen your investment.



## Navy Suit

"The navy suit is the most versatile weapon in your work wardrobe. Pair it with either brown or black shoes and virtually any combination of shirt and tie. You can also wear the jacket as a blazer to wear with dress pants, or play it up with denim or chinos on a 'casual Friday' as Maisam has done."

—Mark

## Gala

"The tuxedo is the epitome of men's elegance, so dress to kill. It doesn't have to be black: you can opt for a navy tuxedo to separate yourself from the crowd. Be sure to nail the details to maximize head-turns: try slicking your hair, wearing patent leather shoes and as always make sure it's a sharp fit."

—Mark



"You're still in a professional environment so you have to treat it as such," says Mark. "You should see it as an opportunity to show your creativity and personal brand. Consider adding a little more colour and replacing your jacket with knitwear or perhaps layer a sweater underneath a jacket."

Dress shoes are still essential. However, you may be able to get away with not wearing

a tie. You should still look as put together on Friday as you do every other work day." For both men and women, dark jeans would be appropriate in such a situation.

"For women, I'd say that if you would wear it at the club, beach, or gym, don't wear it to work," said Tracy. As tempting as it might be to pass black yoga pants off as dress pants, they should be saved for spin class.

If there's one final tip that both Mark and Tracy both have: seek assistance. "Find an advisor who can be honest with you," said Tracy. "It should be from a professional in a store as they have experience fitting and tailoring for all body types and professions."

Mark added: "a professional can help you develop and achieve your personal sense of style." **c**



AU BComm student  
Teang

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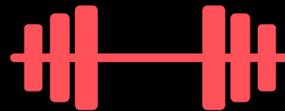
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# The entrepreneurs



An accounting designation is much more than just audits, taxes and financial statements. Accountants are skilled advisors and leaders who play integral roles in running successful businesses. These three designated accountants-turned-entrepreneurs are making the most of their skills and talents by running their own businesses.

By Gitte Sorensen

*The accounting skills I use in running my business are not so much focused on the debits and credits, but rather on the underlying purpose of accounting—providing information for decision-making,*



Todd Korol Photography



## Striking up business in Alberta's oil patch

**Helmut Hauke CGA** is living the Canadian dream—a dream he created himself. Born, raised and educated in Germany, Helmut moved to Alberta in 1990 and has been tapping into Alberta's booming oil and gas industry ever since. "After I arrived in Calgary, I started my career in the oil and gas industry, where I have since held positions from treasury accountant to manager and chief financial officer," said Helmut.

With a good head for numbers and experience in the accounting field, the accounting career path was a clear choice for Helmut. "Regarding my choice of the CGA route, it was the flexibility that allowed me to complete my studies while working full-time," said Helmut. After receiving his CGA designation in 2004, Helmut completed his Master of Business Administration (MBA) a few short years later.

Helmut's business mantra has always been focused on the promotion of a holistic approach to managing businesses, which emphasizes cross-functional collaboration and departing from the "siloed" mentality prevalent in many organizations. "When seeking out business ideas, we realized that effective cross-functional collaboration was an area in which many organizations were struggling," said Helmut. "We recognized this as an oppor-

tunity to help companies change that and become more effective."

In 2007, Helmut and his partner started Kaleut Strategies Inc., a management consulting firm that provides services for clients in the oil and gas industry. "Our firm helps clients re-integrate their accounting departments into their organizations by systematically removing the 'silos' and allowing for improved cross-functional communication, ultimately resulting in a more effective organization," said Helmut.

Naturally, running a business comes with a few learning curves. Helmut quickly learned that, regardless of one's expertise or experience, it takes time to establish a strong client base, thus a certain degree of perseverance and patience is required.

"Do not underestimate the importance of communication and interpersonal skills—effective communication is critical to the service aspect of our business," said Helmut.

Accounting is often referred to as the "language of business," and Helmut agrees there is a natural connection between the two. "The accounting skills I use in running my business are not so much focused on the debits and credits,

but rather on the underlying purpose of accounting—providing information for decision-making," said Helmut. "This helps the client use their accounting department to its fullest potential, so they have the best information available."

Along with being an accountant and entrepreneur, Helmut is also an author and educator. Through his studies, Helmut pursued the academic aspects of accounting and has since developed and taught courses for the University of Calgary and SAIT's MacPhail School of Energy. "I also collaborated with a major publisher of accounting text books and I am the author of *The Operations Accounting Handbook* that will be published in the spring of 2014," said Helmut. "Additionally, I am a director at the Centre for Energy Asset Management Studies and the CFO of a privately held oil and gas company."

While he may be a bit of a workaholic, knowing he contributes to his clients' successes makes it all worthwhile. "As a business owner, many things need to be done, so you need to be prepared to be the CEO and 'janitor.' Providing the best possible service to your clients will inevitably lead to satisfied clients, repeat business and referrals."



## Landing on a golden opportunity

From medical school to running a heli-skiing operation, it's been a wild ride for **Maaike Porter**. "My plan was to be a doctor. My destiny was to be an accountant and own a heli-skiing lodge," said Maaike. "I studied and prepped for medical school, but everything about my life—from growing up in an entrepreneurial family, chasing the outdoors and loving numbers—created an opportunity I don't think I could have planned for."

The bold move paid off. Since 2000, Maaike and her husband have been owners of Great Canadian Heli-Skiing Ltd. and Heather Mountain Lodge in Golden, British Columbia. "Once we decided we wanted to move to BC, we had to look for a business we thought would be successful here," said Maaike. "The fact that the BC mountains are the epicentre for powder-seeking enthusiasts made the heli-skiing business a golden opportunity that we, as entrepreneurs, could not overlook."

Even after a decade of successfully running the business, it was determined that in order to effectively continue growing

the business, better management systems were needed. Maaike's research led her to the CMA Executive Program—in which she is currently enrolled—and the valuable strategic management and accounting skills taught within the program. "The more tools in the toolbox, the more options I will have to approach any problems that present themselves," said Maaike. "My goal is to run my business with the discipline of big business and the agility and passion of a small business."

It's with that passion that Maaike and her husband branded their small owner-operator business focused on personalized service as "boutique heli-skiing." "We lead the industry with the smallest guest-to-guide ratio of four to one, unique unlimited vertical packaging and flexible trip length that are all customer-centric initiatives."

Running any business, let alone one situated in a small B.C. town with a finite amount of suppliers and professionals, has its challenges. "Successful businesses require a lot of expertise to operate efficiently and we occasionally have limited

access to, or no knowledge and experience in, some of the required expertise," said Maaike. "Having to independently solve problems as a business team, we have a tight management team with exceptionally broad skills as a result."

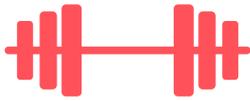
For Maaike, it's the guests from around the world who come to have the best day of their lives, the employees who have so much pride in their jobs and, of course, solving accounting problems that make her work day complete. "Sleuthing through bookkeeping and accounting problems is a twisted pleasure that probably only other accountants can relate to."

While having a family, two businesses and a husband as a partner in both is demanding, Maaike could not imagine a better life. "I guess it's the old saying of 'if you pursue your passions, your career or business will follow,'" said Maaike. "But let me clarify, because it's become clear to me that if you seek a business for which you have a passion, like heli-skiing, you have to make sure you have the same passion for the business as well."

*The more tools in the toolbox, the more options I will have to approach any problems that present themselves. My goal is to run my business with the discipline of big business and the agility and passion of a small business.*



Dibble Photography



## Thinking inside the “box”

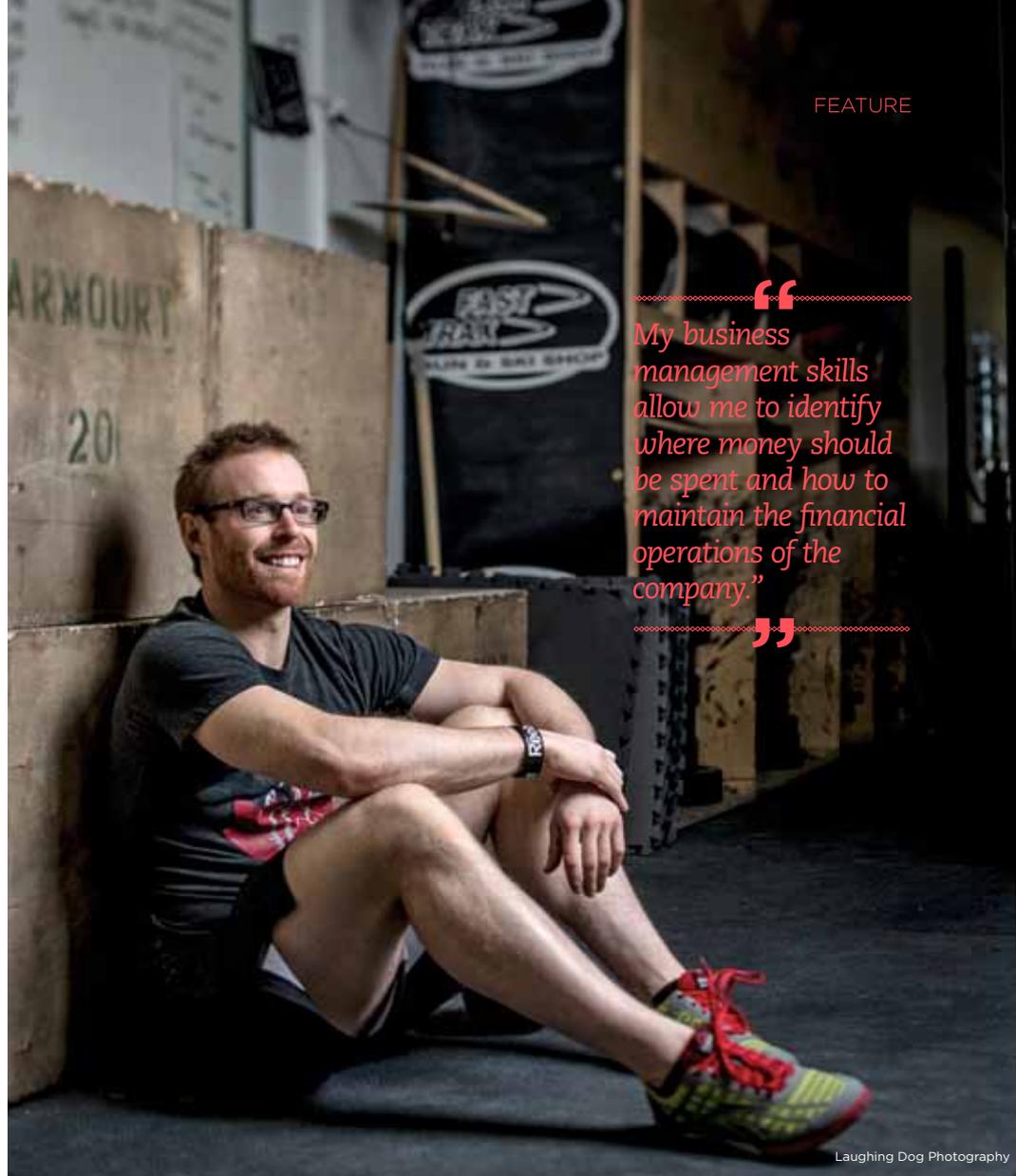
Growing up, **Aiden Poole CA** had an affinity for two things: numbers and sports. “As a kid, I would play EA Sports NHL and I would calculate the best team possible mathematically based on goals, assists, points and penalty minutes, and build the team based on these statistics,” said Aiden. This turned out to be a winning combination for Aiden, who has two budding careers on the go—as an accountant and co-owner of a CrossFit gym.

During his first two years of university, Aiden continued to balance his love of both numbers and sports by wavering between a business or physical education degree. “While I ultimately chose the business route, I continued taking nutrition, strength and conditioning courses while obtaining my bachelor of commerce degree,” said Aiden.

With an immediate attraction to the accounting, statistics and management courses, Aiden signed up for both CMA and CA prep courses and attended the first week of classes of each to decide which was the better fit for him. “In the CA course, we were given a case to analyze, and since I enjoyed the analysis, I decided the CA program was the right choice,” said Aiden.

This decision paid off, as it was during his articling at MNP LLP that Aiden met one of his current business partners and got hooked on CrossFit. “My co-worker invited me to do a CrossFit workout with him at the YMCA,” said Aiden. “He told me I could compare my workout time to other people around the world, and seeing those results inspired me to begin training this way as a means to compete in the sport of CrossFit.”

Realizing there was no CrossFit gym (or “box” as it’s referred to) in West Edmonton, Aiden and his partners decided to open one. CrossFit Armoury opened in September 2011. According to Aiden, CrossFit is defined as constantly varied functional movements performed at a high intensity with a variety of movements, including gymnastic, weightlifting and metabolic conditioning movements. “Our focus as trainers is to provide a



Laughing Dog Photography

group training experience where each member feels inspired by the coaches and other members of the class to complete workouts to the best of their ability,” said Aiden. “We have 130 members and know everyone by name.”

Managing a business is no small feat, and Aiden relies heavily on his accounting background to keep things running smoothly. “I use accounting skills every day when I’m bookkeeping for the company, tracking reports on memberships and product sales, budgeting for company expenses, GST and taxes and determining salaries for coaches,” said Aiden. “My business management skills allow me to identify where money should be spent and how to maintain the financial operations of the company.”

Along with a passion for sport, Aiden understands the mechanics of running a business. “Planning is a huge part of start-

“My business management skills allow me to identify where money should be spent and how to maintain the financial operations of the company.”

ing a business—it took us seven months from when we decided to start the business to when we opened the doors,” said Aiden. “Preparing a business plan, setting a budget, identifying target audiences and defining your company’s brand are all part of the planning process.”

With the sport of CrossFit growing, expansion plans are in the works for CrossFit Armoury, and Aiden has switched from a full-time employee (at an accounting firm) to a sole practitioner.

He plans to continue providing limited accounting services through his professional corporation, allowing him to focus on the operations and growth of CrossFit Armoury on a full-time basis.

“I knew opening this business would give me a chance to do something I love and has the potential to become very profitable as the sport continues to grow,” said Aiden. **C**

# Going for

# GOULD

As Alberta's three accounting bodies come together, so does the standard of excellence that accompanies each designation. This year's CA, CMA and CGA graduates, particularly those on their respective honour rolls, are proving they really are the best of the best. While each of these special graduates has taken a different path to their respective accounting designation, the lessons they have learned will be shared by today's CPA candidates—and the Alberta accounting profession will be stronger than ever.

By Gitte Sorensen



## ROSS JOHNSON

Senior Associate, Audit and Assurance Group,  
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP

### CASB Region Gold Medalist

Not only is writing the Chartered Accountant's national Uniform Final Evaluation (UFE) grueling, the painful two-month wait for results is equally challenging. It's not until the results are released that students can breathe a little easier, particularly those on the honour roll who receive their results a few days prior. In Ross Johnson's case, a call from ICAA Council President Rob Quilley FCA in late November informed him he passed the UFE, made the Alberta UFE Dzurko Honour roll and was named the CA School of Business Region Gold Medalist (for having the highest mark in Canada's western provinces and territories).

According to Ross, finding out he had passed the UFE and been named the Gold Medalist came with a flood of varying emotions: complete shock, overwhelming joy, thankfulness, and an overall sense of euphoria.

"ICAA president Rob Quilley left me a voicemail saying he had some news for me and at the time I thought maybe I had made the honour roll, but when he explained that I had received the Gold Medal I was quite ecstatic," said Ross. "I found it difficult to control my excitement around everyone as I had news that I wasn't allowed to share until the official announcement—after all, I am an accountant, not an actor."

With 451 CA graduates in the province in 2013, Ross belongs to an elite group of 10 Alberta writers named to the National Honour Roll. Making the honour roll is an added bonus for Ross, as he's simply happy he passed the UFE. "I don't think anyone expects to be on the honour roll—the UFE is brutal. For me it is quite an honour to be recognized as a gold medalist, but just passing is an amazing accomplishment in itself."

From the get-go, Ross had a natural curiosity and interest in understanding how things work and why things happen the way they do, making his career choice a perfect fit. "What attracted me to the accounting profession is that if you can follow the transactions, you can generally gain a pretty good understanding of how things are working overall."

Everything seems to be working pretty well for Ross, who looks forward to finishing his articling and beginning his career as a professional accountant. As his articling experience comes to an end, Ross can reflect on what has surely been a whirlwind couple of years. "The most important thing I learned while articling is that a lot of times things are more complicated than they first appear, and it takes a team of people working together to figure things out and get to an answer," said Ross. "What's both exciting and challenging is that no matter how much I learn, I can still learn more."

As Ross contemplates his future, which will certainly be bright, only time will tell where his career takes him.



## HEATHER CLARKE

Operations Analyst, Argus Machine Co. Ltd.  
**CMA Gold Medalist (Alberta)**

Becoming an accountant was a natural evolution for Heather Clarke CMA. Working as an accounting assistant throughout university turned into a full-time gig for Heather, and when she decided to further her education, accounting was the obvious choice. "Thanks to the encouragement from one of my husband's colleagues, I attended a CMA information session outlining the Strategic Leadership Program," said Heather. "It seemed like a good choice for me because it not only offered the technical accounting background I was looking for, but an opportunity to develop other skills such as leadership, public speaking and teamwork."

Heather made the right choice. Receiving the highest mark in Alberta on her CMA entrance exam a few years ago was foreshadowing for good things to come. So it should come as no surprise that Heather was awarded the Alberta 2013 CMA Gold Medal for receiving top honours in the CMA Strategic Leadership Program.

It didn't take long for Heather to put her new leadership and public speaking skills to work, as she was asked to give the graduate address

at the CMA Alberta convocation ceremony. “I was nervous about the prospect of speaking in front of over 1,000 people, but in the end it was an amazing experience and I’m honoured to have been given the opportunity.”

Looking back on her journey, Heather experienced a few speed bumps along the way, most notably giving birth to her first child after year one of the program. Turns out, this didn’t slow her down at all. “I ended up taking a year off from the program and began my second year after my daughter turned one. This proved to be extremely challenging, but in the end, even more rewarding,” said Heather.

“When I received the award for the entrance exam, I wasn’t a parent and devoted a tremendous amount of time and effort

to my studies. Since becoming a parent my priorities have changed, so it was satisfying to see that I was still able to achieve such excellent results.”

Having the letters “CMA” behind her name represents the hard work and invaluable experiences Heather gained during her time in the Strategic Leadership Program. “My experience has taught me about seeing the bigger picture and how to present financial information to a variety of diverse clients,” said Heather. “I am so proud to have those letters behind my name.”

With a long and successful career on the horizon, Heather’s current efforts are focused on learning as much as possible and building on the skills she acquired in the program. There’s no doubt her skills will be put to good use.



## MARIA VALLANCE

Director of Contracts and Planning, Noralta Lodge Ltd.

**CGA Alberta’s President’s Award of Distinction and Valedictorian**

Taking a hiatus from university is just what Maria Vallance needed to kick-start her accounting career. After travelling the world for a few years to “find herself,” Maria did just that—and also found a new home in Edmonton, found the drive to start her career and married her soulmate. “Having been out of the accounting field for some time, I secured a job at PricewaterhouseCoopers as an administrative assistant, started my studies again and transferred to the professional side when my skill set was where it needed to be,” said Maria.

Choosing accounting, particularly the CGA route, as a career was an easy choice for Maria, who always had a knack for numbers and an analytical mind. “The CGA program was the only program that afforded me the opportunity to balance being a loving wife and mother while advancing in my career and concurrently pursuing both my bachelor’s degree and CGA designation,” said Maria. “Being taught and guided by mentors and coaches who have the real life experience while actually performing the work is what really solidifies and deepens our knowledge.”

Maria’s dedication to her career has paid off. She received top honours in the 2013 CGA graduating class, both provincially and nationally. Upon finding out she had been awarded the CGA Alberta Award of Distinction and first place among all Canadian CGA graduates, Maria was in total shock and disbelief. “I tried to insist a mistake had been made, before accepting the reality of my achievement,” said Maria. “While I am an overachiever, my goals are always focused on achieving personal bests and not how I rank in comparison to my peers.”

The road to success certainly wasn’t without its challenges, considering Maria was juggling being a wife, mother, student and professional. “The most challenging part of obtaining my designation was stopping the negative self-talk, believing in myself and realizing I had the power to attain my goal,” says Maria. “Nothing builds self-esteem and confidence like accomplishment and harnessing these two key elements guaranteed my success.”

Over the past few years, Maria has moved up the ranks in her company—from financial analyst to finance manager, and most recently, to director of contracts and planning. “With lots of hard work and dedication, the technical skills and knowledge I have obtained with my accounting designation positioned me to become a decision-maker, not just a number cruncher,” says Maria.

With her expanding skill set and business expertise, Maria aims to become a member of the C-suite, and has her eye on the executive offices. **c**

“*With lots of hard work and dedication, the technical skills and knowledge I have obtained with my accounting designation positioned me to become a decision-maker, not just a number cruncher.*”



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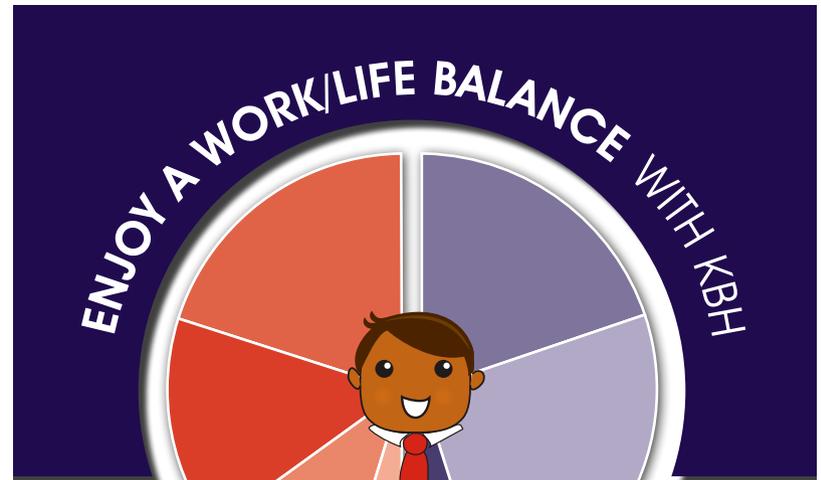
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# It's like getting free money... wait, it is free money!

Established over 30 years ago, the Chartered Accountants Education Foundation of Alberta (CAEF) is the Alberta CA profession's non-profit foundation for supporting business and accounting education across the province.

## Legacy scholarships

The CAEF is offering its legacy scholarships for a second year in a row! These scholarships are available to Alberta high school students, post-secondary and CA School of Business students, as well as Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) Professional Education Program candidates.

**Mailed applications must be postmarked on or before March 10, 2014.  
Emailed applications must be submitted by midnight (MST) on March 10, 2014.**

The following scholarships are available to high school students only:

**Young Emerging Professionals Award**  
Value: \$1,500 each

Awarded to two (2) Alberta high school students. In addition to satisfactory academic standing, applicants must also demonstrate the following qualities in their applications: professionalism, integrity, ethics and leadership.

*Application deadline: March 10*

**Academic Excellence Award**  
Value: \$2,250

Awarded to one (1) Alberta high school student who excels in academics, and maintains a minimum combined average of 85 per cent in core subjects.

*Application deadline: March 10*

The following scholarships are available to post-secondary students, CA School of Business students, and Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) Professional Education Program candidates:

**Aboriginal Student Business Award**  
Value: \$2,500

One (1) award available to an Aboriginal student enrolled in business or commerce at a degree-granting post-secondary institution in Alberta, with a minimum 3.0 GPA at the time of application.

*Application deadline: March 10*

**Academic Excellence Award**  
Value: \$2,250

One (1) award available to a student enrolled in business or commerce at a degree-granting post-secondary institution in Alberta. Successful applicant must demonstrate a 3.5 GPA in current year of study.

*Application deadline: March 10*

**Generations of Excellence Award**  
Value: \$2,500 each

Two (2) awards available to second, third and fourth-year students enrolled in business or commerce at a degree-granting post-secondary institution in Alberta. Successful applicants will demonstrate an interest in pursuing an accounting designation and will have at least one (1) family member who is (or was) a member, in good standing, of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Alberta (ICAA).

*Application deadline: March 10*

**Young Emerging Professionals Award**  
Value: \$5,000 each

Two (2) awards available to post-secondary students enrolled in business or commerce at a degree-granting post-secondary institution in Alberta. In addition to satisfactory academic standing, applicants must also demonstrate the following qualities in their applications: professionalism, integrity, ethics and leadership.

*Application deadline: March 10*

**New Canadian Achievement Award**  
Value: \$2,500

One (1) award available to an individual who has become a new Canadian or permanent resident within the last five years (i.e., on or after January 1, 2009). This individual must be enrolled in business or commerce at a degree-granting post-secondary institution in Alberta, the CA School of Business or the CPA Professional Education Program. This individual must also demonstrate satisfactory achievement in their academic or professional training program.

*Application deadline: March 10*

## General post-secondary scholarships

The CAEF wants to help you succeed in reaching your goal of becoming an accountant. The Foundation currently has four scholarships available to students at any Alberta post-secondary institution.

**Mailed applications must be postmarked on or before April 30, 2014. Emailed applications must be submitted by midnight (MST) on April 30, 2014.**

### James C Miller FCA Bursary in Accounting

Value: \$1,250

Awarded annually to two (2) students enrolled in business or commerce at a degree-granting post-secondary institution in Alberta who intend to enter the professional accounting certification program and reside (or have previously resided) in Medicine Hat (preferred). Selection is based on academic excellence and community involvement.

*Application deadline: April 30*

### Richard Schulli CA Memorial Scholarship

Value: \$2,500

Awarded annually to one (1) student entering his or her third or fourth year of study and is enrolled in business or commerce at a degree-granting post-secondary institution in Alberta. Selection is based on involvement in volunteer activities (preferably in a mentorship role), satisfactory academic achievement in the prior year of study, and an expressed interest in pursuing and accounting designation. The successful applicant will be required to provide proof of registration for the upcoming academic year before funds will be disbursed.

*Application deadline: April 30*

### Don Wilson CA Memorial Scholarship

Value: \$2,000

Awarded annually to one (1) fourth-year student in Alberta or Saskatchewan who is enrolled in business or commerce at a degree-granting post-secondary institution. The student must have secured a training position with a training office offering a career path outside of external audit (previously known as an expanded experience opportunity employer).

*Application deadline: April 30*

### Kenneth Biggs FCA and Leona Biggs Scholarship

Value: \$2,000

Awarded annually to one (1) Alberta post-secondary student who is registered in their final year of business or commerce at a degree-granting post-secondary institution in Alberta. The student must have secured a training position with a training office offering a career path outside of external audit (previously known as an expanded experience opportunity employer). Selection based on satisfactory academic standing and demonstrated leadership in the community or on campus.

*Application deadline: April 30*

## How to apply for CAEF scholarships:

Applications will be accepted in two ways: by mail or by email.

**To apply by mail, send completed applications to:**

**CA Education Foundation of Alberta**  
ATTENTION: NATASHA CONSTANTIN  
RE: Application for \_\_\_\_\_  
(please specify the scholarship)

#580, Manulife Place  
10180-101 Street  
Edmonton, AB T5J 4R2

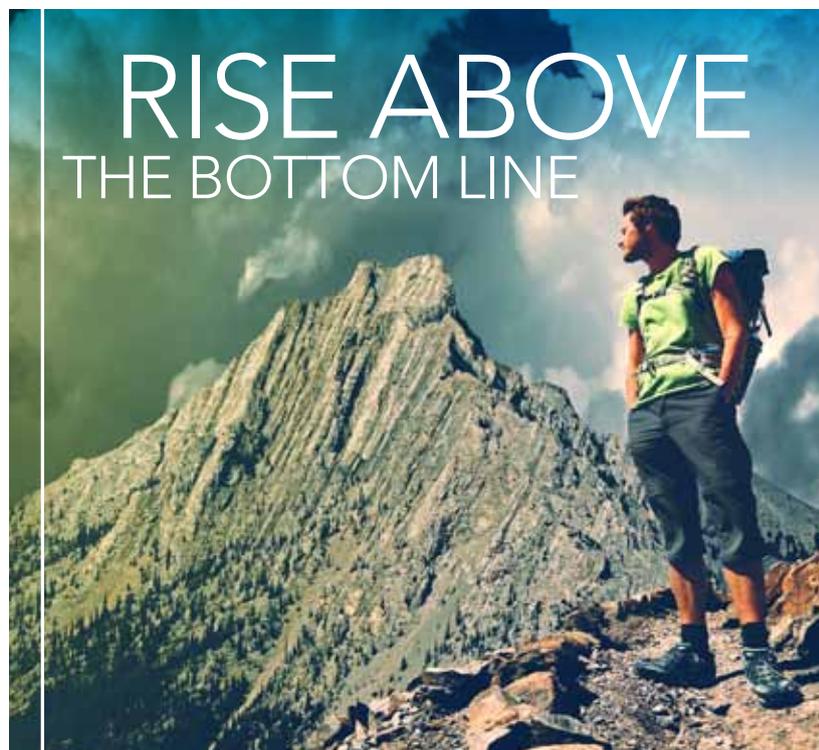
**To apply by email, send completed applications to:**

***n.constantin@icaa.ab.ca***

Email subject line: Application for \_\_\_\_\_  
(please specify the scholarship)

For more information, contact the CAEF by email at [caef@icaa.ab.ca](mailto:caef@icaa.ab.ca) or by phone at 780-424-7391 (toll free: 1-800-232-9406).

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# Leverage Your Accounting Career Through Public Speaking

By Corinne Tessier CMA, FCMA, MBA  
President, Affirming Workplace Solutions Inc.



Looking back on my 31-year career, I realize that it progressed in direct relation to my ability to speak in public. Starting out as a new CMA crafting journal entries for a steel company's year-end, I worked quietly and systematically at my computer with standard accounting procedures to guide me. In a subsequent meeting with the product and sales managers, I had to respond to ad hoc questions about the year-end adjustments and my linear, technical approach failed me. Seeing the confusion on their faces in response to my accounting jargon taught me that if I was going to gain their trust and respond helpfully to their real business concerns, I had to speak in plain language. I knew, when preparing for future meetings, I had to figure out how to present financial statements simply and clearly to help them make good financial decisions. Having to respond extemporaneously to their questions forced me to think more intuitively and laterally than I had learned to do in school. The real test was to emerge from the spreadsheets and make information readily accessible to those who needed it.

Doing this prepared me to become a manager myself. New challenges such as guiding a work team, giving construc-

tive feedback, or negotiating a contract, helped me to listen carefully to body language and pay attention to the impact my words were having. This enabled me to come up with new ideas, encouraged productivity and resolved conflicts.

As one might expect, gaining comfort with speaking increases confidence and conveys authority... and opportunities for leadership. As an executive director, I needed to facilitate meetings and planning sessions. If I wanted everyone to arrive on the same page with organizational initiatives, I had to pay attention to what mattered most to them and focus the conversation on that. People were grateful when they felt their participation was worthwhile and closed with clear actions.

A growing ability to articulate led to invitations to volunteer on boards and exposed me to different circles of people. This opened up new career opportunities and required me to practice communicating within diverse fields of interest.

I was not a natural networker, so when I decided to become a consultant, I began by giving presentations at industry group lunches and conferences. Preparing for these presentations forced me to research

a topic deeply. The learning was satisfying and gave me grounded solutions that I presented to clients. And invariably, a new client would emerge from the audience.

Whether it was in my role as a controller, executive director, or overseas consultant, I had to keep enhancing my ability to speak in different situations in order to obtain the desired results. In turn, each step led to greater career advancement. These activities along the way developed my speaking skills in safe, supportive settings:

- Participating in Toastmasters
- Offering company "lunch and learns"
- Summarizing analysis for a work team
- Learning to lead a focused conversation and facilitate group process from ICA Associates Inc.
- Observing experts at Canadian Association of Professional Speakers
- Learning about body language
- Serving on volunteer boards
- Taking a coaching course

If public speaking is not something that comes naturally to you, I would encourage you to participate in one or more of the activities listed above. It will alleviate your fears and can enhance your career as an accountant. **c**

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