

# Accounting Advisory Councils (AAC):

Testimonials from involved  
practitioners

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# Practitioner A

**Q: Are you involved at your alma mater or other local colleges/universities?**

A: Involved at my alma mater.

**Q: How did you get involved?**

A: A co-worker was coming off the Council and asked if I would consider taking their spot. I was looking for ways to give back to the community and the AAC seemed like a great opportunity to do so.

**Q: What does your role look like?**

A: My role as an AAC member is to work with the accounting faculty at the university to recruit students to the accounting program and to mentor undergraduates so they are prepared for the transition from school to pursuing a career in the field. Based on feedback current students and alumni provide, this initiative has been extremely effective for the university. Additionally, we work with the faculty to review the undergrad and graduate curriculum, interview potential faculty candidates, assist with the department accreditation and develop ideas to raise funds for the department.

**Q: What are the benefits of being part of an advisory council?**

A: There are many benefits to being a part of this AAC, including enhancing the accounting program, guiding students through a mentoring program, connecting with others within the profession and, most of all, giving back to the community.

**Q: What is the estimated time commitment per year?**

A: Our AAC holds three meetings a year, ranging from a one- to two-hour commitment. In addition, there are sub-committee meetings several times a year. On average, the total commitment from a council member is roughly 15–20 hours a year. Meetings may be attended via telephone to accommodate busy schedules, which has resulted in increased participation.

**Q: Is there a required contribution to involvement?**

A: Contributions are encouraged, but not required.

**Q: How does your employer engage with the college/university?**

A: The firm recognizes the value of supporting local higher-education institutions. Several of our practitioners are actively involved in various boards and councils of our local universities. In addition, we participate in on-campus recruiting through our internship program and volunteer for various events specific to the accounting program, including meet the firms and classroom presentations.

**Q: What have you found is a key characteristic or trait needed from volunteers/council members?**

A: I personally believe a passion for the cause is an essential trait. The council, the institution and the individual will all benefit more from the experience if they are passionate about the purpose. When you have such enthusiasm about a cause, you end up giving a 110% as it's something personal.

**Q: What's one activity or initiative your advisory council has been successful in accomplishing?**

A: One of the initiatives the council was successful in accomplishing was instituting a mentoring program for the accounting students. Members of the council and other accounting professionals are matched with accounting students at the university after completing a survey. The mentor serves as a sounding board for the student and provides career advice. For some, a professional relationship is developed, and it continues well beyond the four years.

# Practitioner B

**Q: Are you involved at your alma mater or other local colleges/universities?**

A: My alma mater for my MBA.

**Q: How did you get involved?**

A: One of my business partners had served on the board for a long period of time. He had conflicting priorities. Due to my involvement with recruiting at the university, he asked if I would serve instead.

**Q: What does your role look like?**

A: Our role as members is to partner with and advise the Dean of the College of Business on producing valuable graduates with the appropriate skills.

**Q: What are the benefits of being part of an advisory council?**

A: The benefits are many. Obviously, networking with other local professionals is beneficial. I have been asked to serve on the board of our largest, local, respected charity due to the connections gained through the advisory board. I have also built relationships with the professors at the university, which has benefitted our organization with student referrals/references and resources to draw upon for questions and concerns. And, most importantly, I am able to shape the future of the business-related programs, including accounting, which allows us to have input into the training and skills of our future employees.

**Q: What is the estimated time commitment per year?**

A: The time commitment is 15–20 hours per year.

**Q: Is there a required contribution to involvement?**

A: There is no required contribution.

**Q: How does your employer engage with the college/university?**

A: • We conduct an active tutoring program at the

university. We partner with several of the accounting professors to access course materials and offer open tutoring sessions one day per week in the fall semester. We gain much goodwill with professors, students and the business department at large through these efforts.

- We are in the process of setting up a named scholarship.
- We speak in various classrooms regarding a variety of topics.
- We sponsor every recruiting event at the university, at the highest level offered.
- I volunteer my time for interview training and resume review, whenever asked.
- We consistently hire 2-4 interns from the university. These hires generally turn into full-time career opportunities.
- We sponsor lunches/tours for the accounting professors and College of Business Dean at our office.

**Q: What have you found is a key characteristic or trait needed from volunteers/council members?**

A: The most critical aspect required is a passion for the success of our local university and its students. Our area is somewhat economically depressed and many of the students are first-generation college attendees. Having passion will spur on a desire for consistent participation and contribution.

**Q: What's one activity or initiative your advisory council has been successful in accomplishing?**

A: The Advisory Council has started an annual "Pros and Prof" event. This breakfast meeting allows professors and professionals to network and make connections. The connections then lead to classroom speaking engagements and mentoring relationships.

# Practitioner C

**Q: Are you involved at your alma mater or other local colleges/universities?**

**A:** My alma mater.

**Q: How did you get involved?**

**A:** I had lunch with an attorney that I work with when I was wanting to expand organizations to be involved with that could fulfill a personal side and a professional side. He got me involved with one of the entrepreneur programs at the business schools, then the development group asked if I would be interested in participating on the Advisory board.

**Q: What does your role look like?**

**A:** There are two formal meetings a year, and an afternoon more causal meeting regionally twice a year. I believe the feedback we give the Dean is helpful. It either steers him in a different direction or validates his thinking for what industry needs from students and how he can then attract more students to the university. You are helping to make a difference in bridging our industry with academia, give visibility to the firm and help your alma mater. It's a win all the way around.

**Q: What are the benefits of being part of an advisory council?**

**A:** Getting to meet leaders in the community from a broad range of backgrounds and elevating the firm branding within the school. Also, I get asked to participate on various recruiting panels due to my involvement.

**Q: What is the estimated time commitment per year?**

**A:** About 24 hours, plus 3 hours if on a panel.

**Q: Is there a required contribution to involvement?**

**A:** Yes, \$5,000. Some years we may give more, it varies.

**Q: How does your employer engage with the college/university?**

**A:** Our firm is very active with on-campus recruiting for the full range of the recruiting process. It's one of our primary recruiting schools. We have over time had recruiters teaching resume writing on campus which also gives us great visibility.

**Q: What have you found is a key characteristic or trait needed from volunteers/council members?**

**A:** You have to participate and be passionate or you won't get anything. Having your name on the Board won't get you very far. You have to earn the role and further opportunities will present themselves.

**Q: What's one activity or initiative your advisory council has been successful in accomplishing?**

**A:** 4+1 program that gets the 150 hours. It's an undergraduate with a 1-year master's. I also helped to fundraise donations to the program.

# Practitioner D

**Q: Are you involved at your alma mater or other local colleges/universities?**

**A:** Both! Accounting Advisory Council for my alma mater (“university A”) where I received a Master of Science degree in accounting and another local university (“university B”)

**Q: How did you get involved?**

**A:** At university A, I was asked to join the AAC because of my involvement on campus as a speaker/presenter. I first got involved by giving the AICPA’s This Way to CPA presentation to Beta Alpha Psi and as a guest presenter in upper-level and master’s-level accounting courses presenting on accounting and finance for oil and gas companies.

**At university B,** similar to university A, over the years, I have presented to accounting students on accounting careers. In November 2017, I gave the AICPA’s This Way to CPA presentation to accounting students and also on accounting and finance in the oil and gas industry. As a result of those presentations, I was asked to join the Accounting Program Advisory Board.

**Q: What does your role look like?**

**A: University A** – The Council meets once per year. I attend that meeting and act in an advisory capacity. Throughout the year, I am consulted on how to incorporate current topics, such as data analytics, into the program to be relevant to students entering the workforce; thoughts on how to improve the Council, ways to promote engagement between the business community and students; and priorities and strategy, etc. I also serve on panels and guest-speak, as requested.

**University B** – The Board meets once per year. I attend that meeting and act in an advisory capacity. The last couple of years, my advisory involvement has been reviewing the accounting program content, syllabi, course descriptions, etc. to ensure

relevance. The program actually moved from a traditional accounting program to one that integrates automation, business intelligence, and data analytics. I spent quite a bit of time reviewing all of the documentation to ensure it made sense and was relevant.

**Q: What are the benefits of being part of an advisory council?**

**A:** There are many benefits of being part of an advisory council. For the school/accounting program, they generate engagement with professionals in their community. If done correctly, they can ensure connection across all areas of accounting (i.e., public, private, governmental, not-for-profit, audit, tax, advisory, corporate, forensics, large, medium, small, etc.) Engagement with professionals provides the opportunity to solicit feedback on program content, build relationships with potential employers of students, generate ambassadors for the program, build a foundation of guest speakers, etc. From a council member’s standpoint, the benefits are just as important. As the head of an accounting department (60 people), my involvement with the council has given me insight into where I need to focus training and development efforts for my own employees based on how schools are responding to a rapidly changing technological environment. In some ways, we are ahead of the schools and in other ways, they are ahead of us. It is mutually very beneficial in this regard. Being part of a council also affords me the opportunity to build relationships at the school and with other council members, provides opportunity to guest speak, provides name recognition for my company so we are known at recruiting events, etc.

**Q: What is the estimated time commitment per year?**

**A:** It varies widely between the two boards I am on. Probably 10 hours per year for university B and 20 hours per year for university A, including meetings, guest speaking, panels, review of documents, etc.

**Q: Is there a required contribution to involvement?**

**A:** No contributions required for either. University A is considering whether to add a required contribution.

**Q: How does your employer engage with the college/university?**

**A:** My employer will match donations I make to universities and provide volunteer time for staff to attend career fairs. We typically have 2–3 accounting interns each summer and actively try to engage students with our company and industry.

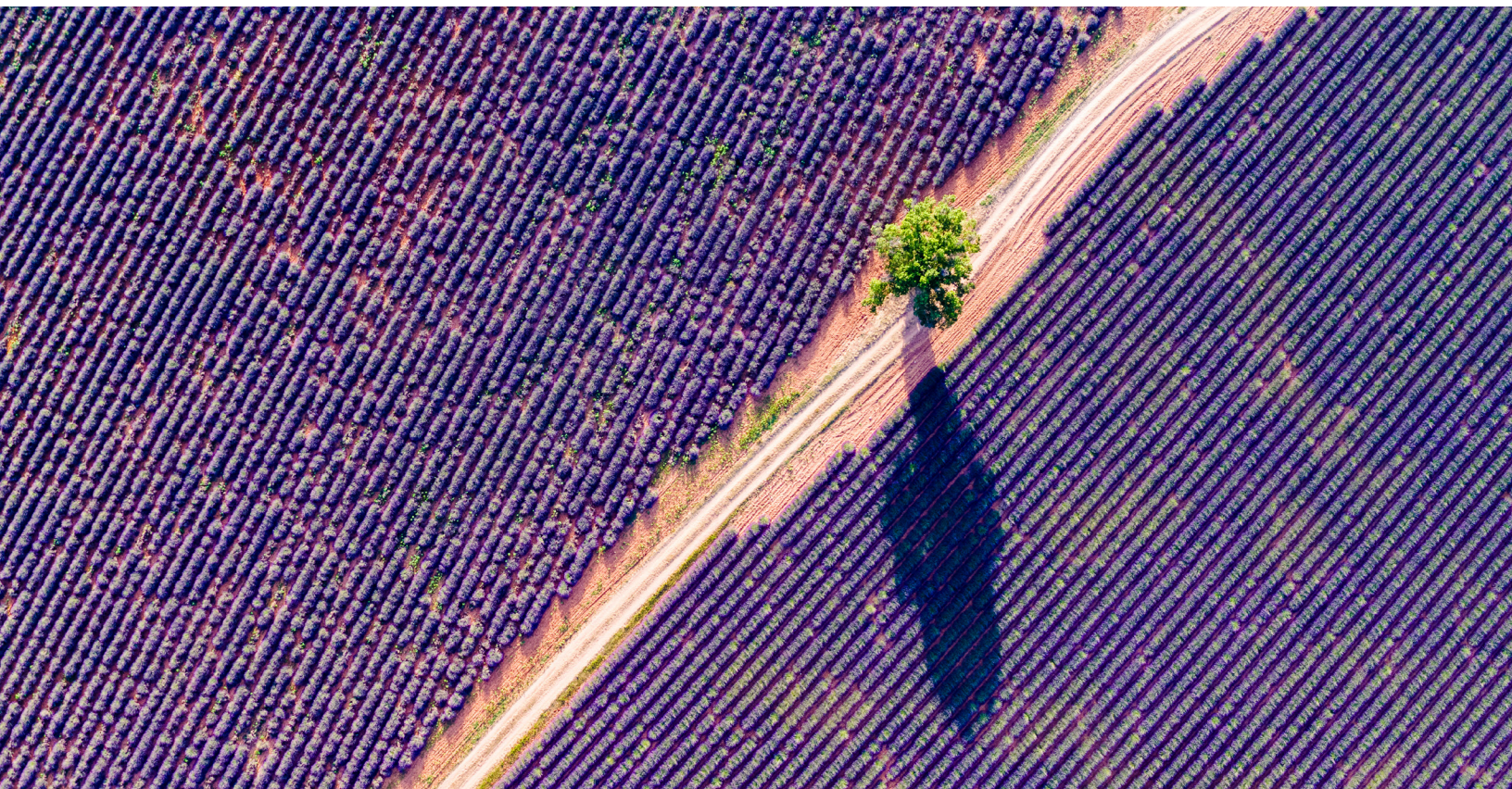
**Q: What have you found is a key characteristic or trait needed from volunteers/council members?**

**A:** I have found that a key characteristic is that the members that are most involved are genuinely interested in the purpose and strategy of the council. The volunteers that are most engaged enjoy engaging in the profession at the college level by speaking, recruiting, and mentoring college students.

**Q: What's one activity or initiative your advisory council has been successful in accomplishing?**

**A:** **At university A**, we have been very successful at organizing events for students that bring students and professionals together. This was a major focus area a couple of years ago. The Accounting Department has had panels on various topics such as professionalism, accounting careers, recent grads advice, etc. They have been very well attended and have generated engagement between the students and professionals. In addition to this, there has also been a focus on meeting accounting executives in the area as a way to promote students for internships, job opportunities, etc.

**At university B**, the board was critical in helping shape the school's new Accounting/BI degree focus. Ensuring that the courses include relevant work integrating accounting concepts, business intelligence, data analytics will be critical in developing students' skills and competencies that are directly relevant to entering the accounting profession.



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