

accounting+



2023

ANNUAL REPORT



In 2023, the second year of Accounting+, the Center for Audit Quality (CAQ) continued to spearhead this national campaign and platform, which focuses on raising awareness of an accounting career at the high school and early college levels.

Accounting+ meets students where they are: on social media and in the classrooms. In addition to social media and content marketing, Accounting+ gives students access to resources and continued support along their journeys—from the initial discovery of how a career in accounting can match their passions and goals to ultimately choosing accounting as a college major.

Accounting+ was founded on three key premises. First, to address diversity in the talent pipeline and raise awareness of an accounting career, we prefer a concerted, collective, accounting profession-wide approach over an individualized, fragmented one. Second, we cannot rely on anecdotes and conjectures; data and research must drive our efforts. And third, we must acknowledge that culture change takes time—and having now built the solid foundation for a sustained, multiyear campaign, we are well positioned to achieve our overarching goal of having an accounting profession that looks like the communities in which we live and work.

We are proud to share more about the evolution and scaled impact of Accounting+ in 2023. This report highlights notable successes and milestones. We remain grateful to our partners for their continued support in showing tomorrow's leaders the possibilities of a career in accounting.

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INTRODUCTION

The talent pipeline remains one of the most critical issues facing the accounting profession. In 2023, we experienced a marked decrease in the number of accounting graduates, continued struggles with retention, impending retirements among public accounting CPAs, and additional external pressures such as the looming enrollment cliff. Simply put, our profession must attract and retain a larger slice of an increasingly shrinking pie.

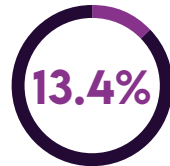
These pipeline challenges are only magnified for the underrepresented students we aim to reach with Accounting+. Although the number of accounting graduates who identify as Latino has continued to increase, the number of Black accounting graduates continues to decrease, in line with an overall decrease in the number of Black students obtaining undergraduate degrees.

These dispiriting statistics emphasize the urgency of reaching students earlier and at scale, and Accounting+ has been a key force in working toward this goal. In 2023, we saw extraordinary results in changing students' stereotypical view that accounting is uninteresting. We shifted students' ingrained misconceptions about the necessary skillsets and created opportunities for greater exposure to and connection with accounting careers.

Campaign results demonstrated our success in meeting students on social media platforms—with 12+ million website visits and 65,000+ subscribers who have opted to learn more about accounting. In the classroom, we reached more than 40,000 students during the 2022–23 academic year.

And now, at the end of the campaign's second full year, we are seeing progress toward our overarching goals of increasing awareness of an accounting career and of an accounting profession that mirrors society at large. This progress comes from collective dedication of our Accounting+ partners, strategic collaborations with experts and influencers, and an unwavering focus on a data-driven and student-centered approach. We are excited to share more about the evolution of Accounting+ and the impact it is having on student populations across every demographic.

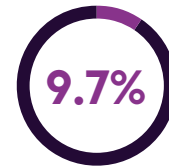
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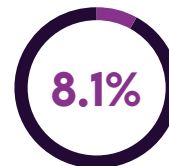
B.A. DEGREES
AWARDED
BLACK
STUDENTS:



BLACK BUSINESS
B.A. CONFERRED



BLACK ACCOUNTING
B.A. CONFERRED



SOURCE: IPEDS 2021-22 DATA

“

What I liked best about this course is how it used real examples of people using accounting to apply to their lives. It helped me better understand how accounting can apply to both my personal and professional life.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

APPROACH

Accounting+ achieved its successes by working together with our 46 partners. With their combined investment, resources, talent, and time, we have built a solid foundation, and now we are continuing to expand the campaign. We are not merely introducing students to accounting; our commitment extends to offering ongoing programmatic assistance, guiding them along their educational paths, and equipping them with resources to consider accounting careers. The Accounting+ platform showcases our partners' resources, including internships, scholarships, and mentorship opportunities, and serves as a destination for the students with whom we actively engage—not only through social media but in high schools nationwide and at other notable venues, such as Acrisure Stadium (formerly known as Heinz Field), the renowned home of the Pittsburgh Steelers!

Our strategy is built on a data-driven approach. Annual qualitative and quantitative research ensures that our initiatives are informed, relevant, and effective. Our most recent data, compiled by Edge Research, our independent research team, show that there is good reason for optimism. Overall feelings about accounting across Black and Latino student audiences' have improved. In 2023, we saw statistically significant growth, - with a 6% increase in both awareness and interest in accounting, as compared with our established 2022 baseline. These directional data confirm that our approach is proving effective.

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What I liked most about this course was that it gave me a lot of different accounting career paths that I didn't know about before. Since I'm thinking about pursuing an accounting career later in life, I got to see careers that I might be interested in pursuing.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

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I didn't know much about accounting and thought it was all about math and working all the time, but now that I know there's so many opportunities in the field, I am considering switching majors.

COLLEGE STUDENT

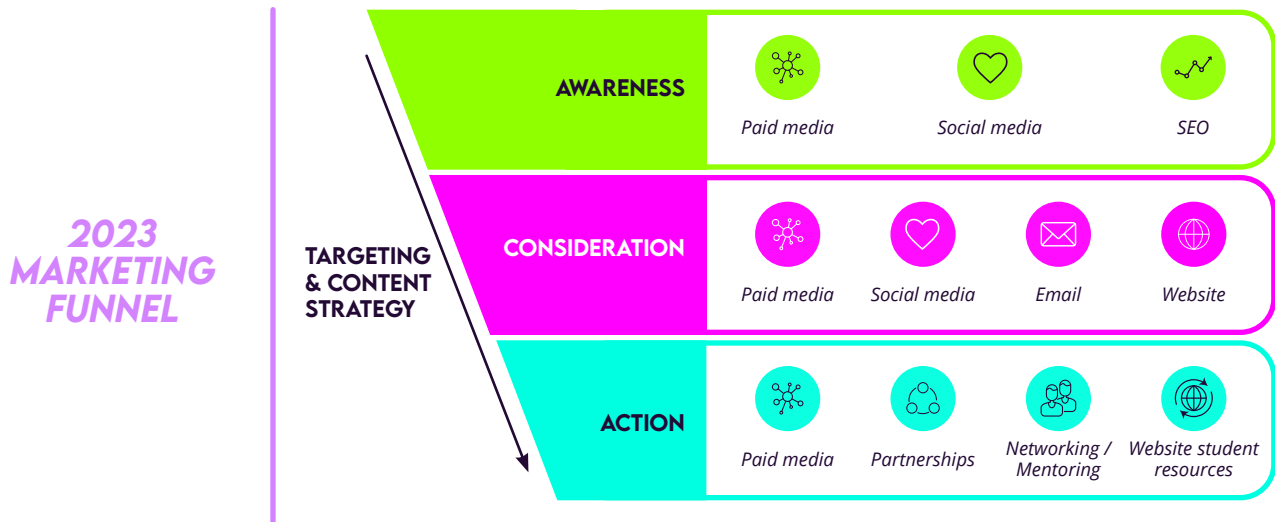


OVERVIEW & IMPACT

Accounting+ actively engages students throughout the academic year. Our website serves as the central campaign hub, alongside social media channels, email outreach, and a significant investment in paid media featuring compelling, relevant content. This approach guides students through the marketing funnel; they first encounter awareness-building efforts that offer trusted voices and messaging to introduce Accounting+ and that helps to reshape any negative perceptions about the accounting profession.

As students begin to consider careers in accounting, we provide tailored programs to keep them engaged and aid their journey. Finally, when they are ready to take active steps toward the accounting profession, students are encouraged to subscribe to stay informed and involved. In 2023, our campaign has evolved to include personalized student dashboards, chatbots, and mentorship opportunities. These new tools are further enhancing our ability to support students as they explore their career options and make their decisions.

“
One thing I really liked was that I was informed that accounting goes into everything. And that you don't have to be a math whiz to be an accountant. One of the professions I want to do is sports management, and I feel like accounting would be a great factor.
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

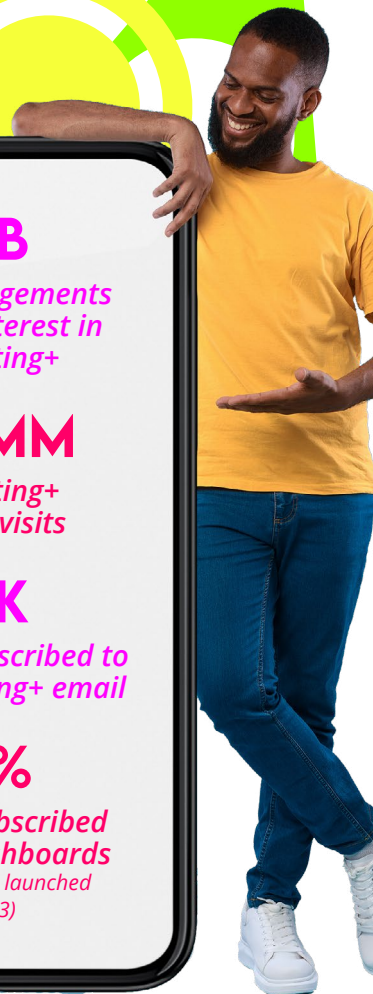
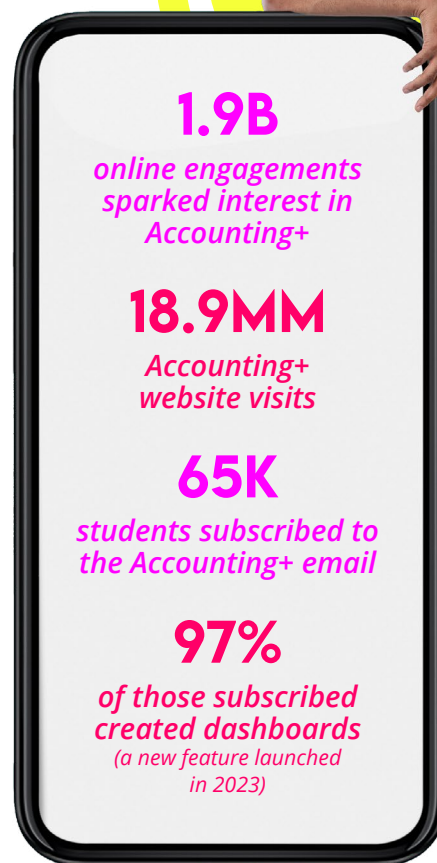


Triple-digit growth in key metrics shows us that our data-driven approach has yielded tangible results. These results underscore the effectiveness of our strategies and provide clear validation that our efforts are making a significant impact. Accounting+ conducts real-time data analysis, allowing us to respond promptly and accurately as students' needs evolve. This capability allows us to tailor our initiatives with precision, ensuring that they remain relevant and effective in addressing the challenges and opportunities within the educational landscape.

The increases in Accounting+ website traffic and engagement seen during 2023 were propelled by the effective amplification of Accounting+ messaging across an expanded number of impactful media partners, content creators, and influencers . These distinct brands all have direct access to Gen Z. Partnering with them helped us not only to amplify Accounting+ messaging across student audiences but also to increase the relatability of accounting careers.

Introducing personalized dashboards on the Accounting+ website has revolutionized the user experience. This improvement led to a four-fold increase in the amount of time visitors spend on the site. Additionally, the dashboards let us gain deeper insights into the demographics and preferences of our visitors, empowering us to deliver more personalized and relevant content. Through direct email messaging, we are now tailoring our communication to the specific needs and interests of individual students, thereby enhancing engagement and fostering a more meaningful connection with them.

As a result, 16 new Accounting+ partners joined us in 2023. Such growth demonstrates the impact of the work we are doing, garnering recognition at the 2023 Anthem Awards, a prestigious initiative by The Webby Awards, which spotlight purpose-driven endeavors that make significant contributions to global change, and ultimately broadening the accounting talent pipeline.



EVERFI'S IMPACT

Accounting+ unveiled the "Accounting Careers: Limitless Opportunities" digital high school curriculum in January 2023. Our strategic partnership with EVERFI made this effort possible. We implemented this curriculum across more than 1,800 high schools spanning 49 states and the District of Columbia and, with it, directly reached more than 40,000 students in 2023. "Accounting Careers: Limitless Opportunities" is designed to broaden what students think about when they consider accounting, accounting skills, and accounting careers. Most students reported that accounting skills can be useful in reaching their own career goals and that the course exposed them to accounting-related careers they didn't know about before taking it.

UPON COURSE COMPLETION:

69%

of students indicated they were interested in a career in accounting

80%

of students said this course introduced them to accounting careers they previously did not know about

89%

of students agreed that accounting skills are useful for reaching their goals

TOTAL SCHOOLS REACHED BY STATE

40,215

Students

2,352

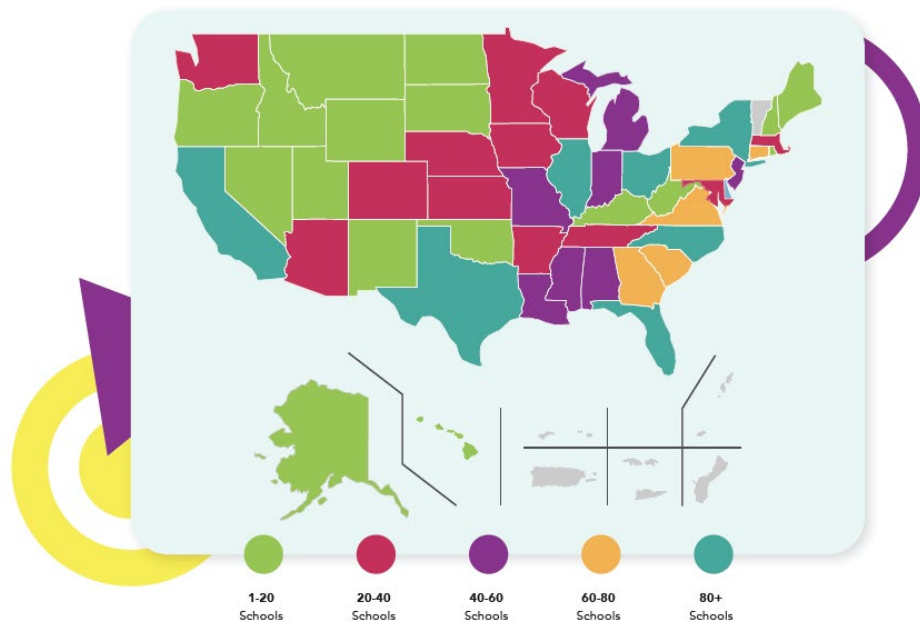
Teachers

1,883

Schools

49

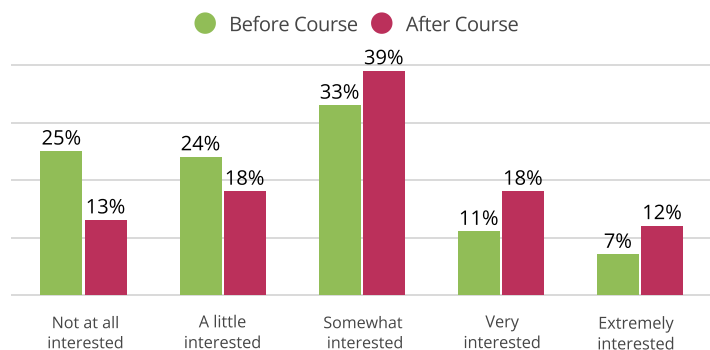
States



After the course

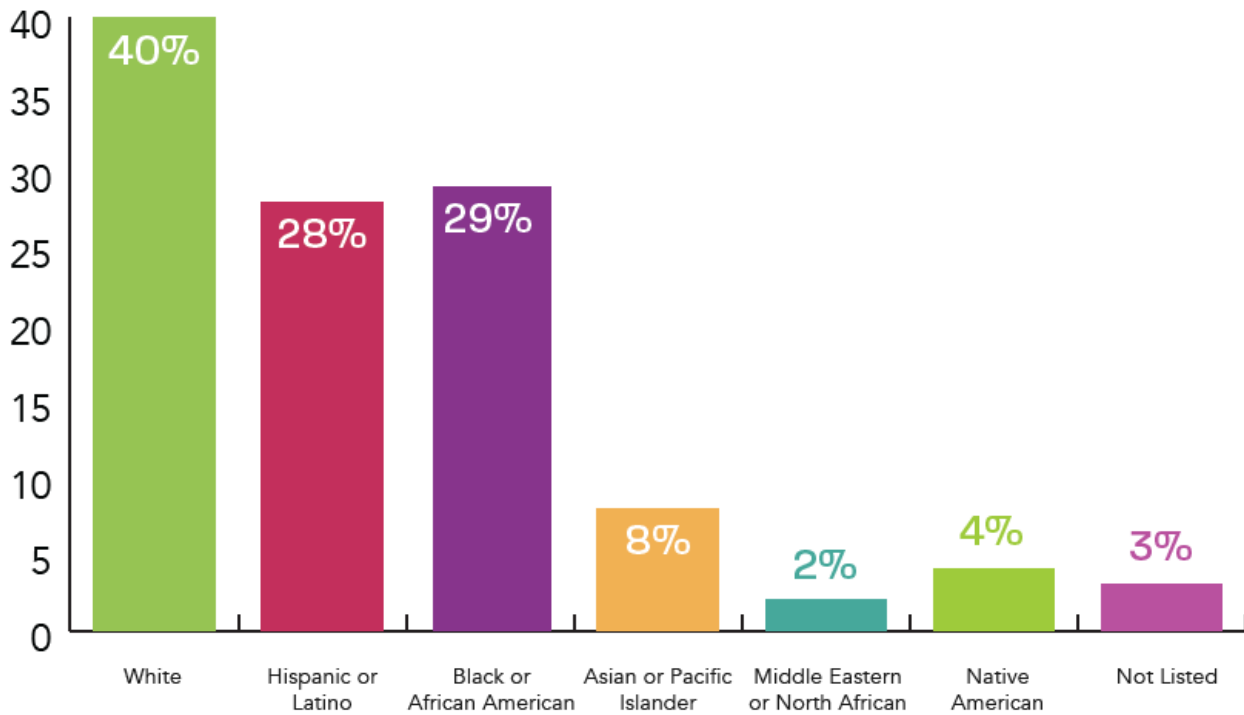
68% OF STUDENTS

said accounting skills are very or extremely valuable compared to 52% of students before the course.

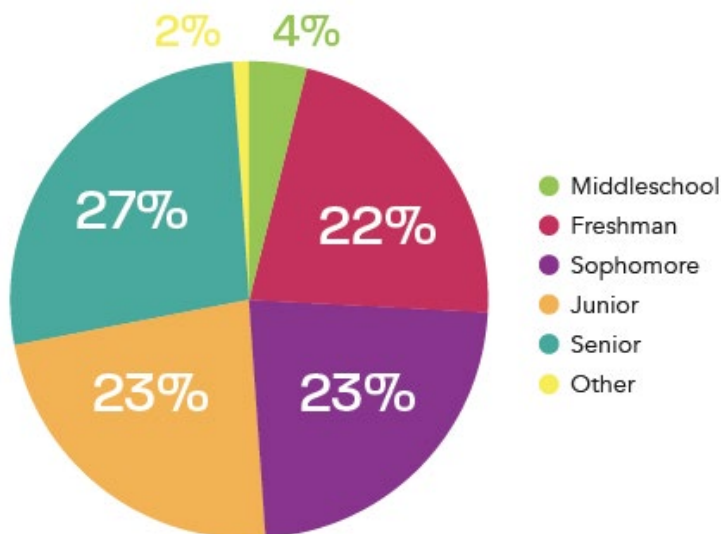


Overall, program engagement takes a multipronged approach. Accounting+ you Future Signature School Events allows Accounting+ partners to volunteer their time to interact directly with students in cities across the country. In 2023 events were held in Washington, DC; Chicago; Los Angeles; and Orlando. Classroom Connect, another volunteer-driven opportunity, matches Accounting+ partners with local participating high schools for virtual or in-person visits with accounting professionals, and the Accounting Careers National Scholarship Contest awarded \$50,000 in total scholarship prizes to 10 winners selected from 738 submissions.

RACE AND ETHNICITY



GRADE LEVEL



COLLABORATIONS & STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The following are some of our most impactful collaborations and partnerships in 2023:

1 PITTSBURGH STEELERS



As part of this collaboration, we introduced the “Steelers Showcase” program—an initiative aimed at bringing the dynamic world of accounting to life for students in Pittsburgh and beyond. Through this program, students have the unique opportunity to engage directly with members of the Steelers’ Finance Department and local industry executives, who can offer their insights into the intersection of sports and accounting.

The “Steelers Showcase” program exemplifies this shared commitment to empowering the next generation of accounting professionals. By offering students firsthand access to industry leaders and facilitating meaningful networking opportunities, the program aims to inspire and equip participants with the knowledge and resources needed to pursue rewarding careers in accounting and beyond.

As we reflect on the impact of our collaboration, we are proud to reinforce the message conveyed in a video featuring Steelers’ General Manager, Omar Khan. His story serves as a powerful testament to the transformative potential of accounting. Through the “Steelers Showcase” program and ongoing initiatives, we remain steadfast in our commitment to nurturing talent, fostering inclusivity, and shaping a brighter future for all.



[A Career for Champions: Steelers x Accounting+](#)

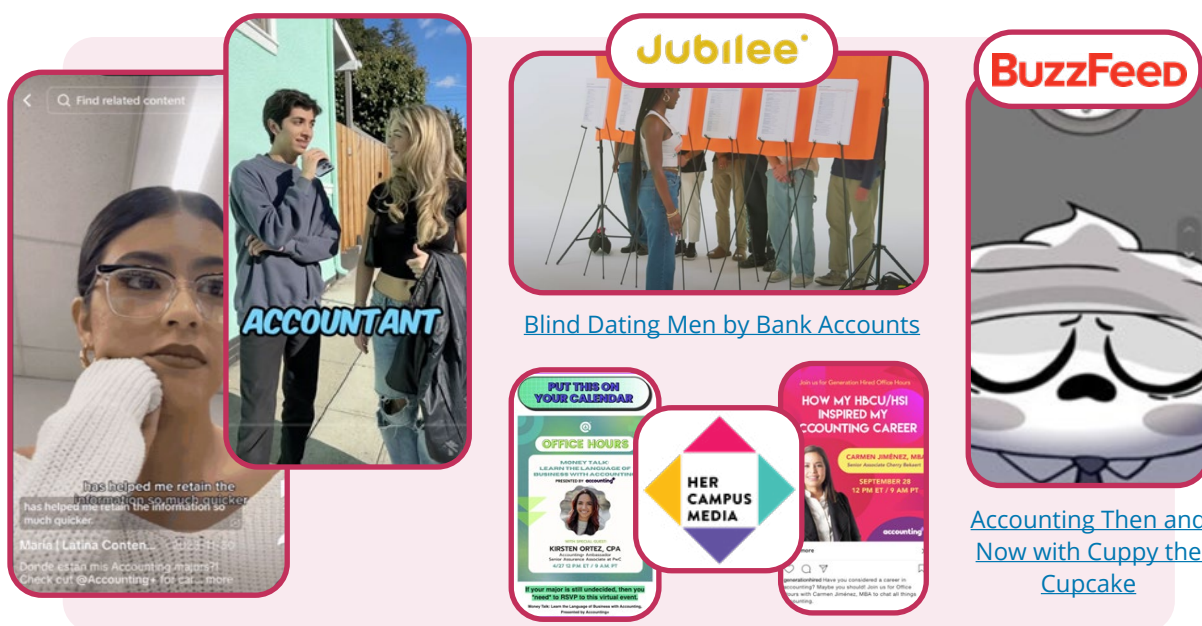
2 PUBLISHER PARTNERSHIPS



As a campaign dedicated to reshaping the perception of accounting as an appealing career choice for students, we recognize the vital role of external partnerships, particularly within the media landscape. In 2023, we collaborated with a diverse range of influential brands such as BuzzFeed, Jubilee, GOAT, MAX, InternQueen, Her Campus Media, and SBS Aire.

What unifies these distinct brands is their direct access to Gen Z, our primary target audience. By forging partnerships with these platforms, we aim not only to establish our credibility among Gen Z but also to ensure that Accounting+ becomes synonymous with these influential voices in terms of relevance and relatability. Our objective is to create content that feels tailored directly to our students, ensuring they feel seen, heard, and understood.

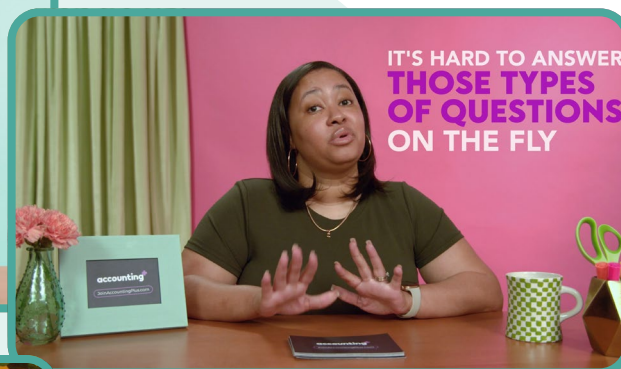
Through these partnerships, we endeavor to connect with Gen Z by delivering accessible and engaging content. Our goal is not just to inform but to resonate with our audience, reflecting their experiences and aspirations. We deeply respect their autonomy, acknowledge the challenges they face, and actively collaborate with and advocate for them. Together, we're striving to carve a pathway toward success, addressing their needs and aspirations within the realm of accounting and beyond.



3 DIGITAL STORYTELLING WITH NABA AND OTHER ACCOUNTING+ PARTNERS



Our ongoing collaboration with NABA and other Accounting+ partners enabled us to connect with 82 accounting professionals, a significant portion of whom are employed by our existing firm partners, during the NABA Annual Conference held in New Orleans. Their personal stories are vital cornerstones of our efforts to vividly portray the personal career journeys of accounting professionals. It serves as the backbone of both our paid media campaign and our website content, playing a pivotal role in inspiring, educating, and acquainting students with the accounting profession.



2024 ROADMAP

Our ongoing data analysis has yielded valuable insights into the effectiveness of our messaging strategies. Although students have responded positively to our overarching message, which extols the benefits of a career in accounting, our findings revealed the one message that resonated most profoundly with them: A career in accounting can deliver tangible personal benefits. This revelation tells us we need to shift our focus from simply showcasing the benefits of accounting to illustrating how this career path can transform students' lives.

In light of these insights, four primary objectives will guide our strategic direction for 2024.

- 1** *First, we remain steadfast in our commitment to fostering continued growth and expanding our reach, with a particular emphasis on engaging high school students.*
- 2** *Second, we are intensifying our efforts in customization; that is, we are using our segmentation strategy to create more relevant and personalized interactions.*
- 3** *Third, using this data, we can optimize our media and website experiences to ensure they align with our audience's specific needs and preferences.*
- 4** *This data-driven optimization approach seamlessly transitions to our fourth objective: We can enhance engagement and partner integration. Although Accounting+ cannot cater to every individual need, we are making strategic use of our partner resources to curate customized experiences for students. Rather than reinventing the wheel, such collaboration allows us to tap into existing expertise and resources. This, in turn, enriches the overall student experience and fosters deeper engagement with our platform.*

Aligned with our commitment to continuous improvement, these objectives serve as guiding principles for our initiatives in the year ahead. They will ensure that we respond appropriately to the evolving needs of our audience—while maximizing the impact of our efforts in promoting accounting career exploration.

Furthermore, in 2024, we are expanding our media channels and forging strategic partnerships to add to our reach and engagement. Gaming is common among Gen Z, particularly on platforms like Twitch, and we are poised to use this medium to connect with our target audience. We are also broadening our horizons through collaborations with TooH Campus and Teen Vogue, which are renowned for their extensive influence among college students and young adults, respectively. These strategic alliances will enable us to reach diverse audiences and amplify our messaging, as these platforms resonate deeply with our target demographics.

By expanding our media channels and cultivating meaningful partnerships, we are well positioned to elevate our presence and impact in 2024.

ACCOUNTING+ PARTNERS

As we close out 2023, we acknowledge that our journey thus far has been shaped by the unwavering support of our 46 partners, and we remain grateful to you. Looking ahead to 2024, we anticipate a momentous year for the campaign, and your continued engagement and support are instrumental in realizing our ambitious goals. With your steadfast partnership, we are poised to make significant strides in increasing the number, and number of diverse, students entering the accounting pipeline.

ACCOUNTING FIRM PARTNERS



NON-PROFIT AND PUBLIC SECTOR PARTNERS



STATE CPA SOCIETY PARTNERS



For more information or inquiries, please contact Liz Barentzen at lbarentzen@thecaq.org or visit www.joinaccountingplus.com

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QUESTIONS?

Contact Liz Barentzen at lbarentzen@thecaq.org

