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Pursue Your Passion



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IMA® (Institute of Management Accountants)

I'm filled with pride and gratitude every time I nominate one of my students at Indiana University Southeast for the CMA Scholarship, a special honor and opportunity that allows students to prepare for and take the globally recognized CMA® (Certified Management Accountant) exam at no cost.

My students are often working so hard balancing school with other responsibilities that certification can seem distant and unattainable. To make one part of their journey easier—studying for and taking the CMA exam for free—is priceless.

One of the best things about the scholarship is that it enables students to take the CMA exam while still in school. That's a huge bonus, because the material covered is already fresh in their minds and this lessens the amount of review they must do. Plus, students are still in the test-taking mindset. Whether interested in a position inside a company or in public accounting, taking the CMA exam enables students to differentiate themselves from their peers and show their employers that they value lifelong learning.

The following are stories of four young professionals who received the CMA Scholarship as a student and are now pursuing exciting, rewarding jobs. After reading them, I hope you'll be encouraged to ask your professor to nominate you for the CMA Scholarship.

About the CMA Scholarship



Every accredited college/university can nominate up to 10 students per academic year to receive the CMA Scholarship, which enables a student to prepare for and take the CMA exam at no cost. The two-part CMA tests the skills that are in-demand by today's top employers. It covers:

Part 1 – Financial Planning, Performance, and Analytics

- External financial reporting decisions (15%)
- Planning, budgeting, and forecasting (20%)
- Performance management (20%)
- Cost management (15%)
- Internal controls (15%)
- Technology and analytics (15%)

Part 2 – Strategic Financial Management

- Financial statement analysis (20%)
- Corporate finance (20%)
- Decision analysis (25%)
- Risk management (10%)
- Investment decisions (10%)
- Professional ethics (15%)

For more information about the CMA and the CMA Scholarship, please visit www.CMACareers.org.

Diane Isibor, CMA
Financial Analyst
Cummins Inc.



By the time Diane graduated from Valdosta State University, she had already had lined up a great job. At IMA's Student Leadership Conference a few years before, Diane was recruited for a summer internship at Cummins Inc. Thanks to her outstanding performance in that role, she was offered a full-time position as a financial analyst at Cummins Sales and Service, Atlanta, to start soon after graduation.

Ambitious and a self-declared overachiever, Diane pursued a difficult double major at Valdosta, earning a BBA in Accounting and a second BBA in Finance, both summa cum laude, and is currently pursuing her MS in Analytics at Georgia Tech. It's no wonder she received a nomination for the CMA Scholarship from her cost accounting professor, Dr. Sanjay Gupta.

"I really wanted to set myself apart early in my career and becoming a CMA seemed like a great way to do that," says Diane. She recalls that the content of the exam was very much aligned with her studies. She also was fortunate to find the time to study in between finishing school and starting her full-time job: She took the exams about three weeks apart, doing intense drills with practice questions and taking timed practice exams. She wisely decided to schedule her test dates for Part 1 and Part 2 of the exam soon after she received the scholarship, so that she had specific goals to aim for.

Diane's career at Cummins is off to a roaring start. She's currently concluding a role in the company's coveted two-year Financial Development Program (FDP), where she rotates every six months through various functional areas of the company. So far, she's worked in financial planning and analysis (FP&A), plant and operations finance, finance systems, and investor relations. She's done stints in Memphis and Charleston; now, she's based at the company's Columbus, Ind., headquarters, working as a financial analyst.

Diane aspires to be a "solution provider"—someone people can go to when they have a problem and who can deliver them a solution. The CMA is certainly helping her get there.

Dylan Azevedo, CMA
Financial Analyst
The Walt Disney Company



Dylan graduated from California State University, Fullerton, with a double major in Accounting and Finance. His original plan was to pursue a career in public accounting, but in his sophomore year, he landed a professional internship opportunity with The Walt Disney Company within its Parks, Experiences, and Products division. It was this opportunity that first introduced him to management accounting.

In addition to that internship, Dylan took a cost accounting course in his senior year, which further solidified his interest. Through that course, he met Professor Paul Foote, who nominated Dylan for the CMA Scholarship.

Dylan started studying for the exam while still in school. He prepared for and passed Part 1 of the exam while he was a student. For Part 2, he had to prepare once he was already working and that proved more challenging. "It's quite hard to prepare for a demanding exam like the CMA while starting a new job in a new city. Between 50-60 hour work weeks and wanting to explore my new home, I felt there wasn't enough time to properly study." Thankfully, he found most of the content in Part 2 familiar, having graduated recently.

He put in the time and passed Part 2 soon afterwards. During Dylan's senior year in college, he went through a rigorous multiday interview process that led to his acceptance into Disney's Accounting and Finance Rotation Program, a sought-after opportunity that exposes young professionals to different aspects of the company's operations. He's already completed three rotations and currently, he's working with the FP&A group at Disney's General Entertainment Division.

His advice for those still in school and looking for that dream job? "Carve out time to study for the CMA before you finish college. Also, get some real-world experience in the field through jobs or internships. The experience, coupled with the CMA certification, will set you apart from the rest of the applicant pool. Once you're through the door, your character, passion, perseverance, and mindset will be instrumental to a long and successful career. Make sure to enjoy the process!"

Matt Weaver, CMA
Financial Analyst
Superbrands Capital, LLC



Matt didn't originally plan to study accounting. He initially considered being a dentist, yet while taking an accounting elective to round out his science-heavy schedule, Matt found that he enjoyed it—a lot. It led him to take more courses in accounting and eventually switch his major.

That's when Matt first learned about IMA and how it could help him in his career aspirations. To become more involved with IMA, Matt founded the IMA student chapter at Washburn University, in Topeka, Kansas. Around the same time, his cost accounting professor, who was the student chapter's faculty sponsor, nominated Matt for the CMA Scholarship.

Matt started to prepare for the CMA exam while wrapping up his undergraduate degree. "I was definitely in study mode and was already very familiar with most of the content areas," he explains.

He passed one part before he graduated, and he then developed a strict study schedule once he started his full-time job. Matt received his second passing score by committing 15 hours per week over a three-month period, carving out time in the evening and on weekends.

Passing the CMA definitely helped Matt's confidence, both in his current post as a financial analyst at a private equity company and in his previous job at Siemens Gamesa, a multinational wind turbine manufacturing company. "Many of the topics covered on the exam—particularly those related to technology—I've already been able to use in my job." He also appreciates how being a CMA requires him to earn continuing professional education, where he's been able to take advantage of courses in robotic process automation and data analytics to help round out his background.

And while his career as a financial analyst and his volunteer role serving as president of IMA's Wichita Chapter keep him busy, Matt also practices—and learns—other skills as a football and basketball official. Refereeing at the college and high school levels has taught Matt a lot about people skills, time management, communication, and the importance of networking.

Katherine Clark, CMA
Finance Coordinator
Casas por Cristo



In Katherine's junior year at Indiana University Southeast, she was looking for a way to distinguish herself from classmates who were competing for prestigious internships and entry-level positions at top companies. Her dad is an engineer and supervisor for a multibillion-dollar electric company and always encouraged her to pursue a career in management accounting. Fortunately, her professor Lisa Book recognized her interest and nominated her for the CMA Scholarship in her senior year.

Katherine took advantage of the scholarship immediately: She began preparing while still in school, listening to recorded lectures online and taking practice quizzes and exams. Katherine notes the close correlation between the exam and her schoolwork, observing, "If you get an accounting degree, almost every topic covered on the CMA exam was taught in your classes. Having those topics fresh in your memory from classes will aid you in mastering the calculations and concepts on the exam."

Katherine began her first job right after college, at a missionary organization that helps build homes for disadvantaged families in Mexico and Central America. She moved to Guatemala and gave herself about six months before she took the first exam. She notes that it was easier to study while a student: "Working 50 or 60 hours while trying to learn my new role made it much more difficult to commit time to preparing for the exam." Still, she was able to pull off this balancing act and eventually passed both exams.

In Katherine's current role, where she's now based in Nicaragua, she's the go-to financial person in the field, having to handle a variety of responsibilities in all areas of accounting and finance. Being a CMA has had clear advantages: "Getting my accounting degree and then following it up with a CMA certification allowed me to be instantaneously proficient in my job," she says. She summed up the advantages: "With the CMA, you're able to become a value-added employee in a shorter period of time. That's something that has been so worthwhile not only to me but to my organization."

My CMA Difference



Kavya Ramesh, CMA

Co-founder and COO, Technogro Analytics LLP
Bangalore, India



My certification journey:

I was able to work towards my CMA while also pursuing my undergraduate degree.

Proudest moment:

Becoming a CMA drove a spirit of innovation in me. I'm a founding partner of a new startup that's reinventing the role of technology in the hospitality industry.

Career goal:

To be happy and a trusted leader who empowers the people around me.

My CMA difference:

For me, earning the CMA was a life-changing decision that gave me the confidence to pursue an entrepreneurial journey.

Career advice:

Don't just view the CMA as a certification but as a transformational tool that will push you to grow as a true leader in whatever career you choose.