

## Benefits of IMA from a Student's Perspective

Kevin Olivis

When starting college at the University of Las Vegas, Nevada (UNLV), I had no idea what major I wanted to pursue. I started as a Marketing major, considering switching to Management my sophomore year. It was not until I took my first cost accounting course, ACC 202 – Managerial Accounting, I knew accounting was for me. Managerial accounting has always intrigued me with the different costs, formulas, and accounting systems unique from financial accounting. Managerial accounting was engaging with each class session challenging me mentally. It drove me to explore additional opportunities managerial accounting provided. I also learned about the Certified Management Accountant (CMA) and the Institute of Management Accountants (IMA) in this class. My professor taught us the importance of the CMA and IMA and asked the class what certifications we planned to get in our lifetime. We wrote our plan on our name cards to help enforce our future goals throughout the semester. I took a deep thought and wrote I wanted to be a CMA. Here in ACC 202, I began my journey of obtaining the CMA and learned about the IMA in the process.

Through the IMA, I discovered the path I would take towards obtaining the CMA. The beginning step in my route was to register with IMA. The process was easy as the website was simple to navigate through. I also received a generous discount upon becoming a member as a student. Membership came with plenty of benefits that exceeded my expectations. The most valuable benefit that helped me towards the CMA came from IMA's Strategic Finance monthly magazines. In 2019, I stumbled across an article called "Dual Certification: It can be done" by Joseph M. Hargadon and Lori R. Fuller. The article explained why acquiring both CMA and CPA would be beneficial in differentiating yourself in a competitive business environment. I read the entire article and, towards the end, had a nine-step plan to prepare for the CMA and CPA exams while in college. I kept the article close to me and used it as my roadmap. Without IMA, I would not have access to the valuable information I use today as a graduate student.

Now that I have established a roadmap, I needed to pay for the CMA. As a college student, most of my income pays off student loans. IMA recognizes the burden of student debt and

offers scholarships for the CMA and college courses. These scholarships include the IMA Memorial Education Fund (MEF), Stuart Cameron & Margaret McLeod Memorial Scholarship (SCMS), CMA Scholarship Program, etc. The scholarships would allow me to take the CMA for free, so I had no excuse, not to at least attempt the exams. One requirement for my college to apply for these scholarships was to become a member of our student IMA chapter.

I was hesitant to join a student organization because I felt I would need to give up much time to meet the obligations. I was working a part-time job and balanced school on top of it all. If I wanted to become a CMA and fully embrace the IMA, I would have to get out of my comfort zone. My first year joining the UNLV IMA student chapter was wonderful. It allowed me to network with other students who had the same interest. They also offered plenty of professional events allowing me to explore the many different options in accounting. Our student chapter did not pressure me to attend any of the events, which was a huge relief. Being a part of the UNLV IMA student chapter had also set me apart from other students on my resume, which would help land me a job at the big 4.

Within the UNLV IMA student chapter, I learned of the IMA Student Case Competition hosted by IMA. It was a great way to test my knowledge from my accounting, finance courses, and the CMA study material. The case stimulates a real-world situation where you need to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize a solution to a management accounting problem. The case is complex but delightful at the same time as you work with your fellow peers to create the best solution for the problem. There is no right or wrong answer and no grade, only an opportunity for your team to win an invite to the IMA Annual Conference and a chance to put your university on the map for everybody to see.

Overall, the IMA was the perfect home for me throughout my time in college. I was able to set a goal for how to pursue the CMA. IMA assisted me with my goal by providing resources like strategic finance and website info to help answer my questions. Multiple scholarships were available to help me fill costs I could not cover. I was also able to

experience a welcoming environment from our UNLV IMA student chapter because of IMA. Finally, I was able to test my wisdom through the IMA Case Competition, creating friendships among peers and a chance to compete against other universities worldwide. These benefits stood out for me; however, this is only a tiny portion of what IMA offers. Explore for yourself and see what you may accomplish through the help of the IMA.