

# A Note From Giorgio Gotti

On behalf of the UTEP Department of Accounting and Information Systems, I want to welcome our faculty, students, staff, alumni, and friends to the Spring 2020 semester newsletter of the Accounting and Information Systems Department.



The Spring 2020 semester began strong with 417 Accounting, 72 Information Systems, 81 Master of Accountancy (MAcc), and 8 Ph.D. students enrolled. Despite the challenging global pandemic and the entire UTEP campus in restricted operations, the College of Business Administration and the AIS Department awarded degrees to 27 MAcc students and 4 Ph.D. candidates with a concentration in accounting during the spring Hooding Ceremony.

In April 2020, we received the great news that the Accounting program was ranked twentieth on Discover Accounting’s list of the 101 Most Affordable Accounting Programs in America. I am happy to share that during the past year AIS students have received more than \$30,000 in scholarships. I encourage you to connect with us through social media and keep up-to-date on our latest news!

## By the Numbers



### Spring 2020 Enrollment

417



Accounting

72



Information Systems

81



MAcc

8



Ph. D.

### Spring 2020 Hooding Ceremony

27



MAcc

4



Ph. D. Candidates  
(Accounting Concentration)

## Impact

# UTEP’s Accounting Program Top-Ranked in Affordability

Educational information website, Discover Accounting, determines its rankings based on data from The Bureau of Labor Statistics, Payscale, and the National Center for Education Statistics. Data used to create the list included a program’s acceptance rates, online reviews, graduation rates, average salaries for graduates, available online programs, program cost, and retention rates.

“This ranking is yet another validation that the quality and tuition costs of COBA’s Accounting degrees combine to provide an exceptional value to our students and now these opportunities are being recognized by industry publications,” said James Payne, Ph.D., Dean of the College of Business Administration.

While the College of Business Administration is accredited by AACSB International – an internationally recognized symbol of the quality of a business school’s programs – the College’s Accounting Program holds its own AACSB Accounting Accreditation. This distinction highlights the programs its globally competitive undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs.

In addition to meeting 15 business accreditation standards for its AACSB accreditation, UTEP’s Accounting and Information Systems Department also meets the additional criteria for six accreditation standards, which are specific to the discipline and profession of accounting.

**The AIS Department meets the additional criteria for six AACSB accreditation standards, which are specific to the discipline and profession of accounting.**

“Within UTEP’s mission of access, excellence and impact, the Accounting Programs continue to deliver a high-quality education to undergraduate and graduate students from the Paso del Norte Region and beyond,” said Giorgio Gotti, Ph.D., Accounting and Information Systems Department Chair. “The number of enrolled students, undergraduate and graduate, the successful placement of our Ph.D. students, and the continuous collaboration with accounting professionals and stakeholders in the region are evidence of the quality of our programs and their positive impact on our community.”

Graduates of the department have achieved career success with global accounting firms, including PwC, KPMG, and Deloitte in addition to many of our region’s leading employers and accounting firms. The College’s alumni network provides a critical link between UTEP and these organizations. To check out the department’s full list of courses, degree programs, and certificates, visit [utep.edu/business](http://utep.edu/business).

# SET YOURSELF APART WITH A MASTER OF ACCOUNTANCY DEGREE



**RAISING AWARENESS:** UTEP's College of Business Administration and the Office of University Communications jointly launched a social media awareness campaign for its graduate business programs. Ads promoting UTEP's MAcc and MBA Programs are circulating across major social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn.

To learn more about the MAcc program, visit [utep.edu/MAcc](http://utep.edu/MAcc)

## Academic Engagement

# Gotti Elected to American Accounting Association Board

Giorgio Gotti, Ph.D., Accounting and Information Systems Department Chair at The University of Texas at El Paso, has been elected to a new board position with the American Accounting Association (AAA).

The American Accounting Association is the largest community of accountants in academia. More than a century old, the group produces leading research and publications within its industry.

"The AAA membership has been very beneficial for my career, allowing me to work and network with the best accounting scholars in the world," said Giorgio Gotti, Ph.D., Accounting and Information Systems Department Chair. "It's time to give back and contribute to the growth of the Association, a community of thought leaders in accounting."

Gotti currently serves the AAA in its International Accounting Section as the Ian Hague Award for Outstanding Service Committee Chair. He previously served as its president in 2015. Gotti's newly elected position – Director, Focusing on International – represents non-US member interests on the board. Gotti is charged with connecting the association with other international accounting organizations.

Gotti will also organize and chair the group's Global Engagement Committee, which looks for ways to enhance AAA's global standing with accounting professionals and academics through engagement and membership cultivation.

"The College encourages its faculty to work in areas that extend the boundaries of knowledge and improve the application of this knowledge through regional, national and international environments," said James E. Payne, Dean of the College of Business Administration at UTEP. "Dr. Gotti's new role with the AAA will help further share knowledge with partners across the globe."

With thirteen years' experience as a faculty member at the College of Business Administration, Gotti has been a recipient of numerous academic awards, including Visiting Senior Research Scholar Fellowship at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy (2019), COBA's Teaching Excellence Award (Master of Accountancy, MBA, B.S. Accounting) (2016-18, 2014, 2015) and Best Research Award at AAA's 23rd Annual Ethics Research Symposium (2018).

Gotti's research has been published widely in peer-reviewed journals, including the Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of Accounting, Auditing & Finance, Journal of International Accounting Research, Management International Review, Review of Accounting and Finance, Journal of International Accounting, Auditing & Taxation, and The International Journal of Accounting.

## Student Profile

# Frank Espino: Student Orgs Help Develop Leadership, Professional Skills; Provide Insightful Career Glimpses

Frank Espino graduated with a BBA in Accounting in December 2019 and is currently a student in the Master of Accountancy Program at UTEP. He has served as the President of the Internal Audit Student Association and Accounting Society, as well as having served as a member of Beta Alpha Psi, and the TXCPA local chapter. Additionally, Espino's professional experience includes time with Josh Lucas CPA, and SBNG as a Tax Accountant. He is currently employed as a Teaching Assistant for the MAcc Program and is expected to finish the program in Spring 2021. Espino has accepted a tax position at firm Pricewaterhouse Coopers in Fort Worth in 2021.

**How your graduate school experience been so far?**

It's actually been a smooth transition into graduate school. I had previously taken some grad level courses on the fast-track program as an undergraduate student, so I was already used to the evening schedule of graduate school. It is a bit easier to manage the workload because I have to deal with only one class every five weeks, compared to balance four or five classes simultaneously. In terms of coursework, I have found the material offered in the MAcc program more engaging and easier to relate to as the topics in my corporate tax course covered areas connected to my current job.

**Tell us about your internship with accounting giant Pricewaterhousecoopers. (PwW)**

I attended the PwC Bootcamp during my first year at COBA. At that time, I wasn't really involved in any extracurricular activities – and my grades were not ideal, so I wasn't interviewed by the recruiters. After that, I made it a priority to apply myself in my studies and challenge myself academically [so] I could secure a position with the company in the future. Last year, I landed an interview with one of the recruiters and secured a tax position with the firm starting in June. I am really excited to work for PwC. It is one of the largest accounting firms worldwide and the experience will only help me grow as an accounting professional. I hope to become more proficient utilizing the current tax code; I also want to gain a more thorough understanding of accounting topics to assist me



Frank Espino is currently enrolled in the Master of Accountancy Program at UTEP. Espino credits his time in undergraduate student organizations for helping him grow as a leader and for challenging him to excel academically in his courses. He has accepted a tax position at firm Pricewaterhouse Coopers in Fort Worth that will begin in 2021.

prepare for the CPA exam.

**What student and professional organizations are you involved with? How does it enhance what you've learned in the classroom?**

During my second year as a business student, I became an active member of the Accounting Society and Beta Alpha Psi; the following year I became the President of UTEP's Accounting Society. This year, I have the privilege of being the President of the Internal Audit Student Association. Once you start getting involved in one organization, it gets easier and becomes more engaging work with other groups and organizations – these experiences during undergrad helped me to grow as a leader. In these student organizations, you're constantly involved in events, meetings, networking mixers with great professionals who share their experiences with us. You begin to pick up on the traits that served them well and helped them grow, too. In addition, student organizations allowed me to develop my leadership and professional skills, assist my peers,

and get a glimpse into what a career in accounting looks like.

**How do you unwind and de-stress after a long week?**

Even as an accountant, I often try to leave some time available to work on my art and do what I feel passionate about. I often draw or paint after a long day of work/school because it allows me to unwind and take my mind off things. I have always been an artist at heart – I actually started college as a painting major. I encourage everyone, especially those who spend a lot of time working analytically, like us business students, to find a creative outlet to let our minds breathe and forget about the craziness and stressful nature of school and work. I have realized that I haven't stopped being an artist now that I'm an accountant. While I'm at work, my notes will usually be filled with motifs or little doodles. I constantly get complimented on my notes, so I guess having an artistic background comes in handy at times!

Community Engagement

# GECU, Project VITA Provide Real-World Tax Preparation Opportunities for Undergraduate AIS Students

Department of Accounting and Information Systems students are getting real-world experience while helping their community through a partnership with GECU and the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program.

The IRS's VITA program offers free basic tax return preparation to qualified individuals and has been in use for more than 50 years. The program is geared towards helping low-income individuals, persons with disabilities, and limited English-speaking taxpayers who need assistance in preparing their own tax returns.

As part of their volunteering efforts, students from the University of Texas at El Paso have been assisting with the VITA program at the on-campus location since 2014. These students have received special training and certification by the IRS to become official volunteers in the VITA program.

Beginning in Spring 2018, the VITA program was offered as a credit-course for eligible accounting students. The course is led by instructor Rebeca Pérez, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the AIS Department, who also serves as site coordinator every year for the UTEP VITA site.

These students, like accounting undergraduate student Estefania Campos, have received special training and earned a certification by the IRS to become official volunteers in the VITA program.

Campos, an accounting student from the College of Business Administration, is returning for a second year with the VITA program.

"Project VITA has been an amazing opportunity not only because I obtained three hours of college credit for it, but also because I gained real world experience while providing a much-needed service to the community," said Campos. "These experiences translate what I learn in the classroom into real-world situations by working on real tax returns and communicating with real taxpayers."

Campos was assigned to be a Site Coordinator at the Fred & Maria Loya Family YMCA VITA



AIS student Estefania Campos works with a client at the Fred & Maria Loya Family YMCA Project VITA site location. Campos is in her second year with the VITA Program and has taken on additional responsibilities as a Site Coordinator. Campos enjoys taking what she learns in the classroom and applying it to help real-world clients with their taxes.

**"These experiences translate what I learn in the classroom into real-world situations by working on actual tax returns and communicating with real taxpayers."**

*Estefania Campos, Project VITA Volunteer*

location, taking on more responsibility in addition to tax preparation. "Knowing how much a volunteer has to go through to work in the VITA Program, I think it's a very helpful service to the community. I'm fulfilled when I realize this experience has a very real impact on members of my community," she said.

AIS students are linked to the VITA Program through a partnership with El Paso area credit union GECU.

GECU leads the Coalition for Family Economic Progress (CFEP) which works within El Paso to provide free tax filing through the VITA Program. In 2019, this initiative resulted in over 10,000 free tax returns, giving back more than \$16 million to the community. It is estimated to have saved El

Paso-area families nearly \$3 million in filing fees.

Paulina Rodriguez de la Fuente is another returning volunteer to the VITA program. De la Fuente is grateful the program allows her to expand her skillset beyond the classroom.

"I was taking a tax course during my first year with VITA and the simultaneous experience of learning tax code while also applying it in real life gave new perspective to the information I was learning," she said. "Now that I returned for another year, I'm back with new skills and perspectives from the previous year and I more aware and compassionate towards people's situations – something I want to make sure I never lose focus on as I work towards becoming a CPA."

## Faculty Profile

# David Folsom: Enthusiasm, Curiosity Help Students Build Stronger Connections with Course Materials

*David Folsom, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Accounting and Information Systems at the College of Business Administration. He currently teaches courses in Contemporary Accounting Issues, Principles of Accounting, and Undergraduate Research, among graduate and doctoral-level courses.*



*An enthusiastic educator, Folsom's research interests include how characteristics of accounting standards affect financial reporting outcomes and how markets interpret financial information, particularly when firms face competitive pressures.*

**Of the courses you teach, which electives do you recommend for students?**

Perhaps my favorite class to teach is ACCT 5310 in the Master's of Accounting Program. In this class, we learn about the theory behind financial reporting. The class is very focused on why we have certain standards, how investors use accounting information, and how accounting standards have evolved through time. We also examine issues where firms have incentives to provide "better" or "worse" financial information to investors and lenders. We also discuss what constitutes "better" or "worse" information to different users of financial information. I enjoy this class because we are focused on why we do accounting rather than just learning the rules and techniques of applying accounting standards.

**Can you describe some of your current research?**

One of my recent publications examines how the structure of accounting standards (U.S. GAAP) affects the decision usefulness of financial reports. Specifically, my coauthors and I classify each U.S. accounting standard on a continuum of how principles-based or rules-based the standard each standard is. We then measure

each individual firm exposure to these standards to calculate if individual firms are more subject to principles-or rules-based standards.

We find that firms more subject to principled-based standards (where managers have more discretion in reporting) provide more decision-useful financial reports, suggesting managers use this discretion to provide better information to markets. However, we also find that when under pressure to meet market expectations, firm managers sometimes use this discretion opportunistically to report better than expected firm performance.

Our findings suggest managers, on average, use discretion in accounting improve communication with investors, but do not always use this discretion appropriately. Hopefully standard setters use this information to better understand the costs and benefits of giving managers more reporting discretion in principles-based standards.

**When you were in college, what strategies did you use to be successful?**

I tried to not only work hard (a must), but also to work smart. Early on in each class, I tried to understand what each professor wanted students to learn. I remember often asking myself, "if I were the professor, what questions would I ask on the upcoming exam?" I also challenged myself to either respond to a professor's question or ask a question in every class I attended. This helped me better understand what the instructor wanted and kept me engaged in each class.

I also got to know many of my professors personally, often outside of class. Most professors chose an academic career because they genuinely want to help students! We are here to help.

However, I recognized faculty time is limited, so I came prepared for any meeting with a faculty member. I still consider the professors I had as an undergraduate and graduate student mentors and friends.

Last, I found other students with similar academic

goals and learning styles as I had to form study groups. Teaching another student a difficult concept is the best way to master a concept! These colleagues pushed me to do better and we often had some friendly competitions. These study partners continue to be friends (and great contacts) today.

**What do you look for in an exceptional student?**

I think the most important qualities in an exceptional student are enthusiasm, curiosity, and work ethic. Good students enjoy learning and want to know more about their chosen field of study. They are open to new ideas, but are unafraid to respectfully challenge current dogma and ways of doing things. Their enthusiasm and curiosity lead them to work hard and to master materials in their chosen field, not just memorize a method to get through a class. Exceptional students are able to see a concept or idea from multiple viewpoints and can apply a concept to multiple settings.

**What resources do you recommend that will help students in their professional careers?**

Be involved in something you are passionate about! To add value in the current business environment, students need to develop communication and leadership skills. Although many of these skills are gained in the course curriculum at UTEP, students need practice in extracurricular activities such as taking part in clubs, community service organizations, or a job or internship that uses these skills. UTEP offers many opportunities – job fairs, free mock interview training, the Accounting Society, Beta Alpha Psi, the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program, to name just a few.

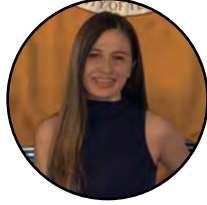
# AIS AWARDS

## TOP TEN ACCOUNTING SENIORS

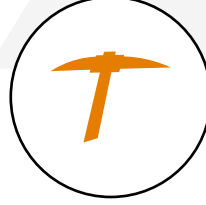
---



Kinley Dem



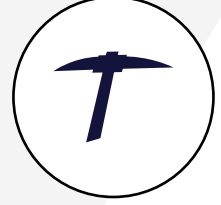
Briana Diaz



Charles Garner



Diana Hernandez



Michelle Lopez



Iliana Medina



Carmen Naciff



Andrea Saenz



Jose Santacruz



Gawa Seldon

## HONORS

---



**Elena Calugher**  
MAcc Student  
Scholarship



**Kinley Dem**  
UTEP's Honors Convocation  
Accounting Outstanding  
Outstanding Senior



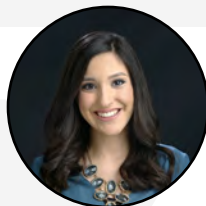
**Paige Dorsey**  
UTEP's Honors Convocation  
Outstanding Accounting Tutor



**Diana Hernandez**  
UTEP's Honors Convocation  
Outstanding Accounting  
Leadership Award



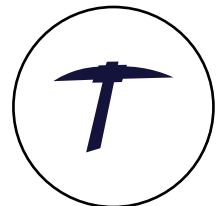
**Wayne Landry III**  
Outstanding Senior - El Paso  
Chapter of the Texas Society of  
Certified Public Accountants



**Maria Martinez**  
2020 Federation of Schools of  
Accountancy Student Award



**Eric Nevarez**  
UTEP's Honors Convocation  
Outstanding Graduate Student



**Edgar Quiroga**  
Public Company Accounting  
Oversight Board Scholar  
2019 - 2020

## TOP TEN SENIOR

---



Sandra Navarrete