

LIFE & WORK | JOURNAL REPORTS: COLLEGE RANKINGS

# Top Colleges for High-Paying Jobs in Accounting

A new ranking puts Harvard at No. 1 and San Jose State University first among public schools

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San Jose State is one of six colleges in California among the top 10 public schools in the U.S. for accounting salaries. Photo: Clara Mokri For The Wall Street Journal

Graduates of Harvard University working in accounting earn higher salaries compared with their peers in the field who graduated from other schools, according to a ranking compiled by the Burning Glass Institute, a nonprofit that researches employment trends.

A Harvard-educated accountant, with an average salary of \$93,111 over the first 10 years of his or her career, earns about \$25,000 more a year than the median B.A. graduate working in accounting. The median graduate’s average annual salary over that span is \$67,717.

Among public-school accounting students, those who graduate from top-ranked San Jose State University earn about \$12,000 more than the median, for an average salary near \$80,000.

The idea behind the rankings is to quantify the difference the choice of undergraduate school makes on future salaries, among all graduates with the same number of years in the field.

While Harvard students earn the highest salary premium, the share of Harvard graduates who go into the field is extremely small, just 0.7%.

Unlike [other professions studied in the rankings](#), a school’s “star power won’t necessarily get you a great score on the CPA exam. That means there’s a broader array of schools from which you can launch and do really well,” says Matt Sigelman, president of Burning Glass.

And unlike the [finance ranking](#), where many of the top-ranked schools are in the New York City area, the top accounting schools are more spread out, partly because the jobs are less concentrated geographically.

That being said, in the public-school ranking, six of the top 10 schools are in California, a credit to the strength of state school systems in the West, Mr. Sigelman says.

## Top 20 Private Colleges for Accounting Salaries

These graduates earn higher pay than the median graduate in accounting

RANK	COLLEGE	ANNUAL SALARY PREMIUM	ACCOUNTING % OF GRADUATES	AVERAGE YEARLY SALARY
1	Harvard University	\$25,394	0.70%	\$93,111
2	Duke University	\$18,072	0.81%	\$85,789
3	Columbia University in the City of New York	\$17,488	0.95%	\$85,205
4	Dartmouth College	\$17,351	1.01%	\$85,068
5	University of Pennsylvania	\$16,756	1.09%	\$84,473
6	Tufts University	\$15,828	0.75%	\$83,545
7	Santa Clara University	\$14,183	5.80%	\$81,900
8	Cornell University	\$13,519	1.14%	\$81,236
9	Northwestern University	\$13,226	0.90%	\$80,943
10	Georgetown University	\$13,066	1.77%	\$80,783
11	Catholic University of America	\$12,488	2.10%	\$80,205
12	New York University	\$12,483	1.76%	\$80,200
13	Union College	\$12,292	2.11%	\$80,009
14	College of the Holy Cross	\$11,303	4.12%	\$79,020
15	Fordham University	\$11,266	5.22%	\$78,983
16	Lehigh University	\$10,713	5.53%	\$78,430
17	Washington and Lee University	\$10,308	3.49%	\$78,025
18	Bucknell University	\$10,019	3.76%	\$77,736
19	Villanova University	\$9,964	5.91%	\$77,681
20	Fairfield University	\$9,947	6.46%	\$77,664

## Top 20 Public Colleges for Accounting Salaries

These graduates earn higher pay than the median graduate in accounting

RANK	COLLEGE	ANNUAL SALARY PREMIUM	ACCOUNTING % OF GRADUATES	AVERAGE YEARLY SALARY
1	San Jose State University	\$12,171	3.93%	\$79,888
2	University of California-Berkeley	\$11,421	2.19%	\$79,138
3	California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo	\$10,404	3.46%	\$78,121
4	University of Virginia-Main Campus	\$9,370	1.68%	\$77,087
5	San Francisco State University	\$8,423	3.01%	\$76,140
6	University of California-Santa Cruz	\$8,284	2.54%	\$76,001
7	University of California-Davis	\$8,229	2.29%	\$75,946
8	University of Connecticut	\$7,336	4.96%	\$75,053
9	College of New Jersey	\$6,864	4.60%	\$74,581
10	Binghamton University	\$6,853	5.48%	\$74,570
11	University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	\$6,629	1.63%	\$74,346
12	University of California-Los Angeles	\$6,405	2.93%	\$74,122
13	Rutgers University-New Brunswick	\$6,179	3.97%	\$73,896
14	California State University-East Bay	\$6,078	4.53%	\$73,795
15	University of California-Santa Barbara	\$6,005	4.13%	\$73,722
16	University of Delaware	\$5,805	3.86%	\$73,522
17	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	\$5,322	2.82%	\$73,039
18	James Madison University	\$5,097	3.56%	\$72,814
19	SUNY at Albany	\$4,922	5.15%	\$72,639
20	University of Texas at Austin	\$4,878	2.61%	\$72,595

## Methodology

Rankings are determined by a Burning Glass Institute analysis of experience and pay data from Lightcast, a labor-market data firm, and Glassdoor, a company-ratings website. For each college, an annual salary premium was calculated using the difference between the earnings of the school’s graduates in their first 10 years after graduation and the median graduate in the field. To filter for graduates working in accounting, the Burning Glass Institute analyzed only the roles relevant to the profession as classified by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Standard Occupational Classification codes and the U.S. Census Bureau’s North American Industry Classification System.

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