

**X****Finance and Accounting Club**

Elgin Community College

Becker CPA Prep Visit

Lisa Easley, a representative from Becker, spoke to the club about the CPA exam. She went over why to get licensed, how the exam works, Illinois requirements, study planning, and how firms support students throughout the process.

1.) About Becker

- a.) Nearly 70 years in CPA exam prep; nearly 2 million candidates have prepared with Becker
- b.) 2,900+ organizations trust Becker, including Big 4 firms
- c.) 90%+ of Watt Sells Award winners have prepared with Becker since 2007
 - i.) Watt Sells Award: 95+ score on all four sections, all passed on first try. It's the only time a score goes on a resume; firms only care if you pass
- d.) Also offers CMA, CIA, and Enrolled Agent review
- e.) Many firms sign direct-bill agreements, so Becker is paid for when you're hired

2.) Why Earn the CPA

- a.) Stand out from other applicants, maximize your skill set, increase earning potential, improve credibility
- b.) Many firms won't promote to manager without it, and only CPAs can sign audits
- c.) Some firms give bonuses for finishing exam fast
- d.) Some firms give PTO to study and reimburse each section you pass

3.) Other Credentials

- a.) CMA: management accounting (budgeting, forecasting, financial analysis, risk management)
- b.) Enrolled Agent: taxation, unlimited representation rights before IRS

- c.) CIA: internal auditing (risk management, fraud detection, internal controls)
- d.) None of these are state licenses; CPA is the gold standard
- e.) Goal: collect as many credentials as possible in your 20s and 30s before life gets busier

4.) Exam Structure

- a.) Core sections (need to pass all 3): FAR, AUD, REG
- b.) Discipline sections (pick 1): BAR, ISC or TCP. Firms don't care which one you choose
- c.) Each section is 4 hours: 2 multiple choice testlets, then 3 task-based simulations, with a 15 minute off-the-clock break
- d.) Passing score is 75. It's a scaled score, not 75%
- e.) Sections can be taken in any order and retaken
- f.) 30 months to pass all four, starting when you pass your first section (36 in some states). Aim for 24 or less

5.) Pass Rates and Study Times

- a.) Becker Exam Day Ready students pass at a 64% higher rate than other test takers
- b.) Pass rates for Becker Exam Day Ready students: TCP 96%, REG 88%, ISC 82%, AUD 70%, FAR 65%, BAR 65%
- c.) TCP has the highest pass rate and shortest study time so it's recommended
- d.) Study hours: FAR 120-150, AUD 110-140, REG 80-110, BAR 120-150, ISC 60-90, TCP 60-90
- e.) Example: 150 hours at 15 hrs/week is about 10 weeks, and weekends will look different
- f.) Interning in tax helps a lot with the tax sections

6.) Suggested Study Order

- a.) No single correct order
- b.) FAR first builds a foundation or gives a challenge; REG first is good if you prefer tax
- c.) With TCP: FAR, AUD, REG, TCP, or REG, TCP, AUD, FAR
- d.) Many people take FAR first to get the anxiety out and retake it if needed

- e.) The 30 month clock doesn't start until you pass your first section

7.) Becker Study Tools

- a.) Study planner: pick an exam date and weekly hours, set days off, and it builds a daily schedule you can change anytime
- b.) Exam Day Ready: 80% of videos, 80% correct on questions, 50% on mini and simulated exams
- c.) Newt: Becker's AI assistant that explains answers and rephrases concepts
- d.) Don't start studying until you're close to sitting; you won't retain it. Free practice questions from the state CPA society are fine

8.) Six Steps to Acquiring License

- a.) Study planner: pick an exam date and weekly hours, set days off, and it builds a daily schedule you can change anytime
- b.) Exam Day Ready: 80% of videos, 80% correct on questions, 50% on mini simulated exams
- c.) Newt: Becker's AI assistant that explains answers and rephrases concepts
- d.) Don't start studying until you're close to sitting; you won't retain it.

9.) Illinois Requirements

- a.) 120 credit hours to sit for the exam (30 accounting, 24 business)
- b.) License: 120 hours + 2 years of experience, or 150 hours + 1 year
- c.) Alternate pathway starting 2027: Bachelor's + 2 years, or Master's + 1 year
- d.) Open-book ethics exam required (not required in Indiana); taken at home
- e.) Notice to Schedule (NTS) lasts about 6 months. Pick how many sections to sit (2 is common); no refunds on unused ones
- f.) Core sections available Mon-Sat year-round; scores in 2-4 weeks
- g.) Discipline sections only in windows: Jan, Apr, Jul, Oct
- h.) Many seniors study over winter break, apply in January, and sit in March or April

10.) Q&A

- a.) Go to meet-the-firms events, bring a resume, shake hands, connect on LinkedIn the next day
- b.) Ask Professor Packard about joint events with other schools

11.) Resources

- a.) nasba.org: account needed later; sends your NTS
- b.) ilboe.org: start the process and send transcripts
- c.) Free Becker resources: becker.com/theplusside
- d.) Campus Ambassador: junior/senior or grad, 3.0+ GPA, accounting/business club member. Free course plus leadership experience. Apply at becker.com/campus
- e.) Contact: Lisa Easley, leasley@becker.com, 312-320-4013

Join us for our next meeting on,

Wednesday, October 14th, 2026