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complete advice to their clients. Likewise, lawyers who have an advanced understanding of accounting can better ...

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By Maren Hendricks.

The need for professionals with both legal and advanced accounting training is expected to grow as businesses and firms anticipate increased scrutiny from a ramped-up Internal Revenue Service. A dual JD/MAcc program allows students to earn a Juris Doctor and a Master of Accountancy degree concurrently. Graduates can

become both attorneys and CPAs and are well-positioned to contribute to an

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securities and fiduciary law to selling a business.

Recognizing the synergies in combining the study of law and accounting and perceiving the benefits of dual expertise for tax and corporate law clients, three top-25 law schools (University of Virginia, Brigham Young University, and University of Florida) as well as a number of other national law schools offer a combined JD and Master of Accountancy degree. For example, Brigham Young University's J. Reuben Clark Law School (BYU Law) and BYU's Marriott School of Business offer a dual JD/MAcc degree (law.byu.edu/departments/admissions/joint-degrees/). This joint degree begins at BYU Marriott with the first year focused exclusively on MAcc courses. The program's second year focuses exclusively on law courses, and the third and fourth years include a combination of MAcc and law school courses.

Recent BYU Law JD/MAcc graduate Duncan Hamilton, now a tax attorney at Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP, highlights the crossover between accounting and law. "Law defines the reasoning and the policies underlying accounting rules. It becomes easier to comply with the rules and make sound judgment calls when you understand both."

Clients Benefit From Advisors Who Offer Both Accounting Expertise and Legal Analysis

Real-world problems often require solutions from both legal and business perspectives.

BYU Law's JD/MAcc graduates have complementary legal and accounting skill sets that allow them to provide both of these perspectives for clients. As practitioners, they offer accounting discipline as well as strong communication skills and the ability to think critically about complex problems.

Rebekah Bingham, a 2022 graduate who now practices tax and corporate law at

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approaching problems, and she brings this fluency to her accounting expertise when helping clients in her practice.

Recent graduate Andrew Juergen is now in the corporate law department at Kirkland & Ellis, where his combined legal and accounting skills allow him to better serve clients. “Having a legal education that has trained me to read, draft, and understand contracts makes me a better accountant. On the other hand, the more familiar an attorney is with financial statements, taxes, cap tables, distribution waterfalls, valuation methods, and other topics covered in accounting classes, the better prepared they will be to help their clients.”

BYU Law’s JD/MAcc is Expanding to Better Meet Demand for Graduates

When professor Gladriel Shobe—leading expert on the Up-C IPO structure and tax receivable agreements—joined the BYU Law faculty in 2016, she immediately recognized the practical value of the JD/MAcc degree and quickly became the program’s ambassador. Professor Shobe began making presentations to undergraduate accounting students at the BYU Marriott School of Business, and she has found that generating interest in the dual program doesn’t take much cheerleading; “The program sells itself,” Shobe says.

The number of students enrolled in BYU Law’s dual degree program has increased steadily since its introduction in 2016, with JD/MAcc students comprising approximately 10% of the current 1L and 2L classes at BYU Law. The JD/MAcc program is projected to expand further in the coming years, as students recognize that industry demand for combined legal/accounting skills outpaces supply, and high salaries reflect this. JD/MAcc graduates simply offer more, and clients are willing to pay for it. Shobe says she speaks with a prospective JD/MAcc student nearly once a week, which is no surprise to her: “We’re offering students a program that develops a combination of skills that employers actually need. These students

are incredibly marketable.”

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