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PROFESSION

Recently conducted research into what minorities are encountering when entering and advancing in the profession are being presented in the new 2022 Insight Special Feature.

Feb. 08, 2023



Acknowledging that a lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is a long-standing issue in the accounting profession, the Illinois CPA Society (ICPAS) and its charitable partner, the CPA Endowment Fund of Illinois (CPAEFI), recently conducted research into what minorities are encountering when entering and advancing in the profession. The findings of this research are being presented in the new 2022 Insight Special Feature, [“A CPA Diversity Report: Uncovering the Barriers to Success.”](#)

The research focuses on the firsthand experiences of alumni of the Mary T. Washington Wylie Internship Preparation Program (MTWW IPP)—a program, now entering its 11th year, designed to prepare qualifying Black and other racial and

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A combination of survey data and insights gathered through personal interviews with the MTWW IPP alumni community revealed three key themes—primarily coming to light during the new-hire and entry-level experience—that could be contributing to the persistent disparity in minority representation and advancement in the accounting profession:

- 1. They see the profession's lack of DEI as a barrier.** In fact, “Environment Not Diverse,” which referred to diverse representation among leadership and peers alike, was the most prevalent barrier to success cited by the MTWW IPP alumni (58%), which was followed next by “Environment Not Inclusive” (36%). Further, approximately 18% of the survey respondents also cited “Discrimination/Microaggressions” and “General Lack of Equity Compared to Other Entry-Level Professionals” as being prevalent barriers.
- 2. They feel handicapped by their backgrounds.** About 49% of the MTWW IPP alumni indicated that “Past Experiences Did Not Adequately Prepare You or Somewhat Adequately Prepared You for Working in a Professional Environment.” What's more, 48% revealed that their “Education Did Not Adequately Prepare You or Somewhat Adequately Prepared You for Your Work.” And almost half of the survey respondents attribute not feeling prepared for success in their jobs when they first entered the profession to these knowledge and experience gaps.
- 3. They believe they're receiving inadequate feedback and development.** Nearly 31% of the MTWW IPP alumni cited “Mentorship Opportunities Not Available or Inadequate for Your Professional Needs” as being a prevalent barrier experienced—making it the third most cited challenge faced. This was followed by “Lack of Timely, Relevant, or Direct Feedback on Performance” being cited by nearly 24% of survey respondents. “On-the-Job Training Opportunities Not Provided or Inadequate for Your Professional Needs” was also a prevalent barrier experienced.

“It’s our hope that the survey findings—along with the unique, eye-opening, and

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reader feedback and is available for further commentary on the factors impacting DEI in the accounting profession.

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