

## Saunders grad gets top scores on CPA exam

### *Adena Thomson is definitely a degree above average*

The RIT alumna, who attended Saunders College of Business as an accounting major, maintained a 4.0 GPA to earn her undergraduate degree and achieved a repeat performance of academic excellence for her MBA degree a year later.

And now Thomson has scored the trifecta. She earned one of the highest overall scores in the world and has been recognized by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants as a top Uniform CPA Examination performer and recipient of the 2013 Elijah Watt Sells Award.

Thomson was one of only 55 of more than 94,000 candidates taking the test who attained a cumulative average score above 95.50 across all four sections of the CPA exam in the 2013 calendar year, and passed on the first attempt.

### *Career ready focus to hit the ground running*

Due to a focus on applied learning experiences, like many Saunders students, Adena was able to begin applying her accounting education to her career even before she graduated. She was hired as a staff accountant at The Bonadio Group's tax department and is in her second year of employment at the firm's Pittsford, N.Y., headquarters. "When I found out in March, they held a party in celebration for me at work," said Thomson. "The exams are daunting to say the least, so I'm grateful that all the time I spent studying paid off- and now I can look forward to the next phase of my career."

Thomson has worked hard to find support and stability. Born in Farmington, Pa., she was raised by parents who follow a rural way of life in a Christian religious community similar to Amish and Mennonite sects. She was uprooted several times before deciding to leave at age 17-leaving family and personal possessions behind. While juggling several jobs to continue her education, she found roots at RIT and in Rochester. Her sister, Kara (who also left the commune), is a licensed practical nurse at University of Rochester Medical Center and is studying to be a pharmacist.



**Adena Thomson** achieved a 4.0 GPA for both her undergraduate degree in Accounting and MBA in Accounting at Saunders College of Business. She also received the Elijah Watt Sells Award. Conferred by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, she was recognized as a top Uniform CPA Examination performer, one of only 55 of more than 94,000 candidates taking the test who attained a cumulative average score above 95.50 across all four sections of the CPA exam.

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#### DAY ONE | career ready

- Strong industry connections, offering real world experiences in and outside of the classroom
- Among the world's oldest and largest cooperative educational programs
- 96% placement rates, or higher

#### DAY ONE | enterprising mindset

- Pioneering Biz 1-2 program
- #1 student innovation center, Venture Creations Incubator, and over 200 clubs to join
- Ranked #21 nationally for entrepreneurship

#### DAY ONE | stand out

- Over 80 minors available across all 9 RIT colleges
- Nationally recognized programs in engineering, technology, arts, and design
- Students develop unique personal brands that employers seek

#### DAY ONE | connected

- Small class sizes, 100% taught by faculty, not teaching assistants
- Low student to faculty ratios, and highly accessible faculty
- Plugged into over 110,000 RIT alumni and large university resources



Saunders College offers several accounting degree options. Designed to prepare students for the CPA exam, students benefit from real-world experience combined with applied classroom learning, as well as the ability to leverage the college's strengths in data analytics and information systems

Undergraduate Accounting major – In addition to the educational preparation for a career leading to top management, the MBA – Accounting program fulfills the education requirements that allow students to sit for the Certified Public Accountancy exam in New York State.

MBA in Accounting – Designed for professionals seeking a career in accounting, the program provides a broad understanding of all business disciplines while specializing in accounting, and prepares students to sit for the CPA exam in New York State (1-year, 30 credit hour, Accelerated 4+1 option available for accounting undergraduates).

Master of Science in Accounting – Designed for professionals with an education, background, or experience in accounting. Advanced accounting curriculum designed to advance accounting professionals in their careers and to meet educational requirements to sit for the CPA exam in New York State.

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With the steady combinations of work and study--and not much sleep--Thomson is ready for some rest and relaxation. "I'm looking forward to some down time after work and on weekends; I enjoy playing violin, golf, volleyball and softball," she said.

### Academic Excellence

"Rochester has been good to me, and I certainly think my award speaks to the quality of the accounting program and the accounting professors at RIT--combined with working for a home grown firm like The Bonadio Group. The knowledge it takes to perform well on a comprehensive test like the CPA exam is a combination of on-the-job learning and academic learning."

Bill Dresnack, associate professor and chair of the accounting and finance department at Saunders College, said Thomson's latest accomplishment is well deserved.

"I don't think anyone who knows Dena was surprised to hear about her CPA exam score," said Dresnack. "Everyone who has worked with her says the same kind of things--'She's one of the best students I ever had; she's incredibly smart.'"

"Dena is a superstar in intellect, but also in character and attitude. The icing on the cake is that she is a genuinely nice person, one of the 'good guys.' Even greater things are coming for her, beyond any question."

Contributions from **Marcia Morphy**, RIT University News

## Here are just some of the companies that hire our Accounting program graduates.

 **ERNST & YOUNG**

**Capital One**

**Johnson & Johnson**

 **Merrill Lynch**

 **pwc**

 **JPMorgan Chase**

**Saunders College of Business** is one of nine colleges at Rochester Institute of Technology. Accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International (AACSB), Saunders enrolls more than 1,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Saunders College works in partnership with RIT's entrepreneurial Venture Creations Incubator and Simone Center for Student Innovation and Entrepreneurship to integrate business education with RIT's world leading technical and creative programs. Saunders College offers seven undergraduate, three MS, two Executive MBA, and 5 MBA programs where students gain real-world business experiences in the classroom and through co-ops.

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