

The American Institute of Professional Bookkeepers

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Colleges Preparing Bookkeepers for Certification Triple in 2004

To fill the growing need for full-charge bookkeepers—the CFOs in today’s small firms—continuing education programs at more than 150 universities and community colleges will offer a course in 2004 to prepare bookkeepers for the national certification exam, a threefold increase from last year that is expected to double in 2005.

The certification was developed by the American Institute of Professional Bookkeepers, www.aipb.org, which gives the Certified Bookkeeper exam at over 300 Prometric test centers nationwide.

“Today’s bookkeepers learned what they know on the job,” says Steve Sahlein, Co-President of the AIPB, the national association for bookkeepers since 1987, which offers the certification. “Only a few have college-level technical training. No business owner would rely on legal advice from someone who never went to law school but promised ‘8 years’ legal experience. Yet every day business owners entrust the family heirloom—their business—to bookkeepers with little more than a list of previous jobs, but no evidence that they have any real knowledge of accounting or tax.”

Academic acceptance of bookkeeper certification is spreading through state university systems as well as individual colleges. Four campuses of the University of California already offer the course, and Penn State has authorized all 17 campuses to offer it.

According to the Department of Labor’s (DOL’s) *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, bookkeeper certification assures the skills and knowledge required to carry out all the bookkeeping and accounting functions through the adjusted trial balance for a company of up to 100 employees. The requirements for becoming a CB (Certified Bookkeeper) parallel those for becoming a CPA, requiring two years’ experience, signing a code of ethics, passing a national exam, and maintaining skills and knowledge with continuing professional education every year.

The Certified Bookkeeper exam is given in three parts, two hours each, and covers adjusting entries, error correction (including bank reconciliation), payroll, depreciation (book and tax), and recording and costing out merchandise inventory.

Sahlein expects the number of CBs to double each year, partly because of the schools and partly because the DOL forecasts both that the demand for full-charge bookkeepers will increase, and that CBs will have the best job prospects.