

# Audio file

[Accountlandia Podcast #2 Lisvan.mp3](#)

## Transcript

00:00:00 Speaker 1(Cynthia)

Welcome to Accountlandia Podcast #2 coming to you from Portland Community College. My name is Cynthia Killingsworth. I'm an instructor and the founder of Accountlandia, and I'm very excited today to have a special guest Lisvan Carvajal Alvarez. He was a former student at Portland Community College and I had him in several classes. He ended up applying for a really special opportunity through Multnomah County, called College to Career Internships and he's going to talk to us about how they work, what his experience was with them. So welcome, Lisvan. Thanks for joining us.

00:00:43 Speaker 2 (Lisvan)

OK. Hello, everybody. Thank you Cynthia for giving me the opportunity to provide some feedback about this experience. I'm really happy to share with the community about everything that I have lived since I start my internship at.

00:01:01 Speaker 1

Everyone always wants to know a person's PCC story. What brought you to Portland Community College, and specifically what made you decide to major in accounting.

00:01:12 Speaker 2

Well, umm, my story is kind of similar to other specs. Students uhm, in a way that I'm originally from Cuba, I came over to the United States seven years ago as a refugee. By the time I landed here in Portland, which was and has been my hometown since then.

I didn't know how to say a word in English. Nothing. Zero word in English, not even. Yes, I start looking for opportunities and school, you know, for as a second language. And all these things since the PCC was so much reportable at the time, was kind of the same reference.

Then I start in level one in the ES ESO classes program at PCC, so I navigate the whole program and after three years I was able to complete it. It was a hard journey because it was very challenging just to incorporate. We can acquire more language skills, but here I am after seven years talking to you and hopefully being able to convey the right message and in the right language skills. That was the first step in time at PCC.

Afterwards I was able to enroll in the career pathway program and then I start my accounting pathway at PCC. Well why accounting because in my home country, Cuba, I got a degree in business administration and when I tried to transfer my skills and my previous knowledge, I found. Now that accounting and business administration where the two fields you know closest related and I start there. With the objective of getting my associate degree in accounting or business administration, they are very similar, but it turns out that I enroll in the career pathway program and I was able to complete one year certificate as an accounting clerk. It took me longer than one year because I combined work with the school. You know, I wasn't able to do full time schooling, but I was able to complete my my accounting certificate. I am taking a break. But uh, I will come back at certain point to try to to complete my associate degree. This is my academic journey in my lifetime right now.

00:03:52 Speaker 1

That is fantastic. And I see you going on for bachelors degree masters degree. Who knows? But you were talking about doing ESOL well and here you are doing a podcast. There was your ultimate test of your success.

00:04:09 Speaker 2

Yeah, I mean, this is absolutely the sense of freedom that I feel, you know, being able to communicate with locals and with native people. It's amazing. And now I am technically bilingual. I can use my English skills just to help other fellows that are not used where I am just to navigate in a smoother way. You know, all the challenging that present to themselves when it comes to communications and all the social life that they feel.

00:04:46 Speaker 1

But it's just amazing giving back. That's wonderful.

00:04:49 Speaker 2

Yeah, that's what I hear today to give back as well.

00:04:53 Speaker 1

Well, we appreciate it. Thank you.

00:04:56 Speaker 1

So how did you find out about the Multnomah County College to Career internships? And maybe you could talk about how they work, and then we'll go into your specific internship, but in general how they work?

00:05:09 Speaker 2

Well, as a normal life and like you know, most of individuals. And while I was doing a school. I was trying to get better jobs. And I tried to to to use my my accounting skills to land in accounting jobs. But then the dilemma came up when I tried to apply for jobs. I found out that there were two challenges for me. One jobs mostly required high experience in addition to higher education.

I certainly made one of those, but not both at the same time, so I wasn't eligible for many, many, many accounting jobs just because I was doing a school. But having been having experience on the field, right, or I had a certain background. But I didn't have any certificate or any degree in accounting to make me, you know, qualify for that job. It was a very challenging time because I applied on and on and on and on.

It didn't happen and then was when I started looking for internship opportunities in order to combine, you know, and acquire on the field some experience while getting some payment and then, you know, go slower but goes going slower but getting both job and experience while I was completing my programs right?

There was something that I gotta say to the public and all the audience that changed the dynamic in the accounting community at PC and it was the amazing creation of Accountlandia. Yeah, that was a breaking point. That was a breaking through. Thank you to you, Cynthia and anybody that work or and has been working on this fantastic idea in all these.

Years I was before Accountlandia and I have been afterwards, so I can't compare how different was how our opportunities at the time there were. There were just a few. I mean all the content and everything wasn't contained as it is, it wasn't so as informative as it is right now. So, Accountlandia just change all that through Accountlandia, I got the advertisement for the internship at the Multnomah County. I went through the whole process and I applied.

The application itself wasn't challenging because as an intern, they didn't require too much. They understood and they understand and just talking from being on the other side already, they understand that you are not fully prepared or that you don't meet all the qualifications and and educational requirements that a normal position would require from you as a permanent employee. That's one thing for me.

Challenging was creating a cover letter and publishing my resume, which I was able to do it going through our specialist, I remember Nicole, I think it was the the amazing especially help me out with my resume and and working on my cover letter and and then I submit all the paperwork and I got the interview. The interview was OK, the interview challenging every time I try to be myself was honest. I tried to highlight all my skills, you know, not only the technical skills because they were reflected on my resume and the cover letter.

But who I was and what I was bringing to this new work space and it, and it has to do more. Who with who? You are. What? What commitment? You show what determination you show, what they think that is meaningful from there. From then, just to allow you allow you to go there,

it was a very competitive process because they were applicants from all over the state. Even from, you know, Oregon State University and PSU. And I think I was the only PCC student at the time and this is something that I wanted to talk about later but that was the whole process, right. And then I finally got the approval right? I mean it was a super great news to me and and then I start my internship. The internship that I applied to was in the County Management Department in the Division of Recording, Taxation and Assessment.

00:10:25 Speaker 1

So property taxes probably, right?

00:10:28 Speaker 2

Yes, this is the division and the department who collect all the money that funds the county, the property taxes, property appraisal, passports, license, permit. All those items are run and are managed by this division. I landed in the residential appraiser department. I was assigned to a project which was about evaluating condominiums, parking spots and all these things, and I start from scratch. I was assigned to a mentor and a supervisor.

After two months, as I said at the beginning they offer me just to stay, which is kind. Of a big opportunity that you have there along with other ones, let me tell you how the internship, it's kind of a structure. So first of all when we as a student when we go to this kind of first opportunity we go extremely focus on showing our technical skills to the people we need. We want to let them know how good we are, our accounting skill or how much we are able to learn and develop on the accounting type.

They are not concerned about that. They want to provide to you. They are not demanding from you. And how does it translate in the internship, for example, the internship is a structuring orientation, orientation sessions. It happens every other week or every week. It depends. When you get together with all the interns that are working in the county, there you have speakers. You are introduced to programs you have. You have taught how to write your resume, how to prepare for your interviews, how to do cover letters and all your supervisor allow you to go. This is part of the program.

They know how every single supervisors that work there, they know how the program runs and they they are aware of that. You are not gonna be strictly working all the time on their on your project. Your project is a reason for you to be there. But what it makes more sense for them is for you to get prepared. They are preparing you right? So orientation section you have peer-to-peer section when you interact with other interns and just to get input from their experience you getting signed information you create connection, you network a lot and you get enrolled with other programs you meet county employees. It's super interactive and it's super good for you to to make connections for you to to create, you know, future future network. That's another.

Thing, you have assign through a pool that you run. You are assigned to a mentor. This mentor is able to meet you as many times as you need just to answer technical question, just to lead

you through the potential pathway you can follow what specialties in the county or in the discipline you are studying for are available or are good. Or what other opportunities related to to accounting, you can go for. Without strictly work in an accounting environment, let's say behind a computer in a parallel for eight hours, right, there are so much more. This is governmental level. This is not, you know, private sector or accounting firm. Here accounting is more about budgeting.

This summer is more about evaluation. These kind of things, at least in the department that I was working in. It's not about auditing or it's about other accounting skills. What's really important at the time among all these good things that the internship provide.

The payment was very generous, even in a permanent job, I was able to get at highest paid as I got in this internship. It meant a lot financially to me. You know, it was a relief. I was able to focus because I was able to cover all my needs and my expense. Keep doing my school and being very committed to to complete my project at the accounting.

This is the how the county internship is structured and most of the take away that I got from from my experience in the in those two months.

00:15:41 Speaker 1

Oh, there's just so much I wanted to shine a light on what you said because someone listening to that may be going "This is too good to be true." Because, like you said, there's a tendency to think you have to bring all these skills and knowledge to the workplace, but what this program is about is building community. Multnomah County is trying to build their community and part of building the community is having people in government that represent the community and are there for the community.

So, that is their primary objective. Everything I'm hearing you say, everything that you see on the website and the videos and the information, that is first and foremost. So, they're looking to hire those people first and then support you as you continue to build your technical expertise whatever way you choose to continue your education, that you have the pay to do and that you have the mentors to help guide you and answer your questions.

You have the community of peers, of your fellow interns that become your class. So fantastic. I love the model.

00:16:52 Speaker 2

And it is real and you are listening from a person that was there and it's still there because I'm now. I'm currently working from there.

Other thing that I would add that is the amount the flexibility for you to take over other activities and complete other programs and from other project. This is an institutional community oriented. Their focus is the well-being of the community and to provide the best resources from the people in need and low income people and people that are struggling in the community part of

the reason that made me decided to stay beside the the that I really like the profession. I really want to keep going where I am the community or they they gave me the opportunity to directly work for that Community. The amount of voluntary jobs and all that I have been able to accomplish on the community.

It's being the most fulfilling thing that I have experienced in my life. The most recent example is that during the the cold weather condition that we faced right to wait two years ago. There were a number of shelters activated for people who weren't able to afford a warm place to be and and or or or or security or and, and we were given the opportunity to go there as a staff taking care of that people, feeding them, welcoming them, looking out for them, providing resources for them. And I remember myself driving in all these bad weather conditions where the roadway were very bad to drive on and I was committed to do that.

I went. I was able to see how my effort, my work impact others life. Other people that didn't have resources didn't have anywhere to go. They were struggling and I was thinking for a minute. Could you imagine these people on the county provided from them? And I was there to support.

00:19:23 Speaker 1

It makes you so proud to be part of an organization like that. You feel like you found your home, don't you? I can see that.

00:19:30 Speaker 2

Absolutely. Absolutely. And it's there were more opportunities for me to support the community. I remember for example, when I'm.... I'm sorry, I'm kind of going out of the line of the conversation, but it's important because I know there are a lot of people out there that care about the community and able just to step forward. I'm trying to work for the county because of that reason.

I remember in back in the summer when the the heat wave was here was impacting our community. I was. I was allowed to call the vulnerable residents on my community to checking on them to ask them what they needed. If they need the the the basic just to survive. Just to handle the the the heat situation and all these things and people show so much appreciation that a county employee called them just to check in. This is overall what we are here about to care about others and use what we know. Just to put it to work for others. So far an amazing opportunity and there was an extension on the internship and it was part of elsewhere.

00:20:47 Speaker 1

So, I don't think you strayed at all because I think our conversation today is about more than accounting It's about community and it's about the opportunities and organization like Multnomah County and how people within their community serve each other.

What advice on that note? What advice would you give applicants? I'm going to be sharing this on Accountlandia. I'm going to be reaching out to our Panther Works Job board and our career

specialist to get this out here for other students beyond just accounting. It looks like the orientation sessions will be in March, so I will be sharing that through Accountlandia and then the applications will run into April. What advice would you give to our applicants?

00:21:33 Speaker 2

First advice is for accounting students overall is that it's a big deal just to combine the education part with experience on the field, just to go growing in on both sides, even when you go slower, you are rounding and shaping a better asset for the job market. That's my first piece of advice.

Secondly, when you go to the application, it is hard process, but you get some help with the account with the PCC specialist that can help you. Just working on your resume and your cover letter. That's not the most important thing because at the end you are able to write down everything that you have work and on and everything you have accomplished in life that could make you a good candidate. When you go to the interview beside to follow all the protocols and all the standards and all the amazing thing that we are taught to do. Be yourself, show who you are from the heart. Those people know they are in front of a different individual. They know that. And then when you finally go through and ensure all the PCV applicants have everything just to be an intern for them, Multnomah County.

Once you go there trying to learn as much as you can but know about the technical stuff in first place know about how to interact and work in a workplace, know how to connect with others, learn how the culture is. Try to make all the connections you want and you can and then decide if you want an extension. You have the opportunity to ask to your, to your supervisor for an extension. They will be very happy if you wanted to land as a full time employee with them.

00:23:44 Speaker 1

SO last question. Next steps for you?

00:23:48 Speaker 2

First I decided that this is what I want to spend my professional life from now on till I get retired so I feel very happy being an employee for the county, but I need to complete certain requirement just to grow my opportunities and be able just to get better jobs and the first steps are to become in a certified appraiser because the department that I work in, it works a pricing and valuating properties for them to apply the property taxes and collect the money. But before I need to get the certification and working on it, I'll probably come back to PCC to take some real estate classes because they are prerequisites requisite, and then after that certification I will just be able to work as a certified pricer and go.

From there, you know, once you introduced the study and the school in your life, you never stop doing that. You always find something else to go for and you always try to add more and more to educational pathway and step up, step up and step up. It's an endless pathway.

00:25:08 Speaker 1

A student of life for life. You may not be in any more of my accounting classes, but it would be really great to see you back at PCC.

00:25:18 Speaker 2

Yes, absolutely. But let me tell you this. I owe something to my mom. I promise her that a certain point, even after retirement, I was, I was going to complete my associate degree at least that so it will happen, you know? Hopefully sooner than later. But I will come back.

I mean PCC as an institution share the same core values, the same mission and vision or very similar than what we have in our institution. So for me, go back to PCC is to stay at home. I appreciate that too much, I mean. Very grateful for having the opportunity to meet PCC at first when I didn't know how to say a word in English.

00:26:09 Speaker 1

It's the PCC story. It's beautiful and you told it beautifully too Lisvan. Thank you so much for joining me today.

00:26:18 Speaker 2

Thank you again for having me the opportunity I feel like in terms of giving back, that was something that I really needed to do sharing with you who are so committed with this community. It's a pleasure for me to share.

00:26:34 Speaker 1

Thank you.