At the beginning of each new year, many USU students and members of the community turn to the School of Accountancy at the Huntsman School for help with filling out tax returns. Through Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), a program where the IRS partners with people willing to serve others to help get taxes done, Huntsman students assist USU students and members of the Cache Valley community through this tax process. On average, USU VITA has generated over $850,000 in tax returns and refunds.

“One of the cool things about having a VITA site at a university is that it’s a win-win; students that are attending the university get the help with situations that are unique to the fact that they are attending the university,” said Bonnie Villarreal, director of the accounting graduate program and a tax professional who helps run VITA each year. “But also the volunteers, who are often studying things like income tax, get real-world experience to supplement the classroom experience.”

This service is especially valuable to international students. Because each country has different rules for filing in the U.S., Huntsman accounting students specialize in learning each country’s unique rules.

Professor Villarreal estimates that the student volunteers file approximately 250 international returns and 500 U.S. returns each season.

“I enjoy VITA because I enjoy meeting students and helping them understand how the tax code affects them,” said Katrina Nieveen, a Master of Accounting student. “VITA also provides an opportunity for me to learn from my classmates and directly apply what I’m learning in the classroom to helping others.”

VITA is sponsored at USU by Beta Alpha Psi, the International Accounting Honors Association.