



WINTER/SPRING 2009

Building Boom



MARY:

When I became dean of the School of Accounting in 2006, I had more than four years of experience at Golden Gate University as dean of the School of Taxation, I had led a variety of new programmatic initiatives as associate dean during a six-year period, and I had been teaching graduate taxation students for more than a dozen years. I was prepared to take on the new challenge of invigorating our accounting programs, but I did not fully expect to be reporting to you that we have made so much progress in so little time. Pleasant surprise (which took a lot of hard work by many): a building boom!

We have revamped our master-of-accountancy (MAc) curriculum, so it is the most relevant it can be; added stellar new faculty (meet just one example, Lisa Slater, on p. 3); created an advisory board of experienced, high-level professionals to guide our growth and development; launched an Expert Lecture Series; started this newsletter for alumni, friends and firms; initiated a full-time day MAc cohort program in 2007 and seen its enrollment increase 25 percent in 2008; and increased our connections with the professional community (see “Casting a Wide Net” on p. 3). And we are proud to be launching our first specialty certificate in forensic accounting beginning this trimester, January 2009.

Building this certificate program from scratch in a three-month period required rapid response from forensic-accounting experts — designing a curriculum outline, then flushing out specific course topics, learning outcomes, class schedules and learning-assessment vehicles. It’s like we built a building. Think of it this way: The architects and engineers (meet one of them, Caroline

Van Alst, on p. 2,) rolled up their sleeves, put on hard hats and work boots, dug the foundation, framed the building, painted and moved in the furnishings.

My thanks to all the advisers (see “Good Advice” on p. 3) who made the idea of a forensic-accounting certificate real. We could not have done it without them, and Golden Gate University’s School of Accounting is now the leading Bay Area university at the forefront of this specialized educational offering — towering above the rest (I couldn’t resist!).

If you’d like to know more about our certificate in forensic accounting, including course descriptions, program offerings and class schedules for spring trimester 2009, please visit www.ggu.edu/accounting. Classes start Jan. 7, 2009.

MARY CANNING (JD 81, LLM 82), DEAN

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CAROLINE VAN ALST

Caroline F. Van Alst (MAc 02) is a detective of sorts, specializing in forensic accounting at Hemming Morse Inc., where she has worked for the past 16 years and is currently a director in the Litigation and Forensic Consulting Services Group. “I get to help the wronged,” Van Alst says. “The work is much like solving a puzzle, where I gather the pieces to show the picture to a judge, jury or mediator. You also have to understand your audience and the level of sophistication required for your testimony. I just recently testified at my first jury trial. It was ... much like teaching a class. In high school, I was a swimming teacher and a ski instructor, and those experiences really helped me in the courtroom.”

“THE MAC PROGRAM AT GGU GAVE ME THE FLEXIBILITY TO TAILOR THE PROGRAM TO MY PROFESSION. I TOOK A FANTASTIC MERGERS-AND-ACQUISITIONS CLASS AND A CLASS ON BUSINESS VALUATIONS, WHICH ARE SUBJECT AREAS PARTICULAR TO MY FIELD.”

Van Alst grew up in New Jersey and went to college in Los Angeles at the University of Southern California. In 1990, she moved to San Francisco and worked as a compliance auditor for the Teamsters Pension Trust Fund, where she uncovered ways in which employers avoided paying fringe benefits to the unions. It was here she discovered her interest in investigative accounting.

While at Hemming Morse, Van Alst came to GGU to pursue her MAc degree and broaden her accounting knowledge. “I chose GGU because it had a great reputation and was close to my office,” she says. “The MAc program at GGU gave me the flexibility to tailor the program to my profession ... I took a fantastic mergers-and-acquisitions class and a class on business valuations, which are subject areas particular to my field. During the program, I worked full-time, took one or two classes each semester and obtained my degree after three years.”

Van Alst received the Edmund Celeski Outstanding Graduate Award at GGU and is currently giving back by helping to develop the School of Accounting’s forensic-accounting certificate program.

When not ferreting out fraud, Van Alst spends time at home and in Lake Tahoe with her husband and two young daughters. She also enjoys construction and remodeling, and always has a project of some kind under way. —Kate McNulty

Honor Roll of Donors

My heartfelt thanks to all our School of Accounting alumni and friends who made a gift to the school during the 2008 fiscal year (July 1, 2007, to June 30, 2008). —MC

\$20,000 or more
Bruce F. Braden, 73

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All gifts, no matter the size, make a difference. Due to space constraints, the printed Honor Roll of Accounting Donors includes those who gave \$250 or more. To be included in the 2009 Honor Roll of Donors, please make your gift before June 30, 2009, at www.ggu.edu/giving.

GOOD ADVICE

Thank you to the School of Accounting’s forensic-accounting advisers, whose tireless efforts made GGU’s new certificate program a reality:

Burr, Pilger Mayer: Curtis Burr
(BA 74, MBA 76)

Glenn & Dawson: Don Glenn

Hemming Morse Inc. CPAs:
Vanessa Hill, Monica Ip,
Matthew Lombardi, Greg Regan,
Paul Regan (MS 79),
Caroline Van Alst (MAc 02)

Matson, Driscoll & Damica:
Dickson Grier

Stuart Weil, JD, CPA

Meet the Teacher



School of Accounting Visiting Assistant Professor Lisa Slater (MAc 98) isn’t just teaching in the master-of-accountancy (MAc) full-time day cohort program in San Francisco; she’s teaching a new course she designed and built herself, which she taught for the first time as an adjunct faculty member last year. Required for all MAc students, Communication and Analysis of Financial Information for Accountants (ACCTG 351C) focuses on the management and strategic-planning context of financial information and its communication by accountants. Slater brings in expert guest speakers on technical topics, demonstrates financial modeling tools, and requires students to design automated management commentaries, and set up forecast models and demand plans.

“This course is the closest thing to an art class for accountants,” Slater says. “We use display and design techniques, including colors and fonts, to make the numbers more informative.”

Originally from England, Slater earned her master’s in economics from St. Andrews University in Scotland. She used her GGU accounting degree to move from marketing and merchandising to PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP as an auditor, then to Levi Strauss & Co., before becoming the director of finance for Gymboree.

CASTING A WIDE NET

On Friday, Sept. 12, 2008, the GGU School of Accounting partnered with the CalCPA Society’s San Francisco Chapter on Biotechnology and Life Sciences to present “Funding Life Science Companies in Today’s Market.” The event was held at GGU in San Francisco and was also attended by those logging on from their home or office via webcast.

The panel, led by moderator Matthew Gardner (pictured, right), president and CEO of Bay Bio, discussed the challenges and opportunities facing the industry, especially for new start-up firms seeking to go public. Michael Benjamin (pictured, center), partner in the assurance practice of Burr Pilger Mayer’s San Francisco office and CalCPA chapter committee chair, organized the event and facilitated the partnership with GGU.

GGU accounting students interested in biotech and life sciences networked with CPAs during the event and learned firsthand about upcoming issues and expected changes to the industry.

“The School of Accounting is actively seeking to partner with industry and the profession to provide specialized knowledge and information to practitioners and students,”



says Dean Mary Canning (JD 81, LLM 82; pictured, left), adding that the school plans to deliver future events by webcast modes.

GOLDEN GATE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ACCOUNTING NEWSLETTER

ARE YOU IN THE KNOW?

School of Accounting event announcements are sent by e-mail and posted at www.ggu.edu/accounting.

To sign up to receive e-mails about upcoming CPE/MCLE events, please contact accounting@ggu.edu.

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ACCOUNTING

ON COURSE

In addition to required courses, the following electives will be offered during spring trimester:

UNDERGRADUATE

ACCTG 104 Governmental and Not-for-Profit Accounting (SF)

GRADUATE

ACCTG 306 Advanced Issues in Financial Reporting (SF)

ACCTG 311 Fraud Auditing (SF)

ACCTG 313 Performance Auditing (cyber)

ACCTG 372 Introduction to Financial Forensic Accounting (SF)

For a full schedule of course offerings, visit course listings at www.ggu.edu/schedule.