

FIU

Business

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School of Accounting
Ledger



INSIDE:

**Building Quality
Serving the Community
Staying Connected**

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A message from the chair of the School of Accounting Advisory Board

“Hit the Ground Running,” a strategy framed by FIU’s new president, **Mark Rosenberg**, reflects many of the strengths that make the School of Accounting among the nation’s best—including our ability to provide affordable, high-quality education.

Faculty research continues to be selected for publication in leading academic journals, an achievement that we believe validates the efforts of **Sharon Lassar**, the school’s director. She is committed to hiring, supporting and retaining research-focused faculty and is keenly aware of the role the school plays in developing business leaders.

Reduced hiring and greater competition for available opportunities remain a challenge for our students. Our program’s role is clear: to develop world-class graduates ready to enter the job market, immediately perform at a high level and look beyond our local market. To increase their options, we will expand the school’s recognition—throughout the country and abroad.

Efforts by the board and the school have borne fruit. Dr. Rosenberg’s leadership will continue to foster and reward our entrepreneurial and innovative spirit. This support prepares us well for the challenges ahead.

Mario de Armas (BACC '85)
Market Managing Partner, Florida
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP

The *School of Accounting Ledger* is a publication of the College of Business Administration at Florida International University. Its purpose is to inform our accounting alumni, supporters and friends in the business and academic communities about our AACSB International-accredited School of Accounting, about our accomplishments and about people and organizations who are committed to our efforts.

EARNED EXCELLENCE



THE BEST BUSINESS SCHOOLS IN THE WORLD
THE BEST ACCOUNTING PROGRAMS IN THE WORLD

*Inside front cover: Several of this year's
scholarship winners*

Letter from the School of Accounting director

Over the past year, the School of Accounting has experienced an exciting mixture of continuity and new initiatives.

Undeniably, the economy is affecting our students and many of our most loyal employers. However, the picture for our graduates remains stable; although some long-standing employers have cut back their hiring, new ones have begun to recruit from the school.

Also, some companies hire our graduates for prestigious leadership development opportunities outside South Florida. **Jose Caballero** (MACC '07, BACC '06, BBA '03), profiled in this issue, has completed one with Johnson & Johnson and is now based in California. **Carla Rogers** (BACC '09), **Felix Jimenez** (BACC '09) and **Ligia Espinosa** (BACC '08) have followed the path to Georgia-Pacific Corporation in Atlanta paved by **Joseph Salinas** (BACC '07).

More undergraduates participated in case study competitions, one of the forms of experiential learning and interactive educational experiences we offer. The most recent xTax case competition, sponsored by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), drew eleven teams of five students representing the school, and for the first time included students from Miami Dade College.

Undergraduates played an active role in two outreach programs during the year, part of our effort to encourage promising students to enter the major. We hosted two events co-sponsored by the Florida Institute of Certified Public Accountants (FICPA), Ernst & Young and Coca Cola Puerto Rico Bottlers: the two-day Accounting Careers and Money Program (A.C.A.M.P.) and the five-day Minority Summer Residency Program (MSRP). In 2010, we will be the first in the United States to host a program, modeled on MSRP and co-sponsored by FICPA and PwC, for community college students planning to transfer to a four-year institution. Undergraduates also participated in the IRS's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. In 2009, 31 students helped low-income earners complete their tax forms; in 2010, 51 did so.

Graduate enrollments remain strong. Each year, three groups in Miami and one in Mexico enter our Master in Accounting (MACC) program. The MACC-Mexico pairs the college with the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM), one of Latin America's leading business schools. Graduates have a master's degree in accounting from both universities. The MACC-Mexico has attracted audit partners, senior managers and chief financial officers. The Big Four accounting firms, accounting personnel from Fortune 500 companies and ITAM faculty members seeking to improve their knowledge of U.S. accounting standards and practices are all represented.

We continue to admit two groups annually into our Executive Master of Science in Taxation program and our Certificate in Foundations of Accounting and Auditing. The one-year certificate program—for students with a Bachelor of Business Administration but no accounting background—gives them the knowledge and skills to enter the accounting profession or a master's program. Because our certificate holders succeed in obtaining accounting jobs, the program qualified as a retraining program: unemployed students can apply for South Florida Workforce vouchers that will pay up to \$10,500 of their tuition.

The quality of our faculty is apparent in the national attention our research and publications have garnered. To enhance our research efforts, we developed a bi-weekly faculty research workshop. In 2009, we participated in the second South Florida Accounting Research Conference and hosted the third in 2010.

As always, alumni are critical to our success. School of Accounting Alumni Affinity Council members launched a mentoring program, and we accepted nominations for the inaugural "Alumni of the Year" award, to be presented at our 2010 Awards Banquet, hosted by the school in conjunction with Beta Alpha Psi and ALPFA at FIU.

Sadly, we learned of the loss of two friends. Albert Morrison Jr., co-founder of Morrison, Brown, Argiz & Farra LLP, died on December 31, 2009. Our business complex includes the Morrison, Brown, Argiz and Farra, LLP Classroom, and the school has an endowed Morrison, Brown, Argiz & Farra, LLP Professorship. The firm also is the lead sponsor for the Entrepreneurship Hall of Fame ceremony for 2010-2015. **Doria Bonham-Yeamon** died on March 25, 2007. She joined the Marketing Department in 1973, transferring to the School of Accounting in 1979, where she taught business law until her 2001 retirement.

Sharon Lassar
Director
School of Accounting



Faculty members win IFRS curriculum development grant.

In the absence of relevant textbooks, the curricular changes needed to prepare students for the likely adoption of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) in the United States poses many challenges. PricewaterhouseCoopers Charitable Foundation's "IFRS Ready" awards recently went to 15 proposals related to curriculum development. **Stephen Lin, Abhijit Barua** and **John Wang** won a \$30,000 grant to fund their proposal "Integrating IFRS in both accounting-major undergraduate and Master of Accounting programs at Florida International University."

Workshops support research efforts.

"Bringing in established scholars to work with faculty members and PhD students, provide information on popular topics and help faculty members determine if they are working in the right direction in their own studies is the most important research activity within any academic institution," said Stephen Lin, further noting that a lively agenda of presentations supports and strengthens FIU's focus as a public research university.

Two years ago, Lin decided to start a regular series of seminars, an offering that was absent despite the number of quality schools and researchers in South Florida. He has since organized at least a dozen workshops annually. In addition to scholars from outside the university, faculty members from the School of Accounting present to audiences that span PhD students, every level of professor within the school, members of other departments, such as Finance and Real Estate and col-

Research published in prestigious journals.



Abhijit Barua

Barua achieved that high benchmark, including two accepted for *The Accounting Review*, one of the top three journals in the field.

Both papers deal with the issue of classification shifting, a technique of moving core expenses to different line items in the income statement to mislead stakeholders. Barua wrote one, "Earnings Management Using Discontinued Operations," with FIU colleagues **Steven Lin** and **Andrew M. Sbaraglia**, and the second, titled "Managing Earnings Using Classification Shifting: Evidence from Quarterly Special Items," with co-authors from two other universities.

The research output of faculty members in the School of Accounting is always impressive, with acceptance by premier journals the ultimate validation. Recently, three co-authored papers by **Abhijit**

Accounting Horizons will publish "CFO Gender and Accruals Quality," written by Barua with FIU colleagues **Lewis F. Davidson** and **Dasaratha V. Rama** and **Sheela Thiruvadi** (PhD '08).

"We looked at the relationship between women and the quality of accruals," he said. "According to the psychology, sociology and financial literature, women are more risk-averse. We hypothesized that those attributes would hold true among female CFOs, resulting in higher-quality accruals."

The research, based on a 2005 sample of over 1,000 firms, confirmed the hypothesis.

"More than 50% of those entering public accounting are women, yet fewer than 10% of them are in top positions," he said. "However, our study shows that their more conservative and cautious accounting judgments are superior to those of their male counterparts."

leagues from area universities.

Given that faculty members in the School of Accounting have research interests that touch every aspect of the field, Lin solicits recommendations from his colleagues before scheduling the presentations.

In addition, three years ago he launched a research conference with Florida Atlantic University (FAU), which the college hosted. This year, FIU hosted the third offering with FAU and the University of Miami joining in. Two representatives from each institution delivered papers. Lin and FIU colleague **Paul Tanyi** presented on "Market reaction to the potential adoption of International Accounting Standards."

"We need a solid research environment to produce good work, and the workshops and conference FIU hosted help us achieve that goal," Lin said.



Stephen Lin

School of Accounting Refereed Journal Publications

Faculty members have had a number of articles published in premier and high quality journals in the past year. A sampling follows.

Aya Chacar and **Krishnamurthy Surysekar**, "A Survey of New Product Development: Can Decentralization Alone Deliver?," *Review of Business Information Systems*, 13.4 (Fourth Quarter 2009) 79-87.

Lewis F. Davidson, **Kannan Raghunandan** and **John A. Wrieden**, "SEC Comment Letters Related to Internal Control Disclosures," *CPA Journal*, 79.8 (August 2009) 34-37.

Cherie J. Hennig and **Wendy D. Gelman**, "Boulware: What the Supreme Court Failed to Address," *Tax Notes*, 123.7 (May 18, 2009) 910-914.

Robert W. McGee and **Wendy D. Gelman**, "Opinions on the Ethics of Tax Evasion: A Comparative Study of the USA and Six Latin American Countries," *Akron Tax Journal*, 24.0 (2009) 69-91.

Cherie J. Hennig and J. O. Everett, "Congress: How about a Mulligan for the Acceleration Election?," *Tax Notes*, 122.2 (March 2009) 222-226.

Cherie J. Hennig and J. O. Everett, "Reportable Entity Partner Attribution Rules Lack Statutory Authority," *Tax Notes*, 123.1 (April 2009) 85-92.

Blaise M. Sonnier and **Sharon S. Lassar**, "Can the Attorney-Client and Work-Product Privileges Survive the Annual Audit?," *Journal of Corporate Accounting & Finance*, 20.4 (May/June 2009) 9-16.

Walfried M. Lassar, **Sharon S. Lassar** and **Nancy A. Rauseo**, "Developing CRM Strategy in Your Accounting Firm," *Journal of Accountancy*, 206.2 (August 2008) 68-73.

Blaise M. Sonnier and **Sharon S. Lassar**, "Florida Adds Portability to Its Save Our Homes Relief Measure and Inflation Protection for Non-homestead Real Property," *Journal of State Taxation*, 26.6 (September/October 2008) 23-30.

Blaise M. Sonnier and **Sharon S. Lassar**, "The Jelke Built-in Gain Valuation Discount Method: Proceed with Caution," *Taxes - The Tax Magazine*, 87.2 (February 2009) 81-87.

Stephen W. Lin and N. Strong, "Cost of Equity Capital and Accounting Conservatism," *Managerial Finance*, 35.4 (Spring 2009) 325-345.

Stephen W. Lin, E. Henry and **Y. Yang**, "The European-U.S. 'GAAP Gap': IFRS to U.S. GAAP Form 20-F Reconciliations," *Accounting Horizons*, 23.2 (June 2009) 121-150.

A. L.-C. Chan, E. Lee and **Stephen W. Lin**, "The Impact of Accounting Information Quality on the Mispricing of Accruals: the Case of FRS 3 in the UK," *Journal of Accounting and Public Policy*, 28.3 (May-June 2009) 189-206.

Antoinette L. Lynch, U. S. Murthy and T. J. Engle, "Fraud Brainstorming Using Computer-Mediated Communication: The Effects of Brainstorming Technique and Facilitation," *The Accounting Review*, 84.4 (2009) 1209-1232.

Robert W. McGee, "Analyzing Insider Trading from the Perspectives of Utilitarian Ethics and Rights Theory," *Journal of Business Ethics*, 91.1 (2009).

Robert W. McGee, "Antidumping Laws as Weapons of Protectionism: Asian Case Studies," *Law Reviews accredited by ABA and AALA*, 5.1 (Spring 2008) 36-69.

Adam S. Maiga and F. A. Jacobs, "Assessing JIT Performance: An Econometric Approach," *Journal of Management Accounting Research*, 20.5-1 (2008) 47-59.

Adam S. Maiga and F. A. Jacobs, "Extent of ABC Use and Its Consequences," *Contemporary Accounting Research*, 25.2 (Summer 2008) 566-533.

Adam S. Maiga and F. A. Jacobs, "Leadership, Non Financial and Financial Outcomes: The Case of Community Hospitals," *Accounting and the Public Interest*, 9.1 (2009) 166-190.

Adam S. Maiga and F. A. Jacobs, "JIT Performance Effects: A Research Note," *Advances in Accounting*, 25.2 (December 2009) 183-189.

Mai Dao, **Suchismita Mishra** and **Kannan Raghunandan**, "Auditor Tenure and Shareholder Ratification of the Auditor," *Accounting Horizons*, 22.3 (September 2008) 297-314.

T. Vermeer, **Dasaratha Rama** and **Kannan Raghunandan**, "Partner Familiarity and Audit Fees: Evidence from Former Andersen Clients," *Auditing: A Journal of Practice and Theory*, 27.2 (November 2008) 217-229.

H. Huang, **Kannan Raghunandan** and **Dasaratha Rama**, "Audit Fees for Initial Audit Engagements Before and After SOX," *Auditing: A Journal of Practice and Theory*, 28.1 (May 2009) 171-190.

T. Vermeer, **Kannan Raghunandan** and D. Forgione, "Auditor Attestation of Management's Evaluation of Internal Control: Evidence from the Non-Profit Sector," *Research in Governmental and Nonprofit Accounting*, 12.1 (2009) 99-119.

H. Louis, D. Robinson and **Andrew M. Sbaraglia**, "An Integrated Analysis between Accrual Disclosure and the Abnormal Accrual Anomaly," *Review of Accounting Studies*, 13.1 (March 2008) 23-54.

V. Naiker and **Divesh S. Sharma**, "Former CPA Partners on the Audit Committee and Internal Control Deficiencies," *The Accounting Review*, 84.2 (March 2009) 559-587.

Vineeta D. Sharma, V. Kaiker and B. Lee, "Determinants of Audit Committee Meeting Frequency: Evidence from a Voluntary Governance System," *Accounting Horizons*, 23.3 (September 2009) 245-263.

Blaise M. Sonnier, "Analysis of Recent Changes to the Louisiana Tax Code," *Journal of State Taxation*, 26.4 (May/June 2008) 49-54.

Blaise M. Sonnier, "Taxation and the First Amendment Collide in Kentucky: Bellsouth Communications, Inc. et al. v. John Farris, et al.," *Journal of State Taxation*, 27.1 (November/December 2008) 25-28.

Books

Robert W. McGee, *Readings in Business Ethics*, Edition No. 1, (Hyderabad, India: ICFAI University Press, 2008).

Robert W. McGee, *Ethics in International Trade*, Edition No. 1, (Hyderabad, India: ICFAI University Press, 2009).

School of Accounting Scholarships

School of Accounting students benefit from the generosity of professional organizations and companies that support accounting education through scholarship programs. We are pleased to present recipients of awards for the 2009-2010 academic year.

FICPA Educational Foundation

- \$2,000 Barbara S. Coleman
- \$2,000 Christopher J. Houseman
- \$2,000 Ismaris M. Soberon
- \$2,000 Isabel E. Villar
- \$1,000 Gabriela C. Manrique
- \$1,000 Yazmin K. Martin
- \$10,000**

American Woman's Society of CPAs—South Florida Chapter

- \$1,500 Maria de la Luz Zarate

Cuban American CPA Scholarship

- \$1,000 Anabel de la Rosa
- \$1,000 Jacklyn Vazquez
- \$2,000**

Caterpillar Excellence Scholarship

- \$2,500 Yamiris Diaz
- \$2,500 David Truong
- \$5,000**

Deloitte Scholarship

- \$2,500 Marc Sainvil
- \$2,500 Farah Andre
- \$2,500 Farrah Vincent
- \$2,500 Carl Emilcar
- \$10,000**

College of Business Administration

- \$2,000 Farah Andre
- \$2,000 Jamie Lou Calibara
- \$4,000**

Irving & Grace Fantle Scholarship

- \$1,000 Jonathan Doozan

(Continues on page 6)



*Dedication of the Ernst & Young Student Learning Lab. Front row, left to right: **Annabelle Rojas** (MBA '98, BBA '87), assistant dean, advancement, alumni and corporate relations; **Joyce Elam**, executive dean; and **Sharon Lassar**, director, School of Accounting. Back row, left to right: **James C. Kaufman**, **Jose M. Martinez**, **Alvaro R. Florez**, **Oscar Suarez**, **Tim P. LaMacchia**, **Hector Tundidor Jr.** and **Ricardo Gonzalez***

Ernst & Young Student Learning Lab opens.

The generosity of FIU alumni at Ernst & Young, including **Alvaro R. Florez** (BBA '88), **Ricardo Gonzalez** (BBA '95), **James C. Kaufman** (MA '92), **Tim P. LaMacchia** (BBA '85), **Jose M. Martinez** (MACC '96, BACC '93), **Hector Tundidor Jr.** (BACC '92) and honorary alumnus **Oscar Suarez**, combined with a match from their firm and

a state match, resulted in a very generous donation to the Florida International University Foundation, Inc. and named the Ernst & Young Student Learning Lab. The dedication took place on February 13, 2009 with the six donors who spearheaded the effort present. The lab employs student tutors who have earned A's in intermediate accounting courses.

Special Florida Institute of CPAs event returns to FIU.

Each fall, the Downtown Miami Chapter of the Florida Institute of Certified Public Accountants (FICPA) holds its presidential and legislative update meeting. In 2008, the event took place at FIU for the first time; the setting proved so appealing that the organization returned in 2009. In addition to the information disseminated, the gathering also included the awarding of some of the organization's generous scholarships through its Educational Foundation. FICPA solicits applications for the scholarships every January with a March 15th deadline for Florida-resident, fourth- or fifth-year accounting students, with recipients receiving their awards at FICPA chapter meetings in the fall.

Last year, FIU had welcomed the FICPA's then president-elect, Jose Valiente from Tampa, who returned this year as president. Among the other officers attending were Matt Walker, president of the Miami Dade Downtown Chapter, and **Elgin Polo**, president-elect and an adjunct professor in the School of Accounting.

The meeting provided students an opportunity to network with professionals and to actively participate in the FICPA—a 19,000-member professional organization that works to advance the accounting profession. Since 2009, **Sharon Lassar**, the school's director, has served as one of five vice presidents, who, along with the president and president-elect, constitute the FICPA executive committee.

ALPFA secures top awards again.

For the third time, ALPFA named an FIU student “National Student of the Year”—the highest student award given by the organization. **Daniel Zamora**, then a junior majoring in accounting, received the award during the national convention which took place in Boston, Massachusetts in August 2009. Previous winners were **Krystel Ramos** (MACC '08, BACC '07) and **Zameer Upadhy** (BACC '02).

For the seventh consecutive year—each year the awards have existed—ALPFA recognized FIU in two other categories: Zamora also captured the award as “South Region Student of the Year” and ALPFA at FIU was named “South Region Student Chapter of the Year.”

“I am very honored to have received the award on behalf of FIU, which has helped me develop as a person,” said Zamora, who has already served as the student organization’s president.



Daniel Zamora and Manny Espinoza, ALPFA CEO

The awards recognize Zamora and the School of Accounting’s student chapter—the largest student chapter in the country—for having reached an all-time high of 143 members and implementing new events such as Excel workshops and a Florida Institute of Certified Public Accountants (FICPA) panel discussion, to name just two.

Thirty-six ALPFA members attended the conference at which Zamora, **Sasha**



*Members of “The Intangibles,” the winning xTax team, front row from left to right: **Teresa Hernandez, Giselle Arbas and Adriana Ross**; and back row, from left to right: **Ramon Medina and Daniel Lopez***

Cruz, Jovan Dushner, Natalie Gross, Rosmery Osuna and Asia Seuc took part in a KMPG case competition.

Students participate in national xTAX case study competition.

Sponsored by global tax services firm PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), the 2009 xTax case competition drew students from FIU, joined for the first time by students from Miami Dade College. Representatives from PwC and the business school mentored the eleven teams of five students each.

Each team worked through the PwC-provided case study, which focused on financing health care reform for a fictitious country through a series of tax modifications. The presence of the MDC students helped fulfill the requirement that each

five-person team include sophomores, juniors and seniors.

Over a two-week period, the 11 teams developed their case studies. They then participated in interactive presentations with PwC representatives. The presentations were videotaped, and the winning team’s video was submitted to compete with participating universities from across the country.

The judges declared “The Intangibles”—**Giselle Arbas, Teresa Hernandez, Daniel Lopez, Ramon Medina and Adriana Ross**—the winner of the local competition. At the national level, PwC recognized FIU as one of the schools with “the largest improvement in participation” versus a year ago.

Johnson & Johnson case competition enables student to improve array of skills.

One of 10 universities participating annually in the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) national case competition, ALPFA at FIU once again represented the School of Accounting. Team members use SWOT assessment, sales forecasts and financial analysis to evaluate business opportunities in one of J&J’s market sectors; in 2009, participants analyzed information about four options to launch an over-the-counter drug into the Asian market, recommending both the product and the market, and defending their choice before a panel of judges. Members of the 2009 team were **Yasmani Delgado, Jonathan Doozan, Teresa Hernandez, Ramon Medina, Brian Quadros and Eduardo Tapanes. Yvette Hernandez Stanley** (BBA '04), leads the J&J recruitment team that offers the competition at FIU.

Below: xTax at FIU, 2009



School of Accounting Scholarships *(Continued)*

**FICPA Educational Foundation
1040K Scholarship**
\$3,000 Barbara S. Coleman

**Goldstein Schechter Koch Company,
P.A. Scholarship**
\$2,500 Silvia Sosa

**Ocariz, Gitlin & Somerfield
Scholarship**
\$2,500 Michael Caron

Rachlin LLP
\$2,500 Gabriela Manrique

FICPA Broward Chapter
\$1,250 Jovan Dushner
\$1,250 Jaleesa Lynch
\$2,500

**Institute of Internal Auditors—Mi-
ami Chapter**
\$1,000 Ramon Medina

**Moore Stephens Lovelace Ray Bolt
Memorial Scholarship**
\$2,500 Kevin Gonzalez

**Randy S. Greene Memorial
Scholarship**
\$1,500 Yan Valdes

**Angelina Perez Memorial Schol-
arship in Accounting**
\$1,000 Juan Duarte

Penny Sult Memorial Scholarship
\$1,000 Jorge Gonzalez

School of Accounting Scholarships
\$9,000 Kendra Walker
\$6,500 Alicia Garcia
\$6,500 Edison Samway
\$5,000 Lidisbel Martinez
\$5,000 Luis Perez
\$5,000 Samuel Sheckman
\$1,500 William Riccardi
\$1,500 Alejandro Trejos
\$1,000 Leandro Gonzalez
\$41,000

Accounting majors investigate career options.



One of the four groups participating in the “Special Agent Experience” from left to right **Jorge Pena, Gustavo Gross, Jeslin Hernandez, Christopher Houseman, Mina Hosseini** (BACC '09) and IRS Special Agent Geoff Burnham

For the second consecutive year, the school collaborated with the Miami-based Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Criminal Investigation (CI) unit to bring “The Special Agent Experience” to campus, affording participants the chance to get a hands-on feel for forensic accounting.

Students divided into four groups, with each investigating a different financially based criminal case.

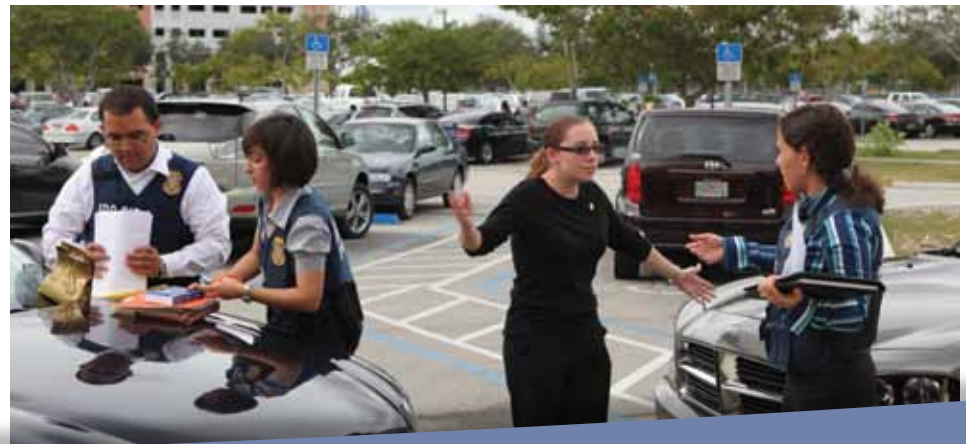
“My team was in pursuit of someone who had allegedly falsified tax returns,” said **Gustavo Gross** (BACC '09, BBA '04). “We were given the lead and followed the case through to conclusion—from research and undercover work to securing a warrant and making an arrest.

The IRS CI team provided us with detailed background information. They brought in sophisticated surveillance equipment, handcuffs and bulletproof vests—everything you would expect to be part of a ‘real’ investigation. It was a fantastic, eye-opening experience.”

According to **Tessie Brunken** (EMST '86, BBA '81), assistant director of student services, the federal government is one of the few employers to increase hiring.

“This experience gives the students a chance to not only learn about the job but also meet with agents and make valuable contacts,” she said. “One of our recent graduates has now joined the CI unit full time and is currently in training.”

Below: **Bertha Ross** (BACC '09), who participated in the event last year when she was an FIU student and is now training as an IRS Special Agent, played the role of a criminal undergoing arrest as part of this year's activity.



Accounting students attend priceless workshop for free.



From left to right: **Rosmery Osuna**, **David Bello** and **Ana Isis Rodriguez**

David Bello, **Ramon Medina**, **Rosmery Osuna** (BACC '09), **Ana Isis Rodriguez**, **Naisla Sabie** and **Daniel Zamora** were among the 89 students from 26 states and Puerto Rico to attend the Accounting Scholars Leadership Workshop, held in May 2009, part of the 40th anniversary of the Minority Initiatives Committee of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA). They participated in sessions on networking, mentoring and techniques to prepare for and pass the CPA exam, plus conducted self-assessments to determine their personality and working style.

"The theme 'CPAs: Embracing a New Era' is telling of the changes on the horizon for the CPA profession and how



George Willie, CPA, Bert Smith & Co. and Sharon Lassar

students can prepare themselves to maximize their talents, knowledge and diverse experiences into becoming successful professionals," said Elizabeth DeBragga, coordinator diversity, work/life and women's initiatives at AICPA.

Sharon Lassar, director, School of Accounting and member of the AICPA's Minority Initiatives Committee, presented "How to Pass the CPA Exam" and participated in a panel discussion on "Life as a CPA." **Zameer Upadhya** (BACC '02), himself an attendee in 2001 and now South Region Director of ALPFA, selected the students.



From left to right: **Daniel Zamora**, **Naisla Sabie** and **Ramon Medina**

Peers and business community benefit from student efforts.

Firms Night, organized by Beta Alpha Psi and Business Industry Night, organized by ALPFA at FIU, brought students and potential employees together for mutual benefit.

"Firms Night was amazing," said **Jacky Gomez**, a Beta Alpha Psi candidate for induction and one of approximately 165 students and professionals who attended the September 2009 event. "Being exposed to so many local, national and global firms is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get my name out there."

"Five students at a time share their résumés and business cards, talk briefly with the representatives

from the firms and then rotate to the next table," said **Albert Tamayo**, president of the chapter, which for the third consecutive year received a "Superior Chapter" designation at the organization's annual conference.



Also in September, ALPFA at FIU put on Business Industry Night, titled "Crossing the Bridge to Success," an event that drew almost 200 students.

Daniel Perron, owner of Perron & Company, who has an impressive record in recruiting, following stints in both public and private accounting, spoke, after which students participated in a mini career fair during which they were able to learn more about the 20 companies that attended.

Left to right: **Vanessa de la Guarda**, **Elsania Galeano** and **Lisbel Garcia**

Two events show high school accounting students what the field holds for them.



Sharon Lassar welcomed the MSRP group and made a presentation.

“We want the brightest students to come into the career and to recognize what FIU has to offer . . . and we want that to occur as early as possible in a student’s life,” said **Tessie Brunken** (EMST ’86, BBA ’81), assistant director of the school’s student services.

Two July events helped make that happen for 54 Florida high school students.

Twenty-one of them participated in the two-day Accounting Careers and Money Program (A.C.A.M.P.), offered in conjunction with the Florida Institute of Certified Public Accountants (FICPA).

They got insights into the life of a college accounting student, thanks in part to the involvement of Beta Alpha Psi; learned job search-related skills; and even played at being traders guided by student interns in the college’s Capital Markets Lab.

The other 33 lived on campus to preview college life and the exciting career opportunities afforded by a degree in accounting during the five-day Minority Summer Residency Program (MSRP), also offered with the FICPA, and supported by ALPFA at FIU members.

Faculty members—including **Sharon**



Laura Sotomayor, Beta Alpha Psi secretary, was one of eight student volunteers during the A.C.A.M.P., held at FIU for high school students.

Lassar, director of the school and a FICPA vice president, and Brunken—presented. Advisory board member and a Royal Caribbean vice president, **Thomas A. Burke** (MACC ’93), arranged a tour of *The Majesty of the Seas* and presentations on private accounting. Ernst & Young, which works closely with the school to develop national opportunities for FIU accounting graduates, hosted a tour of their local offices and exposed students to public accounting.

Clinic benefits students and aspiring business people.

For the past three years, School of Accounting students and students in the College of Law have collaborated to gain hands-on experience while arming individuals with accounting or legal guidance as they implement for-profit and non-profit ideas.

“The College of Law’s Community Development Clinic has helped for-profit businesses such as a beauty salon, a barbershop, clothing stores, music producers, a real estate company, flyer printers, exporters, importers, a daycare facility and an auto

repair company,” said **Tessie Brunken** (EMST ’86, BBA ’81), assistant director of student services.

Clinic participants also have aided individuals in setting up non-profit companies and those applying for tax exempt status for organizations intended to provide cancer support; aid to Haiti, autistic children, foster children, ex-offenders and victims of domestic violence; and for after-school programs and to help stray animals.



Albert Rojas (BBA '74); **Sharon Lassar**, director of the School of Accounting; and **Jorge Flores** (MACC '98)

School hosts rankings celebration.

Alumni gathered at a Bisk Education, Inc.-sponsored event to celebrate *Business-Week* rankings placing the school first in Florida and 18th in the country in 2009. Among the guests, **Richard Perez** (BBA '84), who was president of a predecessor to Beta Alpha Psi and who established the Angelina Perez Memorial Scholarship in Accounting in 2007, attended with his son, a potential future student, who reconnected with friends from his high school as his father did the same with college friends.

Alumni Affinity Council adds value through new mentoring program.

“The goal of our new mentoring program is to establish a relationship between a mentor and a mentee that will last through graduation and hopefully beyond,” said **Fred Campos** (MACC '01, BACC '98), senior manager, transaction advisory services, Ernst & Young LLP, who heads the sub-committee of the School of Accounting Alumni Affinity Council that has fashioned the program and is now promoting it in classes.

According to him, the program’s focus is “not networking. It’s to provide an opportunity for two people to have a frank

talk about school, work and any other issues, and for mentees to hear what mentors say that can help them make better decisions as they plan their careers.”

To give students the maximum choice in finding a mentor matched to their likely career path, the sub-committee is assembling mentors from different backgrounds. All mentors and mentees will gather at a breakfast later in the spring. Organizers plan to have the mentors and mentees meet twice per semester. Following a mentee evaluation in which the students will provide feedback to the sub-committee,

adjustments will be made to improve the offering, including adjusting the frequency of meetings.

Campos is already enthusiastic about the program.

“I never had the chance to be part of a formal mentoring program but I have had mentors informally in business and life,” he said. “I believe in mentoring and I believe the program will be another way the School of Accounting enhances the experiences of its students.”

Kaufman, Rossin & Co. hosts Alumni Day.

Kaufman, Rossin & Co.—one of Florida’s largest independent accounting firms—boasts many FIU alumni, most with degrees in accounting and finance. At Alumni Day, sponsored by the FIU Alumni Association and held at the firm on October 5, 2009, a group of alumni heard updates from **Joyce J. Elam**, executive dean of the business school, and **Sharon Lassar**, director of the School of Accounting. **Steven Berwick** (BACC '74), CPA, a Kaufman, Rossin & Co. principal and a member of the School of Accounting Advisory Board and the President’s Council, welcomed the attendees.



Graduate moves up and out of South Florida.

Being selected for Johnson & Johnson's (J&J) prestigious Finance Leadership Development Program (FLDP) opened the door to new geographies and various accounting positions for **Jose R. Caballero** (MACC '07, BACC '06, BBA '03), who was born, raised and educated in South Florida.

The very competitive FLDP fast-tracks high-potential individuals from top universities to leadership positions within J&J's finance organization. After his first rotation supporting sales and marketing at Cordis Corporation in Miami Lakes, Caballero went to corporate internal audit in New Jersey with assignments in Belgium, Brazil, Peru, Puerto Rico and the United Kingdom. Two California rotations followed: at ALZA Corporation supporting manufacturing operations and currently at Conor Medsystems, a J&J research and development company in Menlo Park. There he controls a multi-million dollar budget for the NEVO stent.

"I engage with functional leaders by managing budgets, forecasting and reporting financials, and valuing potential projects," he said.

Going from being part of a majority population in Miami to



Jose R. Caballero

being in a minority in New Jersey and working with a diverse group in California has expanded his perspective.

"The dynamic challenges are what make this job unique," he said.

He also has enjoyed the presence of FIU alumni **Nicolas Aldrich** (BBA '08), doing an FLDP rotation at Conor, and **Luis Toca** (MBA '99, BBA '96), controller at ALZA.

While Caballero appreciates "South Florida's tight-knit community," his experiences have led him to "encourage FIU graduates to look at opportunities outside the region."

Alumna puts education into practice.

The decade of the 1990s was a busy one for **Vivian Rodriguez** (MACC '92, BACC '91). She completed her Bachelor of Accounting and Master of Accounting degrees, graduated from law school, earned her CPA license and passed the Florida bar. The first decade of the new century, starting in 2001 with her receiving an LLM in taxation and an appointment as a senior attorney with the Office of Chief

Counsel for the IRS, has been just as active, though her focus has shifted from getting her education to applying it in both the tax accounting and legal arenas. Being one of only 250 lawyers certified in tax law by the Florida Bar Board of Legal Specialization and Education gives her ample opportunities to share her expertise.

"I routinely engage in civil litigation, representing the government before tax and bankruptcy courts," said Rodriguez, whose professional growth has enabled her to take on increasingly larger cases.

With her background, it's no surprise that she is a board member-elect to the Junior League of Miami, which she describes as her "other passion." She also stays busy by teaching and serving on the executive boards of the tax section of the Florida Bar, the Florida Association of Attorney-CPAs and the School of Accounting Alumni Affinity Council steering committee.

Rodriguez feels her business degrees prepared her well for the various areas that continue to engage her.

"I wouldn't trade my FIU education for anything," she said. "It's the foundation of my career."

Vivian Rodriguez



Maria Byrd's career takes flight.

For **Maria Byrd** (MACC '99, BACC '95), succeeding has depended on applying what she has absorbed from her experiences.

“What I learned at FIU gave me the ability to tackle my jobs in public accounting with confidence,” she said. “I continue to try to emulate in my own work the teaching methods I observed in my professors.”

She now implements what she learned with the launch of her own company, Figuroa Byrd, CPA. It's ideally suited to her background, working style and interests.

“We provide temporary staffing and support for businesses that need high-level, project-specific support,” she said. “The work offers me a flexible schedule, the challenge of working in different environments and the satisfaction of matching a company's needs with the right talent to achieve their objectives.”

Having her own business also has enabled her to manage time for her home life and to continue her volunteer activities, including for the School of Accounting. As a member of the Alumni Affinity Council, Byrd is leading the “Alumni Resource Guide” project.

“Our goal is to allow alumni to connect online,” she said. “**Gary Opper** (MST '83), managing member, Levie-Opper, LLC, and I have developed a survey for alumni to identify their interest for an online directory listing. The guide will provide a way to connect, to find subject matter experts and to identify ways they would like to be involved with the school.”



Maria Byrd

Alumnus maintains loyalty to School of Accounting from Panama.



Though **Albert Rojas** (BBA '74) spends two-thirds of his time in Panama, he remains devoted to his Miami alma maters, including FIU and his high school. Describing his undergraduate degree—which he began when FIU first opened, completing the program before the university offered a Bachelor of Accounting—as “the base from which I jumped to sales, then to management,” Rojas recently launched a health care insurance company in Panama for overseas retirees.

“Knowing the numbers has made all my career advances easier,” said Rojas, who held a number of positions within AIG over a 24-year period—from internal auditor for Central America and the Caribbean; to administrative posts in Panama; to sales and management positions in El Salvador, among other countries; to president of a joint AIG venture life company in Colombia.

He considers his move from accounting into insurance to be “very common,” noting that one of AIG's presidents had been an accountant.

While he spends one-third of his time in Miami, it is from Panama that his connection to FIU manifests itself most strongly. He hosts FIU faculty, including **Sharon Lassar**, the school's director, on visits and hopes to play a role as FIU expands in Panama.

“Miami's proximity to Panama makes it convenient and inexpensive for students and faculty to travel between the two locations,” he said. “Also, our program's impressive 18th spot in *BusinessWeek's* ‘2009 Ranking of Top Undergraduate Business Programs’ is evidence of our quality and ensures that we can attract excellent students.”

Albert Rojas

Jocelyn R. Flynt (BACC '82) was promoted by Berenfeld Spritzer Shechter & Sheer to principal in the firm's tax practice.

Gary P. Opper (MST '83), president, Approved Financial Corporation and managing member, Levie-Opper, LLC, presented at the school's fall continuing professional education seminar on "Mortgage Fraud: The Crime and Punishment."

Valentin Lopez (BACC '85), managing partner at Lopez and Partners, LLC, won the "Ultimate CEO Award" and was elected to the Property Tax Appraisal Board in Coral Gables.

Mark Fenaughty (MST '87) was promoted to director at Morrison, Brown, Argiz & Farra, LLP.

Manuel del Canal (BBA '91) was named senior vice president and senior market manager of Bank United.

Rafael Garcia (BACC '94) was promoted to partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLP.

Jeremy Ahwee (BACC '95) was promoted to principal at Goldstein Lewin & Co.

Ivan Garces (BACC '95), principal & director of forensics at Kaufman, Rossin & Co., was appointed to the South Florida Chapter of the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners Board of Directors.

Steve Picha (MST '95) accepted a position as tax director at RSM McGladrey, Inc.

Desiree Elias (MACC '96, BACC '95), completed an exploratory internship at BDO Seidman.

Pilar Escandon (MACC '96) accepted a tax manager position at Ocariz, Gitlin & Zomerfeld.

Ana B. Garcia (BACC '96) has accepted a position as internal audit manager of OHL USA, Inc.

John Zamora (MACC '96, BACC '94), partner, Deloitte & Touche, made the *South Florida Business Journal's* "40 Under 40" honorees list. This program recognizes 40 individuals, all under the age of 40, who are proven performers in their respective industries and communities.

Ed Duarte (BACC '98) was appointed president of the Cuban American CPA Association.

Jorge Flores (MACC '98) presented at the school's fall continuing professional education seminar on "Practical Implications of the IPPF."

Erbin Ramirez (BACC '98) was promoted to director at Morrison, Brown, Argiz & Farra, LLP. Ramirez works in multiple industries including health care, securities and telecommunications.

Jose N. Tezanos (BACC '99) accepted an associate attorney position with Fennemore Craig in Phoenix.

Erick Wendelken (BACC '99) was promoted to director at Morrison, Brown, Argiz & Farra, LLP.

Josh Rodriguez (BACC '01) accepted a position as senior manager in corporate accounting with Ryder System, Inc.

Michael Romero (BACC '01) was promoted to controller at Berkowitz, Dick, Pollack & Brant.

Amanda Chrycy (BACC '03) was promoted to manager of audit services at Grant Thornton, LLP.

Brian F. Misiunas (MST '03) was promoted to shareholder with Pinchasik, Strongin, Muskat, Stein & Co.

Roly Cicarelli (MACC '04) of Grant Thornton presented at the school's summer continuing professional education seminar on "Revenue Recognition."

Silka Gonzalez (MACC '05) of Enterprise Risk Management, Inc. presented at the school's summer continuing professional education seminar on "New Information System Audit Trends."

Maria Mendieta (BACC '05) was promoted to senior accountant at Goldstein Schechter Koch.

Microsoft MSN and Internet music community Cyloop have teamed up in an alliance that will have Cyloop offering its content on MSN's portals in Latin America, the U.S. Latin market and the Sympatico/MSN portal in Canada. The strategic alliance was negotiated between MSN and Hoodiny Entertainment Group, the digital entertainment company that owns Cyloop. **JC Morales** (MACC '09, BACC '05) is Hoodiny's vice president of finance and an Alumni Circle member.

Noemi Perez (MACC '05, BACC '02) has transferred from the Miami office of Deloitte & Touche, LLP to be a manager in the firm's Tampa office.

Eric Blanco (BACC '06) of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP presented at the school's fall continuing professional education seminar on "Materiality and Other Considerations Applicable to Integrated and Non-Integrated Audits."

Niska Cazau (BACC '06) was promoted to semi-senior accountant at Goldstein Schechter Koch.

Yaimy Chavez (MST '08) accepted a position as a large and mid-size business (LMSB) IRS agent.

Jovany Cossio (BACC '08) was promoted to semi-senior accountant at Goldstein Schechter Koch.

Stan Jansta (MST '08) of BDO Seidman presented at the school's summer continuing professional education seminar on "Consolidation of Financial Information in Accordance with SFAS 141R."

Shakeel Ramzan (BACC '08) became an audit associate at KPMG, LLP.

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