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We want to know your news!

We’re always eager to recognize our outstanding accounting alumni for their accomplishments! If you’d like to send us your news or have ideas about stories you’d like us to feature, be sure to let us know! E-mail sally.gallion@business.fiu.edu. Thanks!

Errata

A photograph on page 10 of the last issue of the School of Accounting Ledger was misidentified. The photograph is of firm members from Berkowitz Dick Pollack & Brant. The firm name was incorrectly spelled in the article.
As the School of Accounting is like a great football team with a nine and two record,” said Carlos Sabater, Deloitte South Florida and Puerto Rico managing partner, who heads the school’s advisory board. “We are committed to making it the equivalent of a national championship team—that is, one that is famous and that meets those few remaining challenges that keep it from a perfect season.”

The advisory board consists of business leaders who provide practical insight into the school’s curriculum, helping ensure that graduates have the skills they need in the current environment. Members come from a cross-section of the accounting world: national, large regional, and small local firms; industry representatives; public sector practitioners; personnel from the Big Four; and professionals from allied fields, such as law.

Board members have enviable opportunity to fine-tune, not start from scratch.

Fortunately, the board has solid raw material on which to build, including rankings that continue to validate the school’s quality; the consistently high-pass rate on the CPA exam; and the support of Joyce J. Elam, executive dean of the College of Business Administration.

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Antonio “Tony” Giró (MACC ’95, BACC and MIS ’93), senior manager, audit and enterprise risk services, Deloitte, agreed with Sabater that “everything is in place for the school to expand its reputation locally and regionally—an expansion that we see as a strategic objective.”

“We ensure that practice or real-life concerns get flowed through the curriculum,” he said. “Our involvement gives the school a sounding board for ideas and proposed initiatives to address current needs.”

Like a number of board members, Morrie Hollander, partner, business assurance group, Rachlin Cohen & Holtz, LLP, whose firm hires many School of Accounting graduates, brings those real-world concerns into the classroom.

“Other schools struggle to get enough students to fill a class; we have a waiting list,” Sabater said. “Others worry about their graduates getting jobs. All of ours do. That’s the nine and two aspect. To reach championship status, we are working to extend the school’s notoriety, spur fundraising, prompt more corporations to offer internships, support research more, and increase the media’s perception of our professors as a valuable resource.”

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He finds the dialogue between the board and faculty an essential way to keep the school’s stature uppermost in the minds of employers.

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pointing to a different career path for students, necessitating curricular changes to prepare them.

“Post-Enron, there’s more interest in areas like expert testimony, litigation consulting, and business valuation,” he said. “To succeed in these rapidly expanding fields, students need to learn accounting basics. They also must understand the real-world implications of financial statement preparation. I see an opportunity for the curriculum to move beyond mechanics and into the ethical aspects of accounting.”

Attorney José Sirven (BBA ’78), partner, Holland + Knight, credits his accounting major with helping him in his legal career.

“As a business lawyer, I have found my accounting background has helped me because I speak the same language as my business clients, and I can solve legal issues with accounting concepts,” he said. “Law is yet another potential career path for our graduates.”

With the school poised to hire a director who will deepen the school’s relationship with the business community and with input from its advisory board members, a perfect season hovers on the horizon.

Top women students garner scholarships.

Exceptional students receive valuable financial support each year, thanks to the generosity of firms and individuals. Profiles of two of these students illustrate the point.

Graduate student embraces demands of accounting program.

“I am passionate about education,” said Migdalia De Jesus (BACC ’05) currently a student in the Master of Accounting (MACC) program and the 2007 recipient of the Randy Greene Memorial Accounting Scholarship. De Jesus calls herself a “sponge,” wanting to absorb as much learning as possible.

While always interested in accounting, De Jesus’ path to the field was not typical. Her first job, as a travel coordinator for Celebrity Cruise Lines, fed her desire for travel and interaction with people. Following a move to Miami, she became acquainted with the School of Accounting and decided to change course.

She describes the MACC program as “rigorous and difficult,” but revels in the challenge because it makes the reward all the sweeter.

“You can’t study accounting and be ambivalent about it,” De Jesus said. “You have to really want it.”

At the same time, she says that what she loves about the school is its emphasis on balance and on setting priorities. A self-described bookworm, De Jesus explains that it is easy to miss out on other opportunities when you get “too immersed in the books.” For her, having a balance enables her to participate in the Association of Latino Professionals in Finance and Accounting (ALPFA), Golden Key, and Beta Alpha Psi, among others.

She also has parlayed an internship in the school’s controller’s office into a full-time accounting position, giving her an ideal opportunity to apply classroom learning to on-the-job responsibilities.

While she appreciates the monetary value of her award—which will help pay for her graduate work—she says the real gratification comes from knowing that the scholarship committee found her accomplishments worthy of recognition.
Reception brings new School of Accounting faculty members and community together.

As part of its focus on strengthening the relationships between the School of Accounting’s faculty and the area’s business community—including the many alumni who have opted to stay in South Florida—the school hosted a “New Faculty Reception” early in the fall, 2006, semester to welcome five new faculty members. Though the atmosphere was relaxed, the event was designed to fulfill a number of serious objectives.

“We wanted to provide opportunities for our professors to mingle with key individuals from area accounting firms and vice versa,” said Mireya Fonseca (BBA ’00), assistant director, external relations and resource development, who focuses her attention on the School of Accounting.

Along with the “Meet and Greet Luncheon” and other subsequent events, the gatherings have enabled professors to become more familiar with the firms so they can guide students toward good career options.

“We also wanted area firms to get to know our faculty and programs better,” Fonseca said. “This familiarity will help them recognize the high quality background we provide to our students and give them contacts for expertise among our faculty.”

Guests included adjunct professors, members of the school’s advisory board, and representatives of Rachlin Cohen & Holtz, LLP; Ernst & Young; KPMG, BDO Seidman; Kaufman, Rossin & Co.; Pricewaterhouse; and Berkowitz Dick Pollack & Brant. Executive Dean Joyce J. Elam; Annabelle Rojas (MBA ’98, BBA ’87), director of external relations and resource development, who suggested the event; Christos Koulamas, interim director of the school; and Fonseca represented the college.

Pictured below from left: Juan Carlos Morales, (KPMG), Nicole Mannarino, (Rachlin Cohen & Holtz), Sharon S. Lassar, associate professor, and Ray Saller, (Rachlin Cohen & Holtz)

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New faculty members continue school’s tradition of research distinction.

The School of Accounting and the College of Business Administration expect significant research from faculty members. Professors’ expertise—validated by the acceptance of their work in an array of academic and practitioner journals—brings credit to the school, raises the stature of these individuals in their professional organizations, and draws the attention of members of the media when they need expert insights into accounting matters.

New faculty in the School of Accounting—among them Sharon S. Lassar, associate professor, and Kathryn J. Jervis, assistant professor—are carrying on the school’s tradition of producing highly respected research.

Sharon S. Lassar enjoys solving complex puzzles.

For a person who is “very curious by nature,” and who “likes to pick apart complex issues,” the U.S. tax code offers Sharon Lassar a limitless repository of subjects.

Lassar gets ideas by reading about transactions—such as mergers and acquisitions, charitable requests, and spin-offs—in the Wall Street Journal, for example, and follows legislation carefully. She then prepares articles with the practitioner in mind.

“Frequently, a new tax law will have a loophole, which makes for interesting research,” she said. “Also, I enjoy looking at major new tax laws while they are being debated in Congress.

"Frequently, a new tax law will have a loophole, which makes for interesting research."
—Sharon S. Lassar, associate professor, School of Accounting

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I examine implications practitioners may contend with when they see the final versions as well as the possible court cases and administrative consequences.”

Author of about a dozen articles, Lassar currently is watching several areas, including pensions and charitable contributions.

“Practitioners will need to deal with new provisions in the ‘Pension Protection Act,’ which will affect a number of issues beyond pensions,” she said. “The act encourages charitable contributions while also tightening substantiation and valuation requirements for many donations. Also, new operating rules for tax-exempt entities will have a variety of serious repercussions.”

Working in concert with other researchers—in part because she appreciates multiple sets of eyes trained on the complicated subjects she examines—is one form of dialogue related to her research. Another is to bring the ideas into the classroom to discuss with her students.

*Kathryn J. Jervis applies social and political interests to accounting research.*

After performing one audit for a non-profit organization, Kathryn J. Jervis was hooked on the subject of non-business reports—how they’re developed and how they’re used.

“Financial statements tell a story, and people have to understand the story,” she said. “Board members of non-profits may not be trained in reading the reports, yet they have to make informed decisions on the basis of them.”

Her research has led her to explore non-profit hospitals, untangling the complex manner in which they use funds and situations in which they could lose their non-profit status as a result of the ways they handle accounting information.

“Financial statements tell a story, and people have to understand the story.”

—Kathryn J. Jervis, assistant professor, School of Accounting

With eight publications to her credit, Jervis closely watches contemporary events and considers the broader implications—such as social ones—that grow out of accounting practices.

“I try to understand the real world by reading the paper and talking to people,” she said. “I’m interested in politics, political theory, and the ramifications of public policy decisions. For example, an organization has to report its finances, yet it may not reveal everything investors want to know. These social and political aspects intrigue me and give me insights into how different organizations work.”

While their emphases may vary, both professors share their interest in the human elements behind tax and accounting issues.

“It’s fascinating to look at the human nature revealed in the creation and exposure of loopholes,” Lassar said, while Jervis sees an “inextricable connection between research and teaching, as I consider the same questions, such as ‘how will people use this information, how will it affect them, and what does it mean for them?’”
Building Quality

Mireya Fonseca applies her marketing and development savvy to her alma mater.

Combine a major in marketing with marketing experience for a brokerage firm with development work and research in the area of central advancement and you get Mireya Fonseca (BBA '00), assistant director, external relations and resource development. She joined the College of Business Administration in July, 2006, and is focusing her talents and efforts on the School of Accounting.

“As my jobs alternated between solitary positions, such as research, and more people-oriented ones, such as marketing, I realized that I wanted to be in a situation in which I would have a lot of interaction,” Fonseca said.

Her role gives her ample opportunity to engage with others, while she puts her knowledge of marketing and development to good use: helping accounting students.

“I know how hard it is to be a student who wants to go to a conference but doesn’t have the money, or whose educational future depends on a scholarship where there might not be one,” she said. “I see the funds I raise being used to support student organizations and scholarships as well as the school’s operating expenses.”

—Mireya Fonseca, assistant director, external relations and resource development

She also has handled logistics for events—including the “New Faculty Reception” and the first “Meet and Greet”—aimed at drawing the school closer to local accounting and financial professionals for mutual benefit.

After two years of doing research in her most recent job, Fonseca realized she wanted a different pace and she asked herself, “Where can I get it?” Happily for her and the college, “Florida International University” was her answer.

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Student leaders organize and participate in professionally enriching activities.

Twenty-one companies and several hundred business students attended the fall, 2006, Business Industry Night—a mini career fair that enables recruiters and business students to learn more about each other. The FIU Accounting Association (FIU-AA) organizes the semi-annual event, led by the president-elect and with help from Beta Alpha Psi. In addition, Beta Alpha Psi took the lead on “Meet the Firms,” which brings accounting students into contact with public accounting firms.

Joyce J. Elam, executive dean of the College of Business Administration, spoke at Business Industry Night, as did Krystel Ramos, president-elect at the time, and Zameer Upadhya (BACC ’02), president, Association of Latino Professionals in Finance and Accounting’s (ALPFA) Miami Chapter and South Region director, with the majority of the time given over to information-gathering and networking.

At “Meet the Firms,” Dean Elam introduced the firms and students rotated among tables staffed by representatives, who gave them personal attention and career insights.

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First-ever Finance Conference establishes high bar for future events.

The FIU-AA teamed up with the professional business fraternity, Alpha Kappa Psi, to host a finance conference that drew between sixty and eighty attendees to student-moderated sessions on careers in investments, banking, credit unions, corporate finance, and accounting. Each session included highly placed officials from organizations such as Ameriprise, SunTrust Banks, Inc., and Johnson & Johnson.

Michael Jadoo

Michael Jadoo, director of professional development for Alpha Kappa Psi, handled the logistics and fundraising responsibilities, along with Giovanni Rondon, special events coordinator, FIU-AA.

“Our purpose was to enlighten students about the finance industry,” Jadoo said. “Except for internships, there are few ways in Miami for students to learn about jobs and how to prepare to enter the field.”

Thanks to the success of the inaugural conference—which also included two presentations and networking—students plan to continue to offer it, either annually or each semester.
executive boards, and Beta Alpha Psi held its initiation ceremony for pledges. Alejandro Euse made the arrangements, and Dean Joyce J. Elam, who holds one of the few chairs available on the organization’s national board of directors, spoke.

Students expressed their gratitude for many forms of support—including the college’s funding of 22 FIU-AA students to attend the ALPFA annual meeting in Texas in August, along with additional funding from Deloitte. They also acknowledged their appreciation to Christos Koulamas, the school’s interim director, and faculty advisors Kenneth Henry (FIU-AA) and C. Delano Gray (Beta Alpha Psi), among others.

Local community regularly calls upon faculty expertise.

When the South Florida Chapter of the AICPA, among other groups, wants a well-versed speaker on a timely or controversial accounting topic, it need look no further than the School of Accounting. C. Delano Gray, instructor and faculty advisor to the school’s chapter of Beta Alpha Psi, is one faculty member who willingly volunteers to share his expertise, offering continuing professional education (CPE) through the College of Business Administration’s Center for Accounting, Auditing, and Tax Studies (CAATS).

“We use faculty from the college as a resource as often as we can because they provide our members with quality CPE from knowledgeable and enthusiastic presenters,” said Pat Green, CPA of the firm Kratish, Teitelbaum & Green, P.A., and currently chapter president.

The audiences gain from learning the latest about a variety of issues, but benefits accrue to the presenters and the school as well.

“I find these presentations valuable because they help the discourse among professionals on current—sometimes contentious—subjects,” said Gray, who has made eleven CPE presentations over the past several years and functions as a voice of moderation when the subject prompts heated debate. “Also, I think the school is the best at what we do and through these CPE opportunities, I can underscore that fact.”

Gray maintains copies of his presentations online at business2.fiu.edu/1048733/www.
Executive and professional education accounting-related courses deliver high-quality and convenience.

Executive and Professional Education (EPE) in the College of Business Administration offers a wide range of short, intense courses to help professionals stay sharp in accounting and finance. Financial Plans & Budgets and Accounting & Finance for Non-Financial Managers are just two of them, both delivered recently on the University Park campus.

In early January, 2007, eighteen participants attended Financial Plans & Budgets, taught by John Zdanowicz, professor in the college’s Finance Department.

“I got a different view of assets and inventory and how to budget better—information I can apply in my job by preparing better for future expenses.”

—Jesus Banal, director of operations, AAR Landing Gear Services

“I wanted to obtain a better understanding of finances in order to help with planning and budgeting,” said Jesus Banal, director of operations, AAR Landing Gear Services, who was taking an EPE program for the first time and who now plans to sign up for others. “I got a different view of assets and inventory and how to budget better—information I can apply in my job by preparing better for future expenses.”

Augusto Medina, service director, General Electric, a veteran of EPE courses, having already taken Writing for Business and Presentation Skills for Managers and who plans to take more, felt the program met his expectations.

“This was a very good course,” he said. “I wanted to learn financial terms and techniques, and I did.”

Several participants singled out the value of learning about the “DuPont Model,” which analyzes the profitability of a company using traditional management tools while integrating some elements of the income statement with those from the balance sheet. Others commended the professor.

“Dr. Zdanowicz is clearly knowledgeable about finance and his instruction method is clear and engaging,” one said, and another commented, “The instructor kept my attention, explained thoroughly the material, and answered questions readily. I would like to attend other classes that he would instruct.”

Programs enable attendees to learn—or re-learn.

The working professionals who attend EPE programs come from around the area—and include members of the university community as well.

“The Accounting & Finance for Non-Financial Managers helped me to understand what I need to do when I am dealing with controllers, purchasing, accounts payable, and the financial officer,” said Carolina Abella-Coker, business office

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coordinator in the university’s College of Nursing and Health. “It was very helpful because it provided a review of all the important issues and it put the information in the terminology of the university. Since the university is a public institution, some things are different.”

For her, the course was not so much new as a welcome refresher.

“I had learned some of these matters when pursuing my degree, but I didn’t use them. This course helped me remember them, and now that I do have to use them, I apply what I learned on a regular basis.”

—Carolina Abella-Coker, business office coordinator, College of Nursing and Health, Florida International University

Like many other participants in EPE programs, she has taken others, receiving certificates in customer relationship management (CRM) and human resource management (HRM).

“We offer a full menu of courses and are always willing to discuss with clients customizing a program and offering it on campus or at their site,” said Robert Garcia, EPE director.

For information about EPE offerings, visit http://business.fiu.edu/epe/epe.cfm.

MACC degree helps university employee change course.

When Richard Patterson, an auditor with Ocariz Gitlin & Zomerfeld, LLP, found out he could earn his Master of Accounting (MACC) in ten months, he was excited—and a little skeptical.

“I wondered ‘how can they compress two years worth of learning into ten months?’” Patterson said.

Happily he found out it was possible when he enrolled in the College of Business Administration’s program.

“It’s intense, but so well structured that you graduate with broad-ranging knowledge about all aspects of accounting,” said Patterson, who liked his job as a student advisor in the college but wanted to make a career change. “When I finished the program, I felt confident that I was up to speed with what was happening in the business world.”

Patterson describes the coursework as on-target, says the professors were outstanding, and lauds the dedication of program manager Mike Pischner (BS ’00)—a “great guy.” Another aspect of the program that has proven invaluable to his career: the ability to meet and build relationships with other professionals working in the field.

“I wound up with several job offers given my MACC credentials.”

—Richard Patterson, auditor, Ocariz Gitlin & Zomerfeld, LLP

“Many of my interview opportunities came through someone connected with the program,” Patterson said. “I wound up with several job offers given my MACC credentials and chose a medium-sized firm in Miami with about fifty staff members.” He looks forward to working with different clients and to learning about the many aspects of firm operations and business. In the meantime, he continues to swing by campus regularly (he lives only five miles away) to greet friends from the program and check in with Pischner. He also keeps in touch with fellow classmates, who are now friends and colleagues.

“Many of us who work in this community have come from the School of Accounting,” Patterson said. “That’s part of what makes the accounting field a fun place to work.”

Serving the Community
Variety of events link School of Accounting and community.

If a “little knowledge is a dangerous thing,” then recent efforts by the School of Accounting and local firms to expand their knowledge of each other are a step in the right direction. Three separate events have opened doors, put faces to names and voices, and enabled the college and its business counterparts to get to know how each can benefit the other.

The New Faculty Reception, held early in the 2006 fall semester, got the closer relationship underway.

Ernst & Young shares information about its expertise and expectations.

On November 17, 2006, John P. Walsh, Mario Rodriguez, and Michael Lawrence Jr., three members of the Ernst & Young (E&Y) business risk services group, presented to faculty members and staff from the School of Accounting.

“E&Y, which hires many of our graduates, had asked for the chance to speak to us to give the faculty members the opportunity to learn more about their specific practice and the firm in general,” said Manuel Dieguez, instructor, who alerted his colleagues to the request. “This knowledge will enable faculty members to provide more information to students about what E&Y has to offer.”

From Ernst & Young’s point of view, the session also gave them the chance to give professors some insight into the type of student they would like to know more about.

“We are looking for smart people who are dedicated and whom we can train,” Walsh said.

“Meet and Greet Luncheon” affords professors an additional chance to deepen their knowledge about local accounting careers.

The firm of Goldstein Schechter Price Lucas Horwitz & Co., PA, hosted a luncheon on December 8, 2006, at La Palma in Coral Gables to provide a social setting in which faculty members and members of the firm could get to know each other.

The “Meet and Greet Luncheon” was the brainchild of Carlos Garcia, partner, and currently an MBA student in the college.

“We believe that our success is based in large part on the quality of the students from the School of Accounting.”

—Carlos Garcia, partner, Goldstein Schechter Price Lucas Horwitz & Co., PA

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Grads find success in striking out on their own.

They say three’s a charm. That certainly seems to be the case at De La Torre, Taraboulos & Company, a firm started by three School of Accounting graduates that has been very successful since its launch in 2004.

“We started small, but always knew we wanted to grow,” partner Jorge de la Torre (BACC ’96) said. He credits his dad with helping to foster his entrepreneurial drive.

Partners, and brothers, Jeff (MACC ’00, BACC ’96) and Robert (BACC ’97) Taraboulos explain they had long talked about going into business for themselves. When Jeff met de la Torre at Deloitte, the timing seemed right.

De la Torre says the current accounting field is ideal for smaller firms like theirs. His partners also describe a strategy of cultivating client relationships and providing all the services of big firms, at lower prices. That approach, coupled with a focus on quality and personal service, has managed to attract new customers with very little advertising.

“A big part of our success was having a joint vision of where we wanted to go,” Robert Taraboulos said. “That helped us set our goals and has driven everything we do.”

Ten members of the firm, including three alumni from the School of Accounting, attended. Eight members of the accounting faculty and four staff members represented the school. Executive Dean Joyce J. Elam and Christos Koulamas, interim director of the school, also participated, with Dean Elam making some remarks.

“I thought it was an excellent event, and I enjoyed meeting the partners from the firm and seeing that they have an exciting and growing practice,” said Steven Vogel, an adjunct professor in the School of Accounting and an attorney. “It’s certainly a firm I would recommend to any student pursuing a career in public accounting.”

Garcia was equally enthusiastic.

“We really thought it was great,” he said. “So many of my partners have told me how fantastic they thought the lunch was and how pleased they were that they had an opportunity to meet with the faculty. I am glad that we were able to make it happen and look forward to doing it again.”

Staying Connected
Donald Butler (BBA ‘79), a partner in the firm of Rachlin Cohen & Holtz, LLP, appreciates what the School of Accounting has done for his career. Now he wants to help it do the same for others.

Butler has joined the school’s advisory board. As a member, he believes his role is to help ensure the program continues to churn out top-notch accounting students prepared to meet the demands of the workplace.

In Butler’s opinion, that means teaching students critical thinking skills. He explains that even with rules, guidelines, and regulations, “at some point in most projects, it comes down to your judgment and assessment of what’s right and best.”

Butler adds that because his firm and others draw heavily from the school’s graduate pool, they have a “responsibility to make sure the school continues to graduate students who are industry-savvy and able to move comfortably in many areas.”

“We have a responsibility to make sure the school continues to graduate students who are industry savvy and able to move comfortably in many areas.”

—Donald Butler, partner, Rachlin Cohen & Holtz, LLP

He also wants to ensure that graduates consider the professional opportunities at medium-sized firms.

“When I graduated in 1979, all people ever talked about was the national firms,” Butler said. “I want accounting graduates to know we’re out there, too.”

Butler thinks a company like his offers a dynamic and challenging work environment. His position as an advisor in several areas means that his workday is far from staid.

“No two of our clients are identical, and I am regularly tapping into different skills and experiences to get the job done,” Butler said.

At Rachlin, he said, there is tremendous potential for growth and learning among employees who take initiative and “hit the ground running.”

“My time in the School of Accounting taught me how to find answers and find them fast when I come up against something new,” he said. “That’s a skill that serves me well every day in this job.”

When Monte Kane (MACC ‘82), managing director of Kane & Company, P.A., looks out at the landscape of accounting, he sees a field exploding with opportunity. And he’s a guy who should know.

Kane started his own firm in 1990 and said it’s been full steam ahead since then. The firm recently opened offices in Orlando and Las Vegas, and Kane anticipates growth of between thirty and forty percent in 2007 alone. The company provides auditing, assurance, business evaluation, litigation support, forensic accounting, and other services.

Kane attributes the firm’s success to a business formula that emphasizes value-added service every step of the way.

“Our motto is to give a little something extra in everything we do,” he said. “I really think that’s the basis for our growth and strength as a company.”

He champions the professional possibilities at a smaller or mid-sized accounting firm. Due to the fact that they operate on a smaller scale, he said, small firms often provide “fast paths to partnership, an entrepreneurial environment, flexibility in the work schedule, mobile work venues,” and other benefits.

“In the same way we strive to do more for our clients, we also seek to provide a workplace in which our staff is engaged in what they’re doing and is given every chance to grow both intellectually and professionally,” he said. “Our people are our most important asset.”

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Kane wholeheartedly turns to his alma mater in his ongoing search for qualified professionals to staff his shop.

“We hire from the School of Accounting every year because we know the caliber of employee we’ll be getting,” he said. “Many students from the school have unique backgrounds. Many come from different cultures, and when you realize that they’ve excelled academically when English is not their first language, that’s a big ‘wow’.”

Oscar Suarez, the Miami office managing partner for Ernst & Young (E&Y), is considered something of an “honorary alumnus” by College of Business Administration staff. While not a graduate, Suarez has nonetheless dedicated his time and energy to making the School of Accounting a world-class training ground for business students. The school holds a “special place” in his heart, in part because “it has been a tremendous source of exceptional candidates and has strengthened the accounting profession overall.”

A founding member of the Dean’s Council, Suarez also was responsible, along with Director of Alumni and Partner Relations Monique Catoggio (EMBA ’03), for coming up with the idea to establish affinity groups at local accounting firms. The objective: to formalize existing graduate networks within firms and strengthen their connection to the school. The groups—which Suarez says help “feed” participation in the alumni association—emphasize the importance of providing financial support to the School of Accounting (E&Y matches employee donations), and of “paving the way” for new graduates by participating in recruitment efforts.

“I think it’s important that our employees help others in the same way that they were helped when they were just starting out.”

— Oscar Suarez, Miami office managing partner and South Florida tax leader, Ernst & Young

Suarez credits the college with helping create a vibrant business environment that is inclusive and that “channels excellence from all walks of life.” As a member of his firm’s national diversity and ethnicity task force, he says that the business school “has really been able to achieve a spectacular balance in the breadth and variety of the student body, and that has been very beneficial to business.”
Berkowitz Dick Pollack & Brant (BDPB) recently hosted an Alumni Day with all the popular elements of this successful FIU Alumni Association program and brought something new and exciting to the renamed event.

What was the same? The university’s alumni association and the College of Business Administration described their pride in the alumni and updated the forty attendees about news in the university, its alumni association, and the Business Alumni Chapter. Also, the gathering brought alumni within the firm together.

The difference? BDPB suggested inviting members of Beta Alpha Psi. One dozen accepted and gained insight into the potential for growth in their careers.

“By hosting an Alumni Day, BDPB was not only able to provide an enjoyable social networking event for our own university alumni—of whom we have many—but also we were able to meet many of the School of Accounting’s best and brightest students,” said Richard A. Pollack (MSF ’02), director-in-charge of forensic and valuation services at the firm. “We have a number of professionals with ties to the university, and the event enabled the students to speak with firm members informally, learn more about our firm’s structure, and see for themselves how strong a relationship BDPB and the university have,” he said.

The idea worked so well, the alumni association plans to ask other hosts if they’d also like to include students.

Cherie Hennig, professor, School of Accounting and director of the Executive Master of Science in Taxation program; Monique Catoggio (EMBA ’03), director of alumni and partner relations; and Mireya Fonseca, assistant director, external relations and resource development, represented the college.

“It’s great to work with BDPB, which is an important part of our business community, is growing tremendously, is recruiting for high positions, and already employs many of our business school’s alumni,” Catoggio said. “We appreciated that they wanted to show their employees that they care about the college and that they hope alumni will support us.”

Berkowitz Dick Pollack & Brant sets new standard for Alumni Day.
Serving South Florida with pride!

To learn more, visit business.fiu.edu.
To recruit our accounting graduates, contact Barry Shiflett, Director, Career Management Services, at bshiflett@fiu.edu or call 305-348-7395.
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