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Editors Seek Practice Opportunities To Complement Editorial Roles and Academic Backgrounds

By Roland L. Madison

A portion of the articles published in *The Woman CPA* (TWCPA) are practitioner-oriented in order to relate to a segment of our readership and sponsoring organizations. Bearing this in mind, and the strong support of the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) for academics to actively seek meaningful interaction with practitioners, five TWCPA editors recently pursued a variety of practice experiences. This article describes four of the practice-related affiliations experienced by our editors.

Professor Dahli Gray

Professor Dahli Gray, Editor of the International Department, began serving as a Peat Marwick Research Fellow in June 1986 and will continue as such until mid-1988. The Fellowship, sponsored by the Peat Marwick Foundation, provides partial release time from university teaching, so that Dr. Gray may conduct a research project of significance to the accounting profession. She has worked with Peat Marwick professionals in London, New York, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Sacramento, and Portland. She has also worked on research issues with professionals in the London office of Price Waterhouse and the Chicago office of Coopers & Lybrand. She has plans to work with accounting professionals in several other locations, including Detroit, Tokyo, and Sydney. With the perspectives from practitioners, she is developing an inventory of international accounting problems and possible solutions. Her international research is relevant to the prevalent problems and needs of the accounting community.

Program Criteria and Issues Addressed

The Peat Marwick Research Fel-

lowship program is in its third year of operation. On a competitive basis (i.e., quality of research proposals submitted), the Peat Marwick Foundation awards fellowships to eligible accounting faculty members (i.e., persons that possess a doctoral degree and have held an untenured, full-time, tenure track position on an accounting faculty at a university in the United States for no less than eighteen months and no more than forty-eight months). Each fellowship is a significant financial grant that goes to the faculty member's university to provide research support for that person. In 1986, and again in 1987, Peat Marwick made ten awards. The research proposals supported are varied and address significant accounting concerns. The proposals included issues such as tax policy, uses of corporate information releases by investors, economic and behavioral implications of the auditing process, interest rate swaps, federal enterprise zone issues, micro-computer software for decision support, and many other timely concerns. The research is directed at increasing academic and practitioner involvement so that this cooperative effort will benefit the overall accounting and business community.

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Benefits Derived from the Program

Professor Gray has pursued her research effort by interviewing partners, managers, and senior and junior accountants. During these in-

terviews, Dahli also acquired extensive advice and insight regarding teaching. For example, the practitioners emphasized a need for increased writing and speaking skills. They find that accounting graduates master technical skills, but often lack communication expertise. Dahli is incorporating these findings and other advice and insights she gained from practitioners into the classes that she teaches at the University of Notre Dame.

Professor Gray advocates open communication between academics and practitioners. She has been a longstanding member of not only various academic groups, but also several practitioner-oriented organizations. She holds both the CPA and the CMA. She acquired over 13 years of practical experience, which included public accounting, prior to and in conjunction with her academic teaching career.

Professor Karen Hooks

Dr. Hooks, Practice & Theory Department Editor, is on a two-year leave of absence from her position as an associate professor at the University of South Florida in Tampa. University officials were willing to approve her leave, particularly since they are hopeful she will return with an increased knowledge of international accounting, which is currently being sought for University of South Florida faculty. The leave coincides with her husband's opportunity to go on a "tour of duty" in his position as an audit manager at Price Waterhouse.

Research Manager for the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants

Dr. Hooks is currently working as a Research Manager for the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants (CICA). Although technically she is in the Auditing Area of the Studies and Standards Department, all of her time has been assigned as support for the Commission to Study the Public's Expectations of Audits (Commission), which is popularly known by its chairman's name as the MacDonald Commission. The Commission will submit its completed report to the CICA Board of Governors in late 1987 or early 1988.

In securing her position at the CICA, Karen had an additional hur-

dle to cross. She was an American in another country who arrived without an immigration-granted work permit in hand. Her first step was interviewing with the CICA. People with doctorates in accounting are more scarce in Canada than in the United States. Therefore, someone with a Ph.D. and the accompanying research and writing skills was very attractive to the CICA. The Commissioners had to present evidence to immigration that the Commission was not able to hire a Canadian citizen with the necessary job qualifications, thereby justifying that a "visitor" to the country should be permitted to fill the position.

Program Responsibilities With CICA

Dr. Hook's responsibilities have been quite varied. Staff support for the Commission has consisted of two CICA employees, plus others hired on a contract basis as needed. The Commission has spent much of its time receiving oral and written submissions from the financial community and the public. It also hired a major public opinion research firm to conduct a survey of the Canadian public and investigate opinions regarding auditors, auditors' work and financial statements. Karen has spent a lot of time on the survey, assessing its meaning and value for the Commission and working with the research firm as it produced its final report. She was heavily involved in developing a computer database for cataloging the opinions of various people and organizations which made submissions to the Commission. At various times, she has researched topics and has written briefing papers, both for the Commission and for staff members. At one point, Karen coordinated the work of a number of contracted staff who were simultaneously researching and writing on various topics. When drafting of the report was beginning, her role changed to providing various types of editing and research backup. Finally, she has had the enlightening and pleasurable opportunity of attending Commission meetings.

Benefits Derived and Problems Encountered

Dr. Hooks believes the benefits she has received are enormous. First has been the opportunity to interface with people whom she normally

would not encounter. The Commissioners themselves are highly placed people in law firms, financial institutions, public accounting firms, industry and government. Watching and listening to them has been a fascinating experience. Further, Karen learned much from listening to formal submissions made to the Commission by various members of the financial community. The notion that everyone can identify problems, but none can produce solutions which satisfy all affected parties, could not have been more firmly established in any other way. The research, writing and technical support aspects of her position have also been useful. She has developed supervisory and negotiation skills that were never overly critical for one to possess in a teaching capacity at the university. Karen has also furthered her writing and computer skills.

Dr. [Karen] Hooks is currently working as a Research Manager for the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants (CICA).

One of the most interesting problems encountered has been the constant conflict between meeting deadlines and obtaining desired quality of the work product. An academic doing research can largely control deadlines, and meeting deadlines usually depends on one's own efforts. It is another matter when dealing with a support staff, and meeting deadlines for a group of very busy people who usually cannot collectively rearrange schedules if a deadline cannot be met. No single individual has control. The result is that the deadline is always met, although perhaps with less quality or confidence in the interim product than might be desired. Hopefully, one makes up for it after the deadline, but this has been a real-life complication which Karen has seldom encountered in academia.

Professor Roland L. Madison

Roland L. Madison, Associate Editor-Manuscripts, is presently Professor of Accounting at John Carroll University (JCU) in Cleveland. Finan-

cially, his editorial efforts for *The Woman CPA* are jointly supported by grants from the JCU School of Business and John Carroll Alumni employed by Arthur Andersen & Co. He has completed residencies with Peat Marwick and Ashland Oil during his sixteen years in higher education in addition to several years in private practice.

Dr. Madison participated (1986) in one of the eight faculty residences sponsored to date by the Coopers and Lybrand Foundation as part of their five-year "Support for Excellence In Business Education and Research" program (1984-1989).

Unique Residency Program

While extensive planning and communications for more than a year were critical factors in the development of a quality program, the high operative level at which the faculty member was permitted to function made the program a very unique experience relative to the traditional audit-staff or research-oriented programs often provided for academics. Roland was permitted to observe partner meetings, and review files, correspondence, workpapers and documents generally restricted to senior firm personnel. He also had client contacts which were maintained primarily by partners and managers.

Scope of Program and Benefits Derived

While the complete scope of the program was quite broad, the majority of Roland's efforts were in the following mutually determined categories: firm personnel policies and practice, including recruitment; promotion; professional education; and career development, including partner selection and evaluation; SEC practice issues such as discretionary accounting changes, partner rotation, materiality judgments and potential Foreign Corrupt Practice Act (FCPA) violations; practice management and quality control; and cost-managerial accounting practices of clients.

Detailed reports were prepared at the completion of each study area by Dr. Madison. The reports were edited and distributed to appropriate firm personnel. Internal conferences were held to analyze and discuss the reports and decide if specific actions were required.

Roland perceived the following

points as the more significant benefits gained during his residency:

- Identified various behavioral qualities to cultivate in students that may help them succeed in their business careers.
- Created opportunities to bring realistic audit practice and cost-managerial issues to classes; to arrange for tours of manufacturing facilities and class visits by informed guest speakers from the business community.
- Developed research possibilities, e.g., contingencies, human resource development, and managerial accounting topics.
- Developed a more enlightened awareness and appreciation of the nature and extensiveness of the pressures that individual CPAs, at all practice unit levels, must manage during their careers.

The benefits from the firm's perspective included:

- The receipt of an independent, objective assessment of several critical practice areas (personnel policies and procedures, professional education programs, quality control, recruiting and practice management).
- A relevant work product from an impartial outside perspective on several highly judgmental cost accounting issues (capacity concepts, treatment of variances, and improved overhead application bases and procedures for clients).
- Enhanced the firm's understanding of and rapport with the accounting faculty and students at a key recruiting university.

Professor Cherie J. O'Neil

Cherie J. O'Neil, Tax Department Editor, is an Associate Professor of Accounting at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Cherie was a participant in the Arthur Andersen & Co. Faculty Residency Program during the winter quarter (1987). She divided her time between the AA&Co.'s training center in St. Charles, Illinois, and their Washington, D.C., office.

Prepares Tax Material For St. Charles Training Center

Dr. O'Neil devoted her time to incorporating the many tax law changes legislated by the Tax Reform Act of 1986 into AA's individual training materials. In addition,

Dr. [Roland] Madison participated (1986) in one of the eight faculty residences sponsored to date by the Coopers and Lybrand Foundation.

Cherie extensively revised their **Year-End Individual Tax Planning Booklet**, which is distributed to all tax seniors who come to St. Charles for their tax training seminar.

The St. Charles Training Center is a very modern and complete facility. It is actually like a mini-university. Dr. O'Neil felt that the time spent there was very rewarding. She was able to devote large blocks of time to studying the provisions of the new tax law. Long periods of uninterrupted study time is a luxury for a professor who is used to the numerous daily interruptions of campus life. Also, working closely with someone trained in instructional design gave her real insights as to how to improve her own writing and teaching skills. Cherie also had the opportunity to use some of the AA&Co. software for the personal computer.

By working with numerous professional accountants on the tax training material, Cherie believes she can share with her students what the on-the-job training program in a public accounting firm is like.

Tax Research and Practice in Washington, D.C.

When she was not at St. Charles, Cherie spent her time in the tax practice office of AA&Co. in Washington, D.C. She used the "A+" tax preparation system to prepare re-

[Dr. Cherie J. O'Neil] was a participant in the Arthur Andersen & Co. Faculty Residency Program during the winter quarter (1987).

turns. She also did tax research in AA&Co.'s extensive tax library. Some of the research topics pertained to specific clients and other topics pertained to the training material she was writing for the St. Charles program. The extensive tax research materials available were very impressive.

Her stay in Washington, D.C., gave Professor O'Neil an opportunity to observe first-hand what it is like to be a staff accountant in a tax department of a large firm. Cherie was very impressed by the extent to which the personal computer has become an integral part of the CPA firm. It motivated Cherie to integrate the personal computer into as many of her classes as possible.

Conclusion

The editors have an extremely positive view of their practice experiences and believe such opportunities should be greatly valued by both academics and practitioners. Their collective desire is to support and stimulate further interaction between practice and academia, regardless of the specific residency program structure. Accordingly, they believe the AACSB's position on gaining relevant professional experience through faculty residencies is most appropriate.

The editorial staff members feel that their experiences will help them have a better understanding of the problems practitioners must face. This awareness will help them serve as better reviewers of the practitioner-oriented literary contributions to *The Woman CPA*. Also, one final beneficiary of these residency programs must be their students who will enter the professional accounting ranks from the college campuses in the future. Ω



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