

THE ACCOUNTING PROFESSION POST SARBANES- OXLEY:

AN APPROACH TO IMPART KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND ATTRACT STUDENTS TO THE ACCOUNTING MAJOR

BIO'S

Elliott Levy

Elliott Levy is an Associate Professor of Accountancy at Bentley University in Waltham, Massachusetts. He has prior work experience with Arthur Andersen & Co. in New York and with Coopers & Lybrand in Boston, as a faculty intern. He has researched and published on a variety of topics including academic dishonesty, accounting labor markets, educational requirements for CPAs, and audit committees. He received his bachelor's degree from Baruch College in New York City and earned master's degrees from the University of Florida and Bentley University. He is a CPA, CIA, and CMA.

Karen K. Osterheld

Karen Osterheld is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Accountancy at Bentley University. Karen earned her B.S. Degree in Mathematics from the State University of New York at Albany and her M.B.A. Degree from the University of Wisconsin. She is a Certified Public Accountant in the state of Massachusetts. Karen has eleven years of business experience, primarily as a manager in the financial services industry, with a strong background in the areas of internal controls analysis and accounting research and policy formulation.

Karen teaches the introductory financial and managerial accounting sequence at Bentley to undergraduate students. She also teaches an interdisciplinary course entitled "The Role of Community Service in a For-Profit Organization" in the undergraduate honors program. This honors course develops an understanding and appreciation of the issues related to the integration of community service initiatives and social responsibility in a profit-motivated organization and an understanding of the core competencies needed in the workplace. The American Accounting Association (AAA) and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) recognized the course as the winner of the 2001 Joint AICPA/AAA Collaboration Award. The course has also been recognized at Bentley for a 2001 Innovation in Teaching Award and a 2003 Service-Learning Award. Karen also runs the internship program for the Department of Accountancy. In 2003, she received the Joseph M. Cronin Award for Excellence in Academic Advising at Bentley. In 2008, she was nominated Faculty Member of the Year by the student body. She also actively participates on the Bentley College Service-Learning Advisory Board and the Honors Council.

Karen was previously a member of the AICPA's Student Internships and Field Study Task Force and the AICPA's Pre-Certification Education Executive Committee.

Jay C. Thibodeau

Dr. Thibodeau is an Associate Professor of Accountancy at Bentley College. He received his B.S. degree from the University of Connecticut in December 1987 and his Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut in August 1996. He joined the faculty at Bentley College in September of 1996 and has worked there ever since. During his sabbatical in the Fall Semester of 2003, Jay worked with PricewaterhouseCoopers' Learning & Education group to help deliver critical knowledge about the post-Sarbanes-Oxley technical audit guidance to professionals throughout the firm. He has consulted with PricewaterhouseCoopers ever since. At Bentley College, he serves as the coordinator for all audit and assurance curriculum matters.

Dr. Thibodeau currently serves on the Executive Committee for the American Accounting Association's Auditing Section. He also serves on the Editorial Boards of *Current Issues in Auditing* and *Advances in Accounting Education*. He has been published in *Auditing: A Journal of Practice & Theory*, *Accounting Horizons*, *Journal of Information Systems*, *Issues in Accounting Education*, *Managerial Auditing*, *Bank Accounting & Finance*, *Commercial Lending Review*, *Advances in Accounting Education*, *Asian-Pacific Journal of Accounting*, *Practical Accountant*, and *Journal of Financial Education*. He has received national recognition for his work three times: first, for his doctoral dissertation, winning the 1996 Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award presented by the American Accounting Association's ABO Section; second, for curriculum innovation, winning the 2001 Joint AICPA/AAA Collaboration Award; and third, also for curricular innovation, winning the 2003 Innovation in Assurance Education Award.

ABSTRACT

This paper provides a description of a program entitled "The Accounting Profession Post-Sarbanes-Oxley." This program has provided Introduction to Accounting students with an opportunity to better understand important elements of the conceptual framework (e.g., revenue recognition principle, matching principle). The program was also explicitly designed to provide an overview of the lucrative career opportunities that exist for students who major in accounting. In addition, the program provided students with an appreciation for the severe consequences of unethical behavior. Finally, we believe that the program provides a unique mechanism for Introduction to Accounting educators to address broad business, functional and personal competencies (AICPA 1999, 2000) in both an efficient and effective manner.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

-To help students develop an improved understanding and appreciation of the principles, assumptions and constraints that comprise the conceptual framework of accounting.

-To expose students to professional accountants and opportunities in accounting.

-To reinforce the AICPA functional, personal and broad business perspective core competencies.

CORE COMPETENCIES ADDRESSED

Functional Competencies

- Measurement
- Reporting

Personal Competencies

- Problem Solving and Decision Making
- Professional Demeanor
- Interaction
- Communication

Broad Business Perspective

- Legal/Regulatory Perspective

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY

“The Accounting Profession Post Sarbanes-Oxley”, is a program that provided Introduction to Accounting students with an opportunity to enhance their understanding of the conceptual framework of accounting. The program was centered on three real-life case examples of recent financial statement frauds (i.e., WorldCom, Waste Management and Sunbeam). The cases had already been read by students and discussed in their classes. In this program, for each case example, a brief skit was written and then acted out by faculty members to illustrate the tension that practicing accountants face when applying aspects of the conceptual model. We then had three working professionals from varying backgrounds (e.g., industry, government, internal audit, external audit) provide their unique perspectives about each of the real-life scenarios, as portrayed in the skits. The program concluded with a networking session, which provided the students with an opportunity to interact with business professionals from all areas of the accounting world.

Overall, the program has provided us with a highly efficient manner in which to address a wide range of relevant skills and competencies, including the conceptual framework, the consequences of unethical behavior, the broad business, functional and personal competencies (AICPA 1999, 2000) and the career opportunities that exist in the post-Sarbanes financial reporting environment. For some time, accounting educators have

sought to help their students better understand each of these areas. Our program allows educators to address these areas concurrently, an important consideration. The feedback received from all parties, including students, faculty, and the presenting professionals provides evidence that the program met and even exceeded our expectations.

We have no doubt about the adaptability of our program to other colleges and universities. Our program included skits that were based on the case examples found in our customized course textbook. And, while we would be quite happy to share our own skits and teaching materials, colleagues could also easily develop brief skits based on the case examples that exist in their own course textbook. In addition, based on our experience, we believe that it will not be difficult to convince faculty members and accounting professionals to participate in the program. The faculty members that served as actors in the skits enjoyed the opportunity to show off their “thespian” skills and connect with their students in a different manner. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the accounting professionals were very anxious to have an opportunity to interact with students since sophomores tend to be an important target group in their recruiting process. We therefore encourage our colleagues at other schools to consider using our program.

Please contact the authors if you would like more information.

Reference

American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA). 2000. *Vision-Aligned Academic Framework*. Available at: <http://www.aicpa.org/edu/corecomp.htm>.