



Get to Know MSCPA Faculty Scholar Donald C. Wengler, CPA, Ph.D., CFE

As part of its Bridge to the Future Capital Campaign, the MSCPA has established two named faculty scholars, and the society aims to have at least six more in place over the next few years. These positions are intended to help alleviate the accounting professor shortage in Missouri, provide more qualified candidates to firms by giving additional students the opportunity to major in accounting, and ensure graduates have exposure to real-world issues before entering the workforce. The named faculty scholars are generously funded by Missouri CPA firms who have agreed to collaborate efforts and pool resources to ensure all are better positioned to achieve success. The first faculty scholar, Nate Newton at the University of Missouri-Columbia, was profiled in the January 2014 *ASSET* (read at mocpa.org/educators). Following is an introduction to the society's second faculty scholar, Don Wengler at the University of Central Missouri.



Education: Bachelor's degrees in accounting and finance with a minor in economics from Southeast Missouri State University; MBA from the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania; doctorate of philosophy in business administration with an emphasis in accounting from the University of South Florida.

Family: Wife, Angie; three children: Caroline, 10; Luke, 12; Jenna, 22. Jenna and I recently graduated one week apart, with her completing a bachelor's degree in education from Vanderbilt University while I finished my Ph.D.

For fun: Listening to music, ranging from Frank Sinatra to Muddy Waters. I play guitar—mostly blues.

Career path: I have spent most of my life in Missouri, and throughout my career I've enjoyed two different aspects of work-life. I learned the most skills in the least time in public accounting and consulting (Ernst & Young; Coopers & Lybrand; BKD, LLP) because every client is a new job and a new industry, and often you are working on several projects at once. Conversely, holding a corporate position, which I have done twice (Creative Data Services, Argosy Gaming Company), gave me the opportunity to build a more stable work-life where accomplishments can make the job better and contribute to the long-term success of an organization. In consulting, you may not get to know a client long enough to build lasting relationships. Both tracks are rewarding in their own way.



What made you decide to major in accounting?

I never planned to major in accounting. After taking the initial courses required of all business majors, I realized how important accounting is—as the language of business. My initial plan was to work in public accounting for a couple of years to become a CPA and then move into industry. Soon I realized that I was gaining business experience faster in public accounting than I could in any other career opportunity, so I stayed—nearly 20 years, between three firms. However, I also learned that the CPA credential was extremely important to employers outside of public accounting. In one company, the corporate office recommended to the local management team that they interview me for the top accounting job in a division. At the end of the day, the general managers said, “You’re a CPA. The job is yours if you want it.”

What made you decide to become an accounting educator?

While working with BKD in Kansas City as a forensic accountant, I learned how to use business and accounting facts to tell the story about what happened in fraud incidents and to explain what transpired in a litigation matter between two companies that find themselves in court. I also spoke often to associations and business groups about fraud prevention. I started teaching part-time to sharpen my speaking skills. I found that I enjoyed being in the classroom with students. Next, I decided to pursue a full-time career that enables me to use fact-based storytelling, both in the classroom and in my research.

What have been your biggest challenges thus far?

Some business students do not appreciate the benefits of the accounting discipline, but I accept the challenge of helping them see the importance of knowing enough accounting basics to read financial statements and understand the story that financial statements can tell you about a company.

What do you most hope students gain from working with you?

Connecting the real world of business to what is in their textbooks; that is something I find very rewarding. After 25 years in business, I can tell a lot of stories that relate to my courses.

What do you think the biggest challenges are facing your students as they enter the profession?

Finding the right job with the right long-term work-life balance for them. I worry that some students pass up opportunities that will lead them to the most rewarding long-term happiness in their careers because they are too focused on the immediate job search. They should also be thinking about the places the first job can take them five or 10 years from now, and that is difficult to do.

What benefits does being the MSCPA Faculty Scholar provide you and the university?

I see the MSCPA as a force to facilitate greater interaction between the profession, students and their universities. Working more closely together can benefit all of us and our common goal—developing and supplying the profession with great talent. Being named an MSCPA Faculty Scholar was important to my decision to return to Missouri. Accounting Ph.D. programs tend to encourage their graduates to focus first on research and second on teaching, and as such, they urge graduates to conduct a national search for a position that will focus on research. Being named an MSCPA Faculty Scholar made me realize that my practice experience would be valued in the classroom and that it is good to focus on teaching. As a result, I terminated my national job search and returned to Missouri by accepting a position at the University of Central Missouri. Here I can put my students first and still have time to contribute to accounting, auditing and fraud research.

Don Wengler is an assistant professor of accountancy and serves as the MSCPA Faculty Scholar at the University of Central Missouri. He both teaches courses and has research interest in financial accounting, accounting information systems, auditing, and fraud detection and prevention. Don can be contacted at wengler@ucmo.edu.