The seeds of what has become the fully AACSB-accredited Department of Accounting and Finance (ACF) began sprouting in 1977, when the first BS in Accounting degree from UNCG was conferred. Two years later, the Department of Accounting and Finance was officially established. In 1984 the MS in Accounting (MSA) program launched and the first degree was conferred in 1986.

In 1998, Associate Professor Dr. Bill Harden joined the department. A year later, Professor Dr. Venkat Iyer arrived. These two are the longest-standing faculty members from that early time.

“Initially I was the only international faculty member. Our student base was not as diverse as it is today, and there was only one female tenure track faculty member. The first graduate class I taught had five students. Today, it’s normal to have 40 students,” Iyer said.

“Our department has grown to reflect the diversity of the world – our faculty has people from around the globe, people from various ethnic and racial backgrounds, and more women. Our students also reflect this inclusiveness. This is true in the Bryan School overall,” Iyer added.

Harden recalls the early years as being a transition point of the department expanding from having a strictly professional focus to becoming a serious research department – partly in response to the changing requirements for the CPA exam.

In 2005 Iyer took over as director of the MSA Program, which grew to more than 100 students shortly thereafter. The Department of Accounting combined with the finance area in the 2006-07 academic year to create the Department of Accounting and Finance (ACF). Finance was previously included in the Department of Business Administration. In 2002 the accounting programs received initial AACSB accounting accreditation, with reaffirmation in 2009 and 2014.

Today the master’s program is the flagship of the Accounting and Finance Department. “Even with the increased focus on research, the Department of Accounting has never backed away from its commitment to exceptionally high teaching standards. We are about teaching plus research,” Harden said. One constant throughout the department’s history is the high quality of instructors. “This is an attractive place where one can stay intellectually active and also teach.”

Iyer said that teaching is what is most important to him. “The spectrum of backgrounds from which our students come is amazing – they arrive with outstanding raw material that becomes polished by going through the process of our program.”

This commitment to teaching may explain why graduate students frequently say we are a big school that feels like a small school. The faculty are accessible to work with students – even with the tough research requirements. Iyer said he keeps in touch with alumni from 15-20 years ago. “They have done really well and never forget that UNCG has given them so many opportunities.”

Looking to the future, the Department is moving toward blended or completely online delivery of courses at both the graduate and undergraduate level.
Message from the ACF Department Head

Randy Elder, PhD
Department Head
DHG Term Professor

One of the great things about UNC Greensboro is the diversity of our students, and the variety in their backgrounds. In this second edition of the ACF newsletter, we feature recent Master of Accounting (MSA) graduate David Coffey, and finance graduate Fabiola Henriques. David earned an undergraduate degree in political science before entering the MSA program. He is now working as an audit associate at PricewaterhouseCoopers and has already passed the CPA Examination. He illustrates that pursuing a Masters of Accounting degree is a great choice regardless of undergraduate background. Trained as an optometrist, Fabiola is a native of Brazil. She pursued her passion for finance at UNCG and made the most of the opportunity. While both David and Fabiola pursued their own dreams, they also greatly enriched the accounting and finance programs at UNCG.

In addition to working with great students like David and Fabiola, one of the best parts of the being a department head is working with new faculty. We are delighted that Mengmeng Weng has joined us after completing her PhD degree at State University of New York at Buffalo. Mengmeng is the sixth new faculty member to join the Accounting and Finance Department in the past three years. Along with our existing great faculty, these new faculty members have the Accounting and Finance Department poised for giant steps forward.

Message from the Dean

Important milestones deserve celebration. This year we celebrate 50 years of the Bryan School of Business and Economics, and events to commemorate this important milestone will occur throughout the year. I hope you will be able to join us in some of the celebrations.

This year also marks the 40th year of the accounting program at UNCG, and the Accounting and Finance Department at UNCG has much of which it is proud. The Bryan School develops exceptional problem solvers, and recent graduates David Coffey and Fabiola Henriques featured in this newsletter are great examples.

A lot goes in to producing exceptional graduates, including the involvement of outstanding faculty. Mengmeng Wang is the latest addition to our faculty, and she joins a group of relatively new faculty members that are already making their mark, such as Gillian Lei, recipient of the Outstanding Junior Faculty Teaching Award. They are part of an accounting and finance faculty that are recognized for their outstanding teaching and research.

As we look back over the past 50 years of the Bryan School, we have much to celebrate. With our students and faculty, together with the involvement of our alumni, we know the next 50 years will be even better!

McRae C. Banks, PhD
Margaret & Harrell Hill Distinguished Professor and Dean
ACF DEPARTMENT WELCOMES
NEW FACULTY MEMBER
MENGMENG WANG

Dr. Mengmeng Wang joins UNC Greensboro from State University of New York at Buffalo (University at Buffalo). She teaches courses in financial accounting and managerial accounting. Dr. Wang’s research focuses on archival studies in financial accounting. Her research areas include mergers and acquisitions; management voluntary disclosures; management compensation incentives; insider trading; earnings strings and earnings management; regulatory monitoring and SEC comment letters; and corporate legal counsel. Her recent research results on “The Effect of SEC Comment Letters on M&A Outcomes” were quoted in Columbia Law School’s Blue Sky Blog on corporate governance, financial regulation, and kindred topics. Dr. Wang worked on security trading and settlement prior to her academic career.
Faculty Research and Professional Activities

JANUARY 2018 – JUNE 2019

BOOKS AND PAPERS PUBLISHED OR ACCEPTED FOR PUBLICATION

RANDAL ELDER

“Transocean and the History of Tax Inversions,” (with S. Albring and M. Franklin), Issues in Accounting Education (February 2019).


WILLIAM HARDEN


DAYONG HUANG

VENKAT IYER
“An Examination of Factors Related to Internal Auditors’ Organizational-Professional Conflict,” (with A. Jones and K. Raghunandan), Accounting Horizons (December 2018).

AMBROSE JONES
“An Examination of Factors Related to Internal Auditors’ Organizational-Professional Conflict,” (with V. Iyer and K. Raghunandan), Accounting Horizons (December 2018).

GILLIAN LEI


AYALEW LULSEGED

DAVID UPTON

DANIEL WINKLER

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We thank outgoing member Jon Glazman from Smith Leonard PLLC for his dedicated service on the Accounting and Finance Advisory Board and continued support of the department.
DAVID COFFEY

While many students entering the Master of Science of Accounting (MSA) program have an undergraduate degree in the field of accounting or business, students from a variety of academic and professional backgrounds often find their way to the program and excel in their studies. David Coffey is one such student. After obtaining his undergraduate degree in political science from UNC-Chapel Hill and gaining valuable work experience, David made the decision to return to school for his MSA and entered the program at UNC Greensboro.

As a student, David was an asset to the department through his leadership role in the accounting and finance tutoring program, where he served as a graduate assistant tutor. He consistently took the lead when students came in with questions and when faculty needed grading support. He also helped organize and manage the many responsibilities of the tutoring room. David began sitting for the CPA exam while taking a full course load and passed two parts of the exam prior to graduation. By doing so, he not only set a high bar for himself but served as an excellent example for others. Upon graduation in May 2019, he was awarded the Bryan School Achievement and Leadership Award, an honor given to those who not only achieve high academic standing but also give back to the school through leadership and service. Now employed in the accounting field, David shares some insights on his experiences in the program and his transition from student to business professional.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR CAREER PATH SINCE GRADUATION – WHERE ARE YOU WORKING AND WHAT DOES YOUR NEW JOB ENTAIL?
Following graduation in May, I spent most of this summer studying for the CPA exam and completed the exam in early August. You hear this over and over as a student, but employers love for you to complete the CPA exam before you begin working because of the commitment required by a full-time job.

In September, I began working for PwC as an assurance associate, and will work on various audit tasks throughout our quarterly and annual cycles.

LOOKING BACK, IS THERE ONE SPECIFIC EXPERIENCE FROM YOUR TIME AT UNCG, EITHER IN THE CLASSROOM OR OTHER ACTIVITY, THAT STANDS OUT IN YOUR MIND AS HAVING HELPED YOU SIGNIFICANTLY?
If so, how?
The most memorable experiences from my time at UNCG come through the relationships built with other students in pursuit of the same goals. Whether that was working on homework and projects together, studying for the CPA, or just kicking back and taking a break, having friends to share the burden can be incredibly important. Building relationships with professors was also vital as it allowed me the opportunity to absorb the wisdom they have to offer, not only in the classroom but also outside of academia.

WHAT IMPACT DID YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE ACCOUNTING INTERNSHIP PROGRAM HAVE IN YOUR TRANSITION FROM STUDENT TO BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL?
The accounting internship program was instrumental in my development as an accountant and opened a window into the world of business following graduation. In my new position as an associate with PwC, my comfort level and confidence are much higher than they would have been had I not interned with the company previously. Internships provide valuable real-world experience, without having to shoulder the responsibility of an employee. Having the opportunity to meet contacts in the business world through my professors and the “Meet the Firms” event contributed greatly in learning more about the opportunities available.

UNDERSTANDING THAT THERE IS STILL MUCH TO LEARN NOW THAT YOU ARE OUT IN THE WORKPLACE, DO YOU FEEL LIKE THE ACCOUNTING PROGRAM AND OTHER CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AT UNCG PREPARED YOU WELL FOR THE START OF YOUR ACCOUNTING CAREER?
I absolutely believe my experience with the Bryan School helped prepare me for my career in accounting. I gained valuable experience working full time prior to my graduate degree, but the MSA program provided me with a transferable skill set in a profession. I always felt the professors in the MSA program were top notch, and that you couldn’t find a more qualified group of instructors.
TELL US ABOUT YOUR CAREER PATH SINCE GRADUATION – WHERE YOU ARE WORKING AND WHAT YOUR NEW JOB ENTAILS.

After graduation, I chose to start my career in the financial services industry with BB&T. I am currently working in their Leadership Development Program (LDP), an in-house training program which provides the foundation for future leaders inside the organization. It includes heavy training and rotations around different lines of business inside the bank. We also have access to the Executive Management Team, making the experience even more impactful. After completion of the program in December, I will find out my placement. I hope to combine the knowledge learned at the Bryan School and my LDP training to add value to BB&T clients and teammates in the future.

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I had a great time being the president of the Spartan Investment Club at UNCG. I was responsible for allocating resources and budget planning, monitoring the club’s progress, and organizing events. It was a great experience to represent the group at various campus-wide committees and meetings, including having direct access to other student leaders and also Bryan School Dean McRae Banks. I believe every student should get involved – there are more than 300 student organizations at UNCG!

AS YOU PROGRESSED THROUGH YOUR CLASSES IN FINANCE, WHAT COURSES AND CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES MOST INFLUENCED YOUR LONG-TERM CAREER PLANS? At the beginning of my college journey, I was focused more on accounting classes. However, after my first finance class with Professor James Milanese (Business Finance I), I decided to change my major to finance. While accounting focuses more on managing financial reports and records, I discovered in that class that finance is more focused in making projections for future growth, analyzing expenditures and making strategies. Later, I enjoyed exploring different courses and areas, such as financial institutions and markets, entrepreneurial finance, investments, and derivatives. They were all big influencers in my decision to start my career in banking.

WHAT PROGRAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE BRYAN SCHOOL WERE THE GREATEST HELP IN YOUR TRANSITION FROM STUDENT TO BUSINESS PROFESSIONAL?

I really enjoyed my time at Bryan School, and I believe they do a great job helping students transition from student life to professional life. Events like “Back to Business” and “Company Spotlights” were a great resource for me to learn about local companies and opportunities for internships. I also attended all the career fairs organized by the University, where students can learn how to network and apply for open positions.

UNDERSTANDING THAT THERE IS STILL MUCH TO LEARN NOW THAT YOU ARE OUT IN THE WORKPLACE, DO YOU FEEL LIKE THE FINANCE PROGRAM AND OTHER CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AT UNCG PREPARED YOU WELL FOR THE START OF YOUR NEW CAREER?

I believe the finance program at UNCG gave me a strong foundation to start my career in the finance industry. The knowledge gained from classes, the network opportunities facilitated by faculty and staff, and the easy access to local companies provided me with all the tools necessary to start my new career.

Fabiola Henriques came to the Bryan School through a less traditional path than many of our students. Having been trained and employed in Brazil as an optometrist, she made the decision when moving to the United States with her husband to start over and pursue her passion for business and finance. With commitment and determination, she earned her associate degree at community college and continued her studies at the University of Michigan. When job changes brought them to Greensboro, she chose UNCG to continue pursuing her dream.

Once enrolled in the Bryan School, Fabiola excelled both academically and in service to the school. She took the initiative to revive the Spartan Investment Club and became president of the organization, allowing her to fully engage and serve with other student leaders across campus. Prior to graduation, Fabiola was accepted into the BB&T Leadership Development Program. This program accepts, on average, 15 students each year and she was the only student selected from UNCG. Now employed in the finance field, Fabiola shares some insights on her experiences in the program and her transition from student to business professional.

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MEET THE FIRMS 2019

The annual Masters of Science in Accounting Internship Social and Beta Alpha Psi Meet the Firms event were combined for the first time in one great event held August 26, 2019 at the Elliott Union Center. The combined event attracted a record of 20 employers. To prepare for the event, Beta Alpha Psi students and Masters of Science in Accounting students attended a series of workshops.

Curry Family Scholarship Supports Women Interested in Accounting

The Bryan School has enjoyed many students following in their parents’ or other family member’s footsteps. Gail Broadway Curry earned a master’s degree in biology in 1970. In 1980, she returned to UNCG to complete courses in accounting. She is currently a CPA with Curry CPA, LLC in Greensboro. Just eight short years after her mother Gail earned her accounting degree, daughter Laura Ann Curry also graduated with her accounting degree from UNCG and began her career with the family firm.

In 2004, Gail set up a scholarship to honor her daughter Laura by providing scholarship opportunities for meritorious students who plan to pursue a career in public accounting. Laura, who currently serves as a partner with the family firm, hopes that her accounting scholarship will encourage more women to pursue the accounting profession. And so, with Laura’s encouragement, this fall the family decided to do more. The Curry’s recently gave an additional significant gift to their endowed scholarship fund in the hopes of making a bigger impact on the department.

If your family or organization is interested in making a gift to honor the Curry family, or in setting up your own scholarship, please contact Elizabeth Paul, Director of Development with any questions (eppaul@uncg.edu; 336-334-5138).

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Gifts to the Accounting and Finance Enrichment Fund provide support beyond the regular operating budget to sustain program excellence. The fund supports course development, research activities, and alumni and employer outreach.

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