Whitman has launched a rebranded and enhanced online Master of Science degree in professional accounting. A partnership with 2U, Inc., Accounting@Syracuse prepares students with the analytical and technical skills to advance their accounting career in a variety of organizations.

The first class will commence in July with an application deadline of May 8.

Accounting@Syracuse is designed to prepare students for accounting roles in business strategy, consulting, information management and other business fields. The program will provide a platform for students to receive their M.S. in accounting without relocating or resigning from ongoing employment. Based on their undergraduate degree, students will fulfill course requirements in one of three separate educational sequences. Upon completion of the program, graduates will be prepared to excel in accounting careers.

“By partnering with 2U to deliver MBA@Syracuse and Accounting@Syracuse, we will enhance the online learning experience while maintaining access to a relevant and rigorous curriculum and accomplished faculty,” said Ken Kavajecz, dean of the Whitman School. “Through these online offerings, students can pursue specialized knowledge and skills to propel their careers regardless of their geographic location.”

MBA@Syracuse was also relaunched in January; its first cohort included more than 100 students. Whitman’s online MBA program has been consistently ranked as one of the best by various publications, including U.S. News & World Report, Financial Times and Best Colleges. Through the revamped MBA@Syracuse, students will attend virtual live classes while completing supplementary coursework at their own pace. The courses will continue to be designed and delivered by Whitman professors, featuring dynamic videos, interactive content and multimedia.

Working with 2U, a leading provider of cloud-based software solutions for colleges and universities, allows Whitman to enhance the technological capabilities and accessibility of course content. 2U has joined many other top colleges and universities across the country, including the University of North Carolina, University of California Berkeley, The George Washington University and Northwestern University, to develop comprehensive online degree programs.

“As a leader in distance learning, Whitman is committed to enhancing the student experience and creating growth through additional and improved programming,” said Kavajecz.

Learn more about Whitman’s online master’s offerings at onlinebusiness.syr.edu.
We have accomplished quite a bit over the last year. Our faculty is doing a very good job of publishing in the very top journals. Susan Albring has a paper coming out in Management Science, Lihong Liang had one paper published in The Accounting Review and another is forthcoming in Contemporary Accounting Research. Finally, Craig Nichols had a paper accepted at the conference for the Journal of Accounting and Economics (our top journal). The enrollment in our undergraduate and graduate accounting programs remains strong with good placements. Our online Masters in Accounting program, Accounting@Syracuse, will roll out this summer and everything seems to be on track with that program as well.

Sadly, our friend and colleague, Mitch Franklin, will be leaving Whitman at the end of the spring semester. Mitch is leaving for a great opportunity just down the road at Le Moyne College. Mitch has undergraduate and graduate degrees from Syracuse University and has been teaching here since 2000 – it is hard to imagine SU without Mitch. Mitch has taught financial accounting (both undergrad and grad), managerial accounting, cost accounting, tax, finance and the perspectives of business course for freshman. He has published numerous articles on tax issues. He has also won numerous awards for teaching and service (e.g., Department of Entrepreneurship and Emerging Enterprises Dean’s Award for Outstanding Student Service (2011); Beta Alpha Psi Outstanding Faculty of the Year Award (2009, 2010, 2012); Oberwager Prize for Outstanding Student Mentorship (2010); University Excellence in Teaching Award (2008); Beta Gamma Sigma Professor of the Year (2005-2006)). He has served on the University Senate. He has also been the long-time faculty advisor to Beta Alpha Psi since 2007. It has been a superior chapter for the last several years and has in excess of 100 members. In addition, he has advised many freshman/sophomore students over the years. In short, he has been indispensable. We will really miss him.

I would like to thank the members of our advisory board and the alumni council for all the work they do for the department. They give a lot of time and energy to supporting our students and providing feedback to the faculty. I would also like to thank those of you who give back to the department through the Accounting Excellence Fund, which allows us to bring speakers to campus, including Neil Bhattacharya (SMU), Jared Jennings (Washington University), and Dan Cohen (UT-Dallas). We have also provided financial support for the National Association of Black Accountants (NABA) banquet and supported a reception at Lubin House, Syracuse University’s New York City home, for our accounting alums.

Finally, thanks to my colleagues for making my job easy by excelling in the classroom and being willing to step up and help with outside activities.

Sincerely,

–Joseph Compix
Associate Professor of Accounting
Chair, Joseph I. Lubin School of Accounting
The Martin J. Whitman Fellow in Accounting
John Petosa is the perfect example of how a golf game can influence a career. Nearly 12 years ago, while on the golf course with Professor of Accounting Practice Bill Walsh, Petosa first considered being an adjunct professor of accounting. Professor Walsh thought he’d be a natural. Shortly thereafter, Petosa taught his first class, Intro to Accounting. As the semesters rolled by, he kept taking on more and more classes until he finally decided to join the Whitman faculty full time as a Professor of Accounting Practice.

“I’m now in my fourth full year as a Professor of Practice and I’ve never looked back,” said Petosa. “Teaching is one of the most rewarding things that I do every day. I love to see young people grow up, mature and succeed.”

One of Petosa’s favorite events is the Capstone Competition, where he serves as a judge. “I love to see how the students have changed from freshmen to seniors,” he said.

In addition to his course load, Petosa also serves as one of the inaugural Goodman IMPRESS program “housemasters,” a role he considers an “honor.”

“I was honored when Dean Nicholson approached me with this opportunity,” said Petosa. “It’s the first time I’ve felt that I have a permanent role in helping to shape our students for the future.”

This year, Petosa will succeed Mitch Franklin in advising the Beta Alpha Psi accounting fraternity, an honor society for the brightest accounting majors at Whitman. And, if that wasn’t enough, he still serves as chief financial officer of DeliBoy, a Judge in the nearby town of Camillus, a tax preparer and an attorney. With five children, his family life is vibrant, as well.

How does he manage all these activities? “I love everything I do and who I do it with so I don’t even think about it,” he said. “But if I feel out of balance, I simply readjust and move on.”

Good advice from a golfer turned professor.

FREE HELP FOR TAXPAYERS

Members of Whitman’s Beta Alpha Psi Free Tax Assistance group offered free income tax assistance to 15 Syracuse University students, faculty and staff on April 3, in Flaum Grand Hall. The students covered non-complicated individual Federal and New York State tax returns that can generally be filed on IRS short forms (1040 EZ or 1040A). Taxpayers then filed their returns on their own using free E-filing services offered through various organizations.
ANNUAL BETA ALPHA PSI BANQUET RECOGNIZES STUDENTS’ ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

The Joseph I. Lubin School of Accounting was pleased to recognize these students at its annual spring banquet in April.

STUDENT RECOGNITION

INSTITUTE OF INTERNAL AUDITORS AWARD
Timothy Stitt

NY STATE SOCIETY OF CPAS CAREER PREPARATION AWARD
Undergraduate: Gianna Conte
Graduate: David Magnarelli

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As one of 10 family members to attend Syracuse University, Marc Ben-Ami has always bled orange. His decision to attend Syracuse and Whitman was cemented by the programs the schools had to offer.

Fresh out of college, recent graduates normally start in a job with a wide range of responsibilities. Ben-Ami (Whitman ’00) had the opposite experience, working with PwC exclusively in forensic accounting for 13 years following graduation. Now in his new role as director of forensic accounting at Botwinick & Company, Ben-Ami is leading and developing the forensic accounting services while being involved in a broader area of traditional services.

During his years on campus, Ben-Ami had two mentors who stood out as being critical to his collegiate success. The first, Hanna Richardson, worked closely with Ben-Ami when he was a peer advisor leader, a similar program to the current IMPRESS Program peer mentors. Richardson, currently the associate deputy director of the Renée Crown University Honors Program, instilled the idea of working together and comraderie in Ben-Ami.

The second mentor, director of Department of Recreation Services Joe Lore, taught Ben-Ami about professionalism through the way he treated Ben-Ami and other student employees. From being a team captain to organizing intramural sports, the courtesy and respect Lore demonstrated to Ben-Ami are ideals he learned and uses every day at Botwinik & Co. Even to this day, when Ben-Ami visits Syracuse he will frequently stop by Archbold to catch up with Lore.

Since graduation, Ben-Ami has been on the Accounting Alumni Council for Whitman. The council is comprised of a group of alumni in the accounting profession, who work both to connect accounting alumni as a group and to connect those alumni with current students who have an interest in accounting. In 2012, Ben-Ami was the recipient of the Whitman School of Management’s Young Alumnus of the Year award.

Ben-Ami’s advice for current Whitman students is to put yourself out there. It is never too early to network, as the parents of your friends are great resources when looking for advice and assistance. In college and during your career, it is important to be proactive when looking to see what career opportunities are in store. In the realm of career advice, Ben-Ami emphasized the importance of talking to people in similar careers and job paths.

Currently, Ben-Ami resides in New Jersey and frequently returns to campus to visit. And, as always, he bleeds orange.
For Erika Hammond, choosing to major in finance and accounting was not a difficult decision. With future plans of owning her own business, Hammond knew that this course of studies would put her in the best position to successfully run a company one day. With the help of Whitman’s vast network of resources, she has gained extensive experience in accounting and financial management that has set her on track towards this goal.

During her time at Whitman, Hammond has completed a number of competitive and rewarding internship experiences. As a launch intern for Ernst & Young, she worked with the marketing team in the capital markets department to budget for new materials as part of a rebranding campaign.

“Throughout the internship, I spent a lot of time with the accounting staff,” explained Hammond. “I learned how much effort goes into creating and checking financial statements for Fortune 500 companies.”

She also recently served as an intern with General Electric’s Financial Management Program, working with the pricing team to develop a standard procedure for pricing each department in GE Capital. Hammond had the opportunity to pitch her plan for simplifying this process to executives within the company, who eventually chose to implement her ideas.

At Syracuse, Hammond is a member of the National Association for Black Accountants as well as Whitman Women in Business. She has held leadership positions in each of these organizations, which she says have provided her with extensive experience working with a team.

“In the business world, you have to work with many different personalities, whether it’s your supervisor, team or client,” said Hammond. “Whitman is a team-oriented school. Because of that, I learned how to work most effectively with people, which is essential to getting things done.”

Following graduation, Hammond will be returning to Ernst & Young to work in risk advisory for financial institutions. She credits Whitman with helping her to develop a strong network that has led to many opportunities for success.

“At Whitman, I learned how to work effectively with people, which is essential to getting things done.”

By Meghan Rimol

**Student Spotlight**

**ERIKA HAMMOND**

‘15

Selected Faculty Publications

**SUSAN ALBRING**

“Audit committee financial expertise, corporate governance, and the voluntary switch from auditor-provided to non-auditor-provided tax services” (with Robinson, D. & Robinson, M.), Advances in Accounting, Vol. 30, No. 1, 2014.


**RANDY ELDER**

“Behind the numbers: Insights into large audit firm sampling policies” (with Christensen, B.E. & Glover, S.M.), Accounting Horizons, 2014.

**MITCH FRANKLIN**


**ALEX THEVARANJAN**


**Professional Activities**

Craig Nichols, assistant professor of accounting, was invited to present a paper titled, “In short supply: Equity overvaluation and short-selling (with Beneish, D. & Lee, C.), at the Journal of Accounting Economics Conference, November.
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Susan Albring, associate professor of accounting, had a research paper accepted for publication by Management Science, a premier academic journal. The goal of her research, “Does the Firm Information Environment Influence Financing Decisions? A Test Using Disclosure Regulation,” (with Banyi, M., Dhaliwal, D. and Pereira, R.), was to evaluate whether a firm’s information environment impacts a firm’s financing decisions within the context of Regulation Fair Disclosure (Reg FD), which prohibited the use of selective disclosure.

Albring takes advantage of a natural experiment involving a change in disclosure regime enacted by the Securities and Exchange Commission on October 23, 2000. The intent of Reg FD was to improve the form and flow of firm specific information. Specifically, Reg FD prohibits selective disclosure of firm specific information to parties outside a firm such as analysts and institutional investors with the intent to increase the flow of firm specific information in the form of public disclosure.

Theory suggests that a firm’s information environment impacts the choice between debt and equity financing. However there is limited empirical evidence to support the theory. Albring and her collaborators recognize that the effects of Reg FD are not uniform across firms. As such they consider the differential information effects of Reg FD across firms. Given the impact of Reg FD on the firm information environment, Albring and her co-authors examine whether and how the regulation induced changes in firm information environment impact a manager’s preference for debt or equity financing. The benefit of this setting is twofold. First, the change in disclosure regulation represents an exogenous shock to the information environment of firms. Hence, Reg FD provides a useful setting to empirically evaluate theory which assumes a firm’s information environment is exogenously determined. Second, the safe harbor provisions of Reg FD allow firms to continue to make selective disclosure to debt credit rating agencies, and this is an important feature to firms facing considerable costs of public disclosure. To the extent that Reg FD induces greater public disclosure, the reduction in a firm’s information asymmetry reduces the cost of and increases the firm’s preference for equity financing. On the contrary, for the subset of firms for which the regulation impedes the flow of firm specific information, managers may prefer debt financing over equity financing.

Albring and her co-authors find that firms with high proprietary costs of public disclosure are more likely to use debt financing after Reg FD. Given that Reg FD shut down the selective disclosure channel, the evidence suggests that high proprietary cost firms find it advantageous to use less information sensitive debt financing. This relationship is not sensitive to whether a firm relied on selective disclosure before the passage of Reg FD. They also evaluated changes in firm disclosure policy and found firms that adopted an expansive public disclosure policy are more likely to use equity financing. This is consistent with the contention that improvements in the firm information environment favor equity financing.

According to Albring, overall, “the evidence is consistent with theory: firms with deteriorated firm information environments increase their use of less information-sensitive debt, while firms with improved information environments favor equity financing.”
Editor’s Note: Lihong Liang, assistant professor of accounting, had two research papers published in premier accounting journals. The following is her review of both publications.

My research examines how investors and financial analysts process accounting information, reported by corporations. In a recent publication, titled “The Effect of Reporting Model on Analyst Forecast Accuracy,” coauthored with Edward Riedl, in The Accounting Review 2014 (a premier accounting journal), we examine how the reporting model for a firm’s operating assets affects the accuracy of different types of analyst forecasts. We contrast U.K. and U.S. investment property firms having real estate as their primary operating assets. These firms invest in real estate assets for rental income and/or capital appreciation. The setting is advantageous as it (i) is among the few industries in which fair value reporting can be observed for the firm’s primary operating assets; (ii) it exploits the primary reporting difference for this industry across these two countries: U.K. (U.S.) firms report these assets at fair value (historical cost); and finally, (iii) despite the latter reporting difference, this industry is highly developed in both countries, with each having a substantial number of publicly-traded firms, relatively liquid property markets and a large number of analysts following these firms.

To assess analyst forecast accuracy, we assess the accuracy of a balance sheet-based forecast (net asset value, or NAV) and an income statement-based forecast (earnings-per-share, or EPS). NAV forecasts are commonly applied in the investment property industry, and are primary inputs into analyst’s target price estimates. Accountants calculate these by taking the estimated fair value of the firm’s assets, which are primarily the real estate properties, and subtracting the estimated fair value of the firm’s liabilities, primarily debt. As such, NAV provides an estimate of the value of the firm’s net assets in place. EPS forecasts represent analysts’ estimates of the firm’s ability to generate income. We note that this industry is among the few for which both balance sheet and income statement forecasts are commonly observable.

We predict and find higher NAV forecast accuracy for U.K. relative to U.S. firms, consistent with the fair value reporting model revealing private information that is incorporated into analysts’ balance sheet forecasts. We find this difference is attenuated when the fair value and historical cost models are more likely to converge: during recessionary periods. Finally, we predict and find lower EPS forecast accuracy for U.K. firms when reporting under the full fair value model of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), in which unrealized fair value gains and losses are included in net income. This is consistent with the full fair value model increasing the difficulty of forecasting net income through the inclusion of non-serially correlated elements such as these gains/losses.

Overall, the results indicate that the fair value reporting model enhances analysts’ ability to forecast the balance sheet, but the full fair value model reduces their ability to forecast net income.

In another article titled “External Corporate Governance and Misreporting”, coauthored with William Baber, Sok-Hyon Kang and Zinan Zhu, which is forthcoming at Contemporary Accounting Research (a premier accounting journal), we investigate how external corporate governance provisions, specifically statutory and corporate charter provisions that limit direct shareholder participation in the governance process, affect the likelihood of an accounting restatement. The analysis indicates that strong external governance (fewer restrictions on shareholder participation) is associated with a relatively low incidence of accounting restatements. This evidence supports the premise that shareholder participation improves financial reporting quality. The effect of external governance is incremental to that of internal governance, that is, provisions that allow Board oversight of management, and is robust to alternative measures of external governance.
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For more information about the mentoring program, contact:

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Cindy.l.hand@gmail.com

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The Accounting Alumni Council would like to encourage you to share any experiences you’ve had getting your CPE credits. Examples include what classes you have taken or any fun or unique courses attended.

In addition if you have any thoughts about how to improve future newsletters, ideas for presentations or suggestions on events you would like to attend with fellow alumni, please email us at whitcomm@syr.edu.

ORANGE ACCOUNTING NEWS

Please send comments, suggestions, and alumni notes related to Orange Accounting News to whitcomm@syr.edu.

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CELEBRATING TRACY HALPIN’S LEGACY

Generosity, kindness and a special sense of professionalism characterized Tracy Halpin’s leadership style and friendship.

The Lubin Alumni Council, in conjunction with Beta Alpha Psi (BAP), invites the Syracuse University family to honor Halpin’s legacy by supporting the Tracy Halpin Memorial Fund. The fund supports an annual scholarship that is awarded to outstanding accounting students.

I would like to contribute to the Tracy Halpin Memorial Fund.

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Tracy Halpin 5K Walk

Halpin, a former BAP president and accounting student, died unexpectedly in 2006. Each year, Whitman students, alumni, faculty and staff gather to participate in the Tracy Halpin Memorial 5K Walk. Last year, the walk raised about $4,000 for the Halpin Memorial Fund. The walk values healthy living and student wellness.