

## Touching the Future

By Abbie Gail Parham, CMA, CFM, CPA



**Abbie Gail Parham, CMA, CFM, CPA, is an assistant professor at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Ga., and a member of IMA's Savannah Chapter. You can reach her at (912) 478-5037 or [aparham@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:aparham@georgiasouthern.edu).**

**A**lthough I didn't choose a managerial accounting track in college, management accounting has influenced my career in many positive ways, and I am now using it to influence others. After graduating, I went to work in a small public accounting firm and earned my CPA. Then I was recruited to become the controller of a subsidiary of an international manufacturing company. This was my first real exposure to the nuts and bolts of management accounting. I was responsible for everything from product costing to pension plans and insurance benefits. I was no longer just the accountant—I was part of the management team. This required my accounting skills and knowledge and management and communication skills. I completed my MBA while working, taking many managerial accounting courses.

During this time, the department chair asked me to teach a managerial accounting course. This led to what I consider my career—teaching—and I have been enjoying it for the last 19 years. I joined IMA after a colleague invited me to attend a chapter meeting where I met professionals in many different industries from healthcare to airplane manufacturing to candy and cookie manufacturing. I now have served the organization at the local, regional, and national levels.

After teaching for about three years, I felt I needed to make myself more valuable to the university and my students, so I pursued the CMA and CFM certifications! I guess I

was successful because I have served as coordinator for the introductory managerial accounting course for the last five years and as faculty advisor to the Accounting Association (IMA student chapter) for more than 15 years. My goal is to provide my students information about IMA and the CMA, and I emphasize membership benefits such as networking and leadership opportunities.

I take students to the chapter technical meetings where they can interact with professionals. This often opens doors for internships or job opportunities. Some even connect with a mentor. With financial help from the Florida Council, the Accounting Association officers attended the IMA Annual Student Conference this past year. I hope to make it a tradition. I also stress the importance of CMA certification. In my upper-level managerial accounting class, I require the students to take a simulated CMA exam (the managerial accounting portion only), and I use many of the questions for class quizzes and discussion. I also let them know that the exam isn't just accounting. This solidifies the idea that the management accountant is truly a financial professional with skills that many organizations seek.

I have gained so much through my involvement with IMA and believe the most important lessons I can share with my students are my own experiences and accomplishments. That is what I try to do every day, and, by doing so, I believe I touch the future. **SF**