

## Beyond My Expectations

By Amy Ford, CMA, CPA



**Amy M. Ford, CMA, CPA,** is an accounting instructor at Western Illinois University and is a member of IMA's Central Illinois Chapter. You can reach her at [am-ford@wiu.edu](mailto:am-ford@wiu.edu).

**M**y first experience with IMA® came as a Master of Accountancy student at Western Illinois University in 2002. At that time, WIU didn't have an IMA student chapter but had been competing in IMA's Student Case Competition for many years. I joined our team, and we worked many hours to solve the Tri-Cities Community Bank case on implementing a balanced scorecard.

Our team made the final four and had the opportunity to compete at the live finals that summer. We didn't win, but the entire experience of the case competition was truly one of the highlights of my college education. I didn't give managerial accounting much thought for a career, though. I pursued my CPA and went to work for a public accounting firm after I graduated.

When I returned to WIU as an accounting instructor in 2006, I learned that WIU had morphed its Accounting Club into an IMA student chapter. One of my duties as an instructor was to serve as the faculty advisor. I was overwhelmed at first, but with the strong support of IMA staff, especially Jodi Ryan, I learned the ropes of being a student chapter faculty advisor.

Every year I saw my involvement with IMA grow. I joined in 2006, and I attended my first Student Leadership Conference that year and my first Annual Conference in 2008. My students participated in various IMA competitions, and, with each victory, my opportunities to learn more about IMA and management accounting grew.

When I attended Student and Annual Con-

ferences, I found myself learning more about management accounting. I began to realize the wealth of opportunities available to my students if they pursued a career in this area. I found myself writing proposals to speak at upcoming Student and Annual Conferences. I even published a teaching article on budgeting in *Strategic Finance*.

Last year I reached two huge milestones in my IMA career. I was named the 2011 Ursel K. Albers Mentor of the Year and earned my CMA®. The mentor award was the result of a nomination put together by my students. Deciding to sit for the CMA was a result of five years of learning the importance of the management accounting profession from IMA.

The thought of sitting for the CMA exam had lingered with me since I came back to teach. The 2010 changes to the exam triggered my action to pursue the certification. I found the new two-part format to be very thorough in its examination of the material yet administered in a way that would appeal to candidates.

Of course I was nervous about passing. I didn't tell many colleagues or students that I was sitting for the exam. I didn't want to fail and be a bad role model for my students! The end results were beyond my expectations, as I not only passed the CMA exam but also earned a Certificate of Distinguished Performance. Now I'm trying to advocate the certification and instill the importance of management accounting to the future of accounting—my students. **SF**