



# Back to School

No matter what age you are, involving yourself in some kind of educational program can take you places you may have only dreamed about and give you insights that enrich your professional and personal lives.

As we say goodbye to summer in the northern hemisphere, many IMA® members are sending their children off to school, while others are returning to classes themselves. Throughout the world, people seek to further their education. Why? Because knowledge provides the underpinning of our society. It broadens our horizons, opens our minds to new concepts and how to apply them, enhances our ability to grow, and prepares us for the future. Education truly is lifelong.

As a management accountant, you can use education to help you achieve or exceed your life goals and career ambitions, while your personal body of work can help differentiate you from others. For those of you already working in the field, continuing professional education (CPE), which I discussed in this column last month, contributes to the knowledge base begun earlier in your career and builds on that foundation. It's the accumulation of acquired knowledge and learning experiences that

you can apply to help you grow both personally and professionally.

For those just beginning or close to beginning their careers, the challenges can be harder. Even with a college education, it has become increasingly difficult to get that needed entry-level experience in accounting. Students need to combine their education with other differentiators such as internships, certification, or involvement in professional associations. As the only association that focuses solely on advancing the field of management accounting, IMA offers much support in these areas, particularly for students and members of the academic community.

IMA now has nearly 10,000 student members around the globe along with a growing number of student chapters currently totaling more than 100 strong. This compares to 3,850 student members only five years ago. In addition, we now have more than 22,000 candidates who are enrolled in our CMA® (Certified Management Accountant) exam program, and many of them are students and young professionals. These individuals understand the importance of differentiating themselves from others and gaining a credential that will help

them stand out to employers.

IMA also continues to play an active role in the academic community, working in tandem to advance management accounting. We now have 300 Campus Advocates who are part of a formal program for educators who want to serve as on-campus IMA champions, and we've introduced the IMA Higher Education Endorsement Program, which recognizes colleges and universities with a management accounting track. To date, we've endorsed 12 institutions, and many others are in the application process. These schools want to differentiate themselves as leaders in management accounting education. In addition, we sponsor groundbreaking research through our IMA Research Foundation, celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. In fact, just last month it announced a new Research Incubator Grant Program. And IMA recently worked alongside the American Accounting Association (AAA) Management Accounting Section to develop a curriculum framework that broadens the scope of accounting education.

What if you aren't going back to school? There are many ways for members who are more estab-

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lished in their careers to contribute to the education process. You can become active with your college alumni association, work part-time as an adjunct professor, encourage your company to sponsor internships or participate in career fairs, or join IMA's successful mentoring program. You also can contribute to IMA's Memorial Education Fund or sponsor a student at IMA's Annual Student Leadership Conference, being held this year November 6-8 in Indianapolis, Ind. There are many ways to participate, and by getting involved in management accounting education and thought leadership, you will reap the rewards as well.

IMA is committed to helping support the educational needs of our members, whether they are a few years away from earning their undergraduate degree or nearing retirement. Back to school doesn't have to bring with it that childhood dread of saying goodbye to summer; it can bring anticipation and a renewed sense of how education can empower our careers and our lives.

I welcome your comments at [jvincent@imanet.org](mailto:jvincent@imanet.org). **SF**