

**Institute of Management Accountants
Student Leadership Conference 2015 Orlando, Florida
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The Student Leadership Conference this year was a great source of information for every student who is pursuing an accounting degree. All the sessions were designed to help students with better communication, networking, team work but the most important, to inform us better on how to successfully become CMA's and all the benefits it has in building our careers.

The first day started with an Exhibit Showcase. The exhibitors were from Universities that were promoting different Master programs in the Accounting/Business field, CPA/CMA review courses and also companies that gave the opportunity to many students to interview with them for accounting/finance positions. Being a Student Ambassador of Surgent CPA review in Eastern Michigan University, I helped out in their booth giving information to students about the CPA exam process and also how the review course works.

The exhibitors were: **Universities:** Kennesaw State University; Keystone College; Ohio Northern University; Penn State SMEAL; University of Chicago; Wake Forest University School of Business; Xavier University. **Review Courses:** Becker; Gleim; PRC CMA Review; Surgent CPA Review; Wiley.

Companies: Cummins Inc., Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS); U.S Peace Corps.

During the conference I tried to attend sessions that covered a lot of different areas and aspects, academic-wise, career-wise and also work-wise. In all the sessions the speakers tried to engage the students in discussions by asking for their opinions and personal experiences.

The conference officially started with a session from **Clark Jones** - Vice President of Finance, Global Marketing, Sales, Travel Operations, Technology and Public Affairs, Walt Disney Parks & Resorts. The topic was "Passionate People Drive Magical Experiences". It was very interesting to hear how he and other people who work with him, make sure that their work translates into unforgettable moments for all the Disney fans around the world. He talked about his journey and how he started his career in Disney. Mr. Jones said that every time someone would present him with a new opportunity or a new project he would always say: "I love opportunities". Also he said that every student should be: Passionate about who they are, Passionate about what they want to do, but most importantly, Passionate about T accounts!

Another very beneficial session was Zebras and Cheetahs presented by **Colby Jubenville**, Ph.D. Principle, Red Herring Innovation and design (also author of the book Zebras and Cheetahs). This session made everyone reflect on their academic and career goals. He pointed out how, we, as college students should not be going to school just to get a degree, but to get a gainful employment that will provide life quality and fulfillment later on. He advised everyone to quit competing for commodity but to compete for value instead. By value he meant: knowledge, skills, confidence and networks. In the market world those things are going to differentiate you from the others.

Also, he showed us a very nice summary of a person's career through their lifetime: In their 20s- Get Into the game; 30s Move up in the game; 40s Stay in the game; 50s ask themselves: What do I really want? Personally, I think this was a great chance to reflect and work on goal setting and also in identifying what is most the important thing to us, so we can work harder in improving ourselves in that direction.

The third session I attended was from **Maunda Land**, CMP- College and University Relations Manager, The Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA). This session was about Business Etiquette and the role it plays in today's professional world. This session was mostly a group work, where we had to identify different countries, states we had been and what impressed us most from those cultures. It was interesting how many of the students had personal stories in different cultures that "conflicted" with their own cultures. For example a very surprising fact is that if you are going on a business trip in Thailand it is likely that the host company will ask you to a "hands-off" business lunch, which mean someone will be feeding you while you discuss different contracts with other people. You should not refuse the lunch if you feel uncomfortable because it's considered disrespect.

CMA Jeopardy presented by **Amy Ford**- CMA, CPA Senior Associate Faculty, Western Illinois University. This session was an overview on the CMA exam, how many parts it has, what topics they cover, when to take the exam etc. Besides of the general information we played a game that tested our knowledge on different areas of the exam (Decisions, Bonds, Finance, and Potpourri-Mixed). It was a great chance to create an idea on the type of questions that will be given in the CMA exam and also to identify what areas we are more confident and what areas we need to work more.

A great entertainment activity we had during the second day was the Murder Mystery Dinner where we enjoyed dinner during careful investigation and discussion in our groups. This event caused a lot of laughs and was a fun atmosphere to socialize and connect with more students and professionals.

The session that summed up the conference was presented by **Kelly Richmond Pope**, Ph.D., CPA- Associate Professor of Accounting, Fraud/White Collar Crime Expert, DePaul University. This session was about how Exceptional Leaders commit extraordinary crimes. She presented interviews of people who have previously committed white- collar crimes in the companies they worked on and what came up as a conclusion from all the stories was that: Nobody starts their careers with the mindset of committing that crime, they start to rationalize their decisions by forgetting their moral principles and also learn how to do it from opportunity.

These were some insights from my experience in this conference. For next year's conference I will try to encourage other students as well to be part of it because it is worth the time. It is also a very exciting news that Detroit will be hosting IMA Student Leadership Conference 2016.