



Saint Michael's College

Knights and Days in...

BUSINESS & ACCOUNTING

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A newsletter for students and alumni of Saint Michael's Department of Business Administration and Accounting

## CHAIR'S MESSAGE – By Robert Letovsky, Ph.D.



Can we educate our students to become “creative”?

Though always recognized as important for success both in for-profit and nonprofit institutions, creativity has assumed a newfound importance in today's hyper-competitive society. All too often, however, managers confuse “creativity” in an organizational sense with artistic talent, and wrongly assume that, like gifted painters or musicians, only a select few can be truly creative. This under-estimation of employees' capacity for creativity leads to organizational under-performance, marked by missed opportunities, late reactions to new trends and surprise moves by competitors.

To avoid confusing creativity with artistic talent, it's important to understand what creativity in an organizational sense really means. In a recent interview, Dr. Ronald Burt, professor of sociology and strategy at the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business and author of the book *Brokerage and Closure: An Introduction to Social Capital*, provided a startlingly simple definition of creativity:

“When someone brings us a good idea, it's typically something that person has seen elsewhere...Value is created by translating an idea discovered elsewhere into local jargon, so that it's easy to digest. And in that translation is the act of creativity.”

Speaking directly to the question of who could be called “creative,” Burt went on to say that “...creativity isn't just the domain of

brilliant people, it's also the domain of average people who travel to other groups.” Unlike the famous composer or sculptor, a creative person in an organizational sense does not have to “create” or invent something which did not exist before, but can simply have the insight to bring together an idea or practice from one place with an audience that has yet to see that practice. This chain-like reaction is what Burt says lies at the heart of creativity.

To accomplish this type of creativity within organizations, management experts agree that traditional functional divisions—between the “finance people,” the “marketing people,” the “production people”—have to be broken down. These so-called silos which divide people with differing areas of expertise are increasingly seen as the

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## FACULTY PROFILE: Visiting Professor Karen Popovich

“Numbers are our friends” has been the introductory statement in Visiting Assistant Professor Karen Popovich's *Statistics and Operations Management* course. Her opening statements will be changing slightly as she was recently hired as a tenure-track assistant professor in the Department of Business and Accounting for management courses. Popovich has regularly taught statistics, production/operations management, and management information systems in the undergraduate business program and has taught operations management in the graduate MSA program. In her new role, she will be a part of the faculty teaching management/organizational behavior, business policy, and other management/quantitative elective and required courses.

Popovich recently earned her doctorate in business administration from Cleveland

State University in Cleveland, Ohio. Her dissertation research was titled: “Strategic enrollment management in higher education: A multivariate and nonlinear optimization methodology to enroll the first-year class.” In her research she used several advanced data analysis techniques to determine the best financial aid package to offer first-year students. She is now working with Saint Michael's financial aid office to test her model for validity and reliability.

As many of Popovich's current and future classes are quantitative based, she spends a lot of time working with students to overcome fears associated with numbers. By taking a hands-on approach she works with students in and out of class. She attempts to bring as much “real-world” experience as possible to theory-based courses. In fact, it is not unusual to see



Karen Popovich with Robert Letovsky and Walter Rom during her dissertation defense.

Professor Popovich's students on campus collecting primary research or flying paper airplanes to develop quality control charts. “We take our objectives very seriously, but we also try to have a little fun,” she says.

In her free time, you might see her “falling gracefully down the mountain” at Bolton Valley or Smugglers' Notch. No matter what the season, she enjoys the Vermont way of life.

## CHAIR'S MESSAGE...

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real barriers to creativity. Alvin Toffler, considered by many one of the most influential thinkers on management, said recently that “narrowly focused specialists may be good at incremental innovation, but breakthrough innovation is most often the product of temporary teams whose members cross disciplinary boundaries.”

Can this ability to build bridges across disciplines be taught? How can business and management programs, built as they are around courses focused on functional areas, teach the kind of attitudes that lead managers to transcend the silo mentality? One way is to give students as many opportunities as possible to work in teams and gain an appreciation for

what skills others can bring to bear on a given problem. Another is to offer courses where students adopt an organization-wide view to develop strategies and solutions that draw on a range of disciplines. Finally, business and management programs must demonstrate to students that innovative new ideas can originate anywhere in the world, and that no one society or country holds a monopoly on innovativeness.

Both the business administration and accounting majors have been built around a high level of group work and interdisciplinary thinking. The *Management and Organizational Behavior* course as well as the capstone *Business Policy and Strategic*

*Management* course require students to participate in several intense team projects. Courses such as *Knowledge Management, Leadership and Consumer Behavior* all examine business and management challenges from a number of discipline perspectives. Courses explicitly concentrating on innovations such as *International Marketing* and *Principles of Advertising* give our students the opportunity to learn where successful new ideas originate and how they can be adapted to new settings. The goal in each of these courses is to promote precisely the kind of idea transference which lies at the heart of organizational creativity.



George Fortune

## A TRIBUTE TO GEORGE A. FORTUNE

In December 2006, alumnus and retired accounting professor George A. Fortune passed away. A copy of his obituary is as follows:

**GEORGE A. FORTUNE, SHELBURNE** - George A. Fortune, 89, of Shelburne died peacefully in Fletcher Allen Health Care in Burlington on Thursday, Dec. 28, 2006, with his family by his side. George was born in Shelburne on May 4, 1917, the son of the late George and Bertha (Patnode) Fortune. He was raised and educated in Shelburne, was a graduate of Cathedral High School and St. Michael College, received his Master's of Science Degree in Accounting from the University of Vermont, and was proud to be a licensed C.P.A.

### Remembering George A. Fortune

“ When I started at Saint Michael's College some 29 years ago, I had three mentors: Joe Amrhein, George Fortune, and Harry Knight. Each of them contributed immeasurably, in different ways, to my development as a teacher. I remember George's contribution was extremely important, and at the same time, the most difficult for me to implement. It all started when I first taught *Intermediate Accounting*. Back then we had fewer faculty and my first class had 40 students, all determined to be accounting majors. Unfortunately we could only keep 20 majors due to staffing difficulties—and George's instruction to me was, 'You have to flunk half the class.' Given my style and philosophy, that was very difficult for me to contemplate, so I went back to George and asked him how I could do that. His answer has always stayed with me—'Birge, as long as you are up front and honest with the students about what is expected of them in the course, and then follow through with it, in a consistent, honest, meaningful and measurable way, they will have no legitimate grounds for complaint. They may not all be happy, but at least they will know you're fair.' ”

That's what I'll always remember about George Fortune—he was a tough, fair, and competent guy. ” ”

—BIRGER BENSON

Associate Professor of Business Administration  
and Accounting

## Remembering George A. Fortune *continued...*

“ In the mid 60s, there were two courses in the freshman year of the Dupont Plan of Studies that weeded out the least prepared students; for the business majors, they were *Physical Science* and *Accounting*. They were year-long courses with mid terms in January and in May, the latter tests covering the entire year of study. Professor Fortune was my savior. Coming back from a school vacation he called out the names in class of those students who in his estimation were not going to make it...without his help. After the rollcall, he said... ‘You will sit up front, you will ask questions, you will hand in your homework directly to me and I will review any and all questions that you may have.’ He was straightforward and in spite of his stoic appearance, had a soft spot for students. I survived the year by following his every instruction and finished the course with a “C” for which I will be forever grateful. When I returned to the College in 1973 as the Alumni Director, we became closer over the years. I told that story at his retirement party. He came up to me afterwards indicating that I embellished the story a little too much from his memory but I know that he saved me and a number of alums because of his exceptional teaching and concern for students. ”

—RIT DiVenere '67

*Vice President for Institutional Advancement*

## MEET OUR ADJUNCT PROFESSORS



**Christine Bauer-Ramazani** has been a full-time instructor at Saint Michael's College for over 20 years. Her main assignment is in the School of International Studies, where she teaches English language courses for international students; *Business English*; *Academic English* for BU113 (*Foundations of Business Administration*); and an online/distance course in the graduate MA-TESL program on *Computer-Assisted Language Learning*.

After completing her MBA at the University of Vermont in 1992, she assisted Vice President and Business professor **David LaMarche** in designing and implementing a Strategic Plan for the School of International Studies. Since the mid-1990s Christine has enjoyed teaching an English language support course for international students enrolled in BU113 or BU101 and has also taught both courses several times. She always enjoys being part of the BU113 teaching team.

After graduating from Saint Michael's in 1988 with a B.A. in accounting, **Steve Doyon** worked at KPMG LLP in Burlington for 14 years, where he performed accounting and audit services for businesses in a variety of industries. Doyon, a Certified Public Accountant, has served as an adjunct faculty member for the Business Department since fall 1995, and as a visiting instructor for the 2003–2004 academic year. He currently teaches *Financial Accounting* and *Intermediate Accounting*. Doyon serves as an officer of the Saint Michael's College Chapter of Sigma Beta Delta, the Business Honor Society, since it was established in 2003. He enjoys working with Saint Michael's College students, and enjoys sharing real-life accounting experiences, which help make the subject more relevant and accessible.



**Genevieve Jacobs** teaches *Principles of Business Communication* at Saint Michael's, and previously taught *Media and Society* in the Journalism Department. She earned her master's degree from Norwich University in counseling psychology. She says that the “The Saint Michael's student ‘zeitgeist’ springs from bright, curious, and dedicated young people demonstrating a vigorous concern not only with personal ambitions for the immediate future, but also towards envisioning a better world for all.”



**Ilona Motsiff** attended LeMoyne College in Syracuse, New York, where she majored in history and modern languages. After completing her master of arts degree, she and her husband Bill moved to Vermont to start their careers and family.

Motsiff taught at Trinity for nearly 20 years until it closed in 2000. She was then offered the opportunity to teach at Saint Michael's College in the Department of Business Administration and Accounting. In the past six years, she has taught *Foundations of Business*, *Business Policies and Strategic Management*, *Marketing*, and *International Business*.

**Mary Jane Russell**, CPA, and the director of finance at Saint Michael's College, earned a MSA degree from the College. She teaches *Managerial Accounting* and says she loves the community spirit of Saint Michael's, both inside and outside the classroom. She was formerly the assistant director of a federally-funded research center, and an audit manager with KPMG in Burlington.

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**Susan W. Sweetser** runs MassMutual's Focus Markets Department, which includes the Women's Markets Division and the SpecialCare Program. Previously, Sweetser worked for National Life Insurance Company, most recently as vice president of advanced sales. She is a certified financial planner and a chartered financial consultant. A member of the New York and Vermont Bar Associations, Sweetser is an adjunct professor of business law at Saint Michael's College and is a former two-term Vermont State Senator. She earned her MBA from the Wharton School of Business in 2002 and her law degree from Vermont Law School in 1985.

**Thomas F. Van Dzura**, CMA, CFM serves as the controller for the Society of Saint Edmund. He is a 1989 graduate of Saint Michael's and completed the MSA program in 2003. He teaches *Managerial Cost Accounting*.

**Bill Wargo** has been the Vermont Health Department's legal counsel for over 15 years. After graduating from Columbia College, he earned a masters degree in social work from Hunter School of Social Work and furthered his education by earning a Juris Doctorate degree from New York University School of Law. He has taught law for over 15 years at Saint Michael College. He teaches *Legal Environment of Business* to undergraduates and *Legal Issues of Administration* and *Cyberlaw* to MSA students.

## SIGMA BETA DELTA

*Congratulations to the following students, who were inducted into Sigma Beta Delta on March 31, 2007:*

<b>Charles G. Bouteiller</b>	<b>Danielle M. Murray</b>
<b>Charlotte A. Dzerkacz</b>	<b>Amanda Partlow</b>
<b>Sarah D. Jasmin</b>	<b>Kristin C. Pietroski</b>
<b>Matthew D. Kaufman</b>	<b>Amy L. Stoecklein</b>
<b>Kyle A. Metayer</b>	<b>Clare L. Sullivan</b>
<b>Peter R. Miller</b>	<b>Matthew R. Yuse</b>
<b>Seung-Min Lee</b>	

Sigma Beta Delta (SBD) is the International Honor Society for Business, Management and Administration.

To qualify for SBD, students must rank in the top 20 percent of their class and have completed approximately three-quarters of the program.

If you would like additional information, please contact  
Diana Hoppe, administrative assistant at  
[dhoppe@smcvt.edu](mailto:dhoppe@smcvt.edu)

## NEWS FROM OUR ALUMNI

**Dan Jackson '05** is the Director of Account Management at Dealer.com in Burlington, Vermont which offers complete online marketing solutions to the automotive industry. If you are a graduate in the Burlington area or a graduating senior looking for employment, please feel free to contact Dan Jackson directly for more information by e-mailing him at [dan.jackson@dealer.com](mailto:dan.jackson@dealer.com).

**Nicole Aubuchon '01** writes to say, "I am an audit manager with KPMG and have been with the firm for over 5 years."

**Michael P. Lefebvre '06** currently works at Union Mutual as a financial analyst in Montpelier, VT.

**Dennis Santopietro '91** is Founder/ President of Fix My Hog, Inc. [www.fixmyhog.com](http://www.fixmyhog.com) in San Diego, CA. FMH produces and distributes "do it yourself" DVDs for motorcycle maintenance and performance.

**Courtney L. Devarney '03** is the senior vice president at Universal Mortgage Processing, Inc. "I am co-owner of a mortgage processing company in Boca Raton, FL. and have been in the mortgage industry since August of 2003," she writes. "My company processes mortgages for over 25 different mortgage companies all over the country. "

**Daniela Hidalgo '97** is working for an English /Argentinian export company called Argentine Natural Food Co. They export Argentinian products (wine, lamb, dulce de leche, olive oil) to India and Dubai. She is attending the Universidad Torcuato Di Tella. She is very happy with the program thus far and is looking to graduate in December. "It is a well organized program; it is one of the top 15 in Latin America."

## STUDENT RESOURCE CENTER EVENTS

Check out the Student Resource Center calendar for detailed information:

[www.smcvt.edu/studentlife/src/default.asp](http://www.smcvt.edu/studentlife/src/default.asp)

## STUDENT PROFILE: *Erna Numanovic '07*

### Current place of internship: Kelliher Samets Volk Marketing Internship

**Q: What do you like most about your internship?**

A: I love the people that I get to work with. The culture at Kelliher Samets Volk is quite exciting. Everyone at the firm knows one another. Individuals are friendly and excited to come to work. Many people working for the firm are not much older than I am which makes it that much more interesting for me as an intern to have the opportunity to work there. I love the office space that I have been assigned to. It feels good to come to work and know that work is waiting for you with your name on it at your own desk. This experience is very important for me and I am glad that I have been given the opportunity to do an internship.

**Q: How has your education at Saint Michael's helped you with your internship?**

A: The classes alone have helped a great deal. Since this is a marketing internship, many of my marketing classes here at the Saint Michael's College have contributed to my experience. In addition, this specific internship site requires a lot of group work. Everyone works together to get the assigned task done. As a business major, I have done quite a bit of group work and this experience has better prepared me for the internship. I am working with many individuals who depend on one another to get the work done. It is important that I be reliable in order to get my side of the assigned task done.

**Q: What is one piece of advice that you could give to your fellow students about performing well in an internship position?**

A: Do what is asked of you. Don't complain but rather do the work that you are assigned. Come to work prepared and on time. When there is no work to do ask for some more. This may require that you go out on your own. Check out the different departments and ask if anyone needs help with anything. Let others know who you are and the days that you are available to help out. Be assertive. If you find your self doing a lot of busy work it is important that you speak up. Let the employer know what you are interested in and what is important to you. Establish a relationship with those around you. This will make you experience that much more worth while. Be friendly and enjoy yourself. ■

## A MESSAGE FROM THE ACADEMIC INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

– By Joanne LaBrake Muehlberger, Internship Director

THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM CONTINUES TO GROW IN VERY POSITIVE DIRECTIONS. This is happening for several reasons. First, the business department is requiring an internship position for those who qualify. Second, several students are making the decision to do more than one internship. Third, the internships are representing Saint Michael's College well. Employers consistently rave about interns, not only because they are well prepared, but because of their work ethic. As a result, we have much to be proud of. Our internship program continues to thrive.

**Would you like to learn from an internship experience?**

Please contact  
Joanne LaBrake Muehlberger  
at 802.654.2314

*Knights and Days in Business & Accounting* is coordinated by Sarah Cloutier, Graduate Assistant in the MSA department. The business and accounting department would love to hear from you! Please submit comments to [scloutier@smcvt.edu](mailto:scloutier@smcvt.edu).