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Amy K. Cooper, CPA, CFE, CGMA, MPAcc

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During this election year, FiveThirtyEight.com!

In what ways have you contributed to your firm/company to make it better?

It is really important to me to find ways to connect students with opportunities to learn outside of the classroom, as well as inside the classroom, and to help them start developing professional relationships. Employers expect students to be a professional as soon as they graduate and start working. However, there is no degree in professionalism. I am the faculty advisor for the student accounting organization, GAAP (Great Alaskan Accounting People). This organization provides students with numerous opportunities to learn about what it means to be a professional and to meet people from all areas of the accounting field and the general business community. I work closely with the students to bring in speakers from across the accounting profession and not just from Fairbanks but also across the US through video-conferencing.

I have encouraged students to serve in the AICPA Accounting Competition and for the last 3 years, we have had a team make it to the top 15. For the past 4 years, I have taken a team of 4 accounting students to Seattle to compete in the Seattle University/KPMG Accounting Case Competition. I have worked with the School of Management's Outreach and Development officer to create a resume and cover letter workshop open to all students, sponsored by the BDO office in Anchorage. We have also created, with the KPMG office in Anchorage, an etiquette seminar and dinner for accounting and business students. These are just a few of the events that we offer to the students to work on their professional development and networking.

In what ways do you participate in the professional community to change/improve the accounting profession?

I actively volunteer for the Alaska Society of CPAs and the American Institute of CPAs. I spearheaded the creation of a leadership academy for the Alaska Society of CPAs, based on

the AICPA's Leadership Academy. The mission of the academy is to "help participants

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is an AICPA conference geared to young CPAs who want to work on professional development and leadership skills. This is a 3-day event that is engaging, interactive and full of energy. I have had the opportunity to present at the EDGE Experience for the past 4 years. Every year, I am inspired by the CPAs who come from across the country who are as excited about our profession as I am.

In what ways do you participate in your local community to help others?

I currently serve on the local hospital Volunteer Services Fund Account Committee and the public radio station, Friends of KUAC Board of Directors. I am a member of the PTA at my children's school and volunteer in their classrooms and at school functions. I served on the board of directors for the Breast Cancer Detection Center, a center whose mission is to promote early detection of breast cancer for all people in Alaska, regardless of the ability to pay, for 6 years. I was Treasurer from 2008 to 2012 and Secretary from 2012-2013. I served as team captain for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life for 3 years and have been a team member for multiple years.

What changes do you foresee in the accounting profession of the near future (3-5 years)?

I think the idea of the traditional office will change into one that is more mobile and flexible. Young CPAs will come into the profession wanting to specialize in more areas than tax or audit. They will also bring with them the desire to contribute to their community and their belief that nothing is impossible.

How do you see yourself participating in shaping the future of the accounting profession?

I love accounting and I love teaching – I am very lucky that I get to combine these two

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about the future of the accounting profession

What is your career philosophy?

Find what you love to do and show your passion and enthusiasm. Work hard. Smile and try to be a little bit kinder than necessary. Try to look at problems as opportunities. I love the quote by Thomas Jefferson – “I’m a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the more luck I have.”

Describe one person who has been an important mentor to you and how that person helped change your life.

I have been fortunate to have some great mentors in my life but I always come back to my dad. He worked full-time as a physical therapist, worked a part-time job doing physical therapy home health, and went back to school to get his masters degree-all while his 3 children were in elementary school and younger. My mom worked full-time too so it was not easy for my dad to be in school as well as working 2 jobs. Yet he was always there for us, at basketball or soccer games, at school functions, helping us with our schoolwork – supporting us every way he could. He pushed me to learn about the world around me and embrace differences in others. He showed me the value of hard work, not just for myself but how it can help boost those around me. He taught me there is no point in complaining – a job has to be done so do it and be grateful. Most of all, he showed my brother and sister and me that compassion and kindness toward others is one of the greatest gifts you can give someone.

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