UPJ Accounting Alumni Advisory Board (AAAB)
Meeting Minutes
May 3, 2003

Board Members: David Braden, Gina Brawley, Kim Dorchak, Dan King, Denise Letcher, George Letcher, Matt Rigo, Janice Rummell, Rachel Loya, Kathy Wallace, Nikki Yost, Debbie Smiach Zakrzewski

Guests: None

I. Call to Order
♦ As Karen Varga, President, was unable to attend the meeting due to personal reasons, George Letcher called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees.
♦ Attendees introduced themselves, no guests were present.
♦ Dan King was nominated to serve as temporary chairperson to conduct the meeting (motion by Nikki Yost, second by Rachel Loya).

II. Approval of Minutes
♦ The September 28, 2002 minutes were submitted by Gina Brawley and approved by the Board (motion from Kim Dorchak, second by Nikki Yost).
♦ At the September 28, 2002 meeting, it was noted that the IMA Student Chapter President is supposed to serve as secretary, but is usually unable to attend the meetings. Gina Brawley suggested that the Board revise the charter to appoint a Secretary from existing Board members. After discussion, the Board decided to make this appointment at the September 2003 meeting. Rachel Loya will take minutes for this May 2003 meeting.

III. Report of President
♦ As President was not present, this report was unavailable.
♦ Dan King, acting as Meeting Chair, reviewed the Board’s mission statement.
♦ It was noted that a new President will be elected at the September 2003 meeting as Karen Varga’s officer term expires.

IV. Report on Placement
♦ George Letcher noted the following known placements:
  ✔ Four students were placed at Watkins, Meegan, Drury & Co., LLC in Washington, DC. These students were hired in the fall and would be starting in June 2003. This is the public accounting firm where Gina Brawley used to work and where Brian Beiter, another UPJ alum, is currently employed. This firm comes to the UPJ campus to recruit and currently selects a majority of their new hires from our school.
  ✔ One senior was placed at another accounting firm in the Washington DC area.
  ✔ One senior was placed at Bulow, Hottle & Co, a firm in Somerset.
  ✔ One senior was placed with the Department of Defense.
George Letcher noted that several students have expressed an interest in attending graduate school rather than searching for a job upon graduation, particularly with the tightened job market.

The national firms did not hire as many graduates this year due to the current state of the profession and decrease in available staff positions.

After coming on campus for Ernst & Young interviews, LaDawn Yesho expressed concerns to faculty that the UPJ students need to improve their interview skills. Overall, the students need to work on first impressions and place more of an emphasis on teamwork when answering interview questions. LaDawn and Dana Rusnic, both AAAB members working at Ernst & Young, offered to come talk to UPJ students on interview skills.

V. Report on Curriculum

Janice Rummell noted that she just finished teaching new course focusing on special accounting topics (such as the Enron scandal) in Spring 2003. Positive feedback was received from the students. She hopes to repeat the course in the future.

George Letcher is planning to teach a course focusing on special fraud topics in Spring 2004.

Debbie Sniach Zakrzewski discussed a project given in her Accounting Information Systems class which required students to use and learn about various software programs, including Quicken, Excel, Peachtree, and Quickbooks. UPJ’s IT lab had software for all of these programs except Quickbooks. However, with a limited number of Pitt licenses, it was sometimes hard for students to access the software. Laptops were provided by Wessel & Company for students to use Quickbooks. She is working with UPJ’s IT department to improve access under site licenses and obtain Quickbooks software to reduce technical difficulties in the class for future terms. The course was well received by the students.

There were only approximately 40 accounting majors graduating May 2003 and only 23 juniors taking Intermediate Accounting in the Spring term 2003. This represents a drop from prior levels when approximately 40 students would take Intermediate Accounting per semester.

The accounting faculty has noted some concerns regarding students.

- There is a concern about student apathy (such as not caring as much about the quality of their work, not taking the initiative to make-up missed assignments, quizzes or exams).
- There are a number of poor students who are sticking with the program, rather than dropping classes (as was experienced in the past).
- The faculty observes that there is still a small group of really great students and a small group of weak students. However, faculty observes that, what used to be the large average group of students, has diminished.

Debbie Sniach Zakrzewski noted that several students failed one of her classes and that she discussed her concerns with Dr. Gonder, the new Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs.

George Letcher noted that of his 38 students in Cost Accounting, 7 dropped and 4 received a “D”.
Faculty noted that they do not believe that these concerns relate only to the UPJ or the accounting program. These trends seem to be happening across all majors and universities. Nikki Yost, who taught an accounting class at Penn State Altoona, concurred.

Faculty noted that the accounting program is experiencing competition from other technical programs (such as engineering). Many students are pursuing a non-accounting technical undergraduate major and later pursuing an MBA.

Faculty noted that all UPJ curriculum programs are being encouraged to emphasize speaking and writing skills. Certain courses are being designated as “Speaking/Writing Enhanced”, and students will need to take a certain number of classes with this designation. The faculty is looking into the possibility of getting one of the accounting classes to qualify for this designation.

VI. Report on the IMA Student Chapter

Janice Rummell noted that the IMA Student Chapter sold Easter baskets and raised $88 to donate to the Johnstown Day Care Center.

Janice Rummell noted that the student members were strongly encouraged to attend some of the IMA Professional Chapter events. Rachel Loya noted that there was a good turnout of UPJ students at both the February and March IMA Professional Chapter meetings (approximately 10 at each).

Janice Rummell will be attending the IMA National Conference in Nashville, Tennessee in June 2003.

The following AAAB members serve on the IMA Professional Chapter Board of Directors:

- Colleen Brooks (President, Director of Newsletter, and Co-Director of Program Book)
- Rachel Loya (President-Elect and Co-Director of Student Affairs)
- Janice Rummell (Co-Director of Student Affairs and UPJ Student Chapter Advisor).

VII. Committee Reports

A. Membership

- It was noted that the Board decided previously to not limit the number of Board members. The Board will welcome any interested individuals.
- Don Mowry, whose term expired May 2000, should be moved to nonactive member status. He currently works for Ernst & Young and is working on an international assignment in Germany.
- LaDawn Yesho, whose term expired May 2002, accepted a 3-year term renewal.
- Denise Letcher offered to check with Martin Fritz, whose term expired May 2002, to see if he would like to renew.
- The following individuals, with terms expiring May 2003, accepted a 3 year term renewal:
  - Gina Brawley
  - Bill Crowe
  - Dan King
Kim Dorchak, whose term expires May 2003, declined renewal. She is still interested in the Board but unable to accept due to other commitments and time constraints. She will consider attending future meetings as a guest.

Brenda Hussey, whose term expires May 2003, contacted Maryann White and declined renewal.

Nikki Yost noted that her 3-year membership term needs revised on the roster as it should end May 2004.

Denise Letcher noted that Ronald (RJ) Saul would like to accept a 3-year term on the Board. He currently works at Alpern Rosenthal in Pittsburgh. He was unable to attend today’s meeting but would like a copy of the minutes. Denise would get his email address.

George Letcher noted that Janie Tikey contacted him and is interested in Board participation. She was unable to come to today’s meeting.

Denise Letcher suggested using a phone line for members to participate in future meetings via conference call. As it is difficult for Board members who have to travel to attend the meetings, this may improve participation. She and Debbie Smiach Zakrzewski will check with Chris Stumpf at the UPJ Conference Center about whether this would be possible and what the pricing would be.

B. Public Relations

Gina Brawley and Rachel Loya attended the Accounting Forum and distributed AAAB folders. These folders contained interviewing tips, information on the accounting profession, and contact information for the AAAB. However, the students either seemed hesitant to take the information or uninterested. Gina and Rachel had to approach the students to initiate conversation and pass out the folders. Overall, they felt that these folders were a good idea, that this was the appropriate event to distribute them, and that we should continue this effort in future years.

Gina Brawley sent a letter to 2002 UPJ accounting graduates inviting them to September 2002 meeting and to join the AAAB. Gina will work on sending a similar letter to December 2002 and May 2003 grads.

Rachel Loya noted that the draft press release should be revised with regard to the AAAB website, until it is up and running. Rachel will work with Kim Miller, Director of Marketing & Public Relations at UPJ, to publish this AAAB press release in University publications.

C. Placement

Denise Letcher noted that a spreadsheet was prepared to tally responses of the letters sent to alumni. This spreadsheet should be on the computer in Mr. Letcher’s office. Denise and Peggy Tanney would work on cleaning this spreadsheet up so that resume packets could be sent to all of the alumni who responded.
D. Student/Alumni Resources

Debbie Smiach Zakrzewski and Kim Dorchak noted that further development of the AAAB website is on hold. UPJ is currently in the process of revamping all of its websites. Debbie spoke with Jeff Sernell in UPJ’s IT Department, who will mention our goals to UPJ’s web development team and try to get assistance for us. However, the timeline for UPJ’s web development project is long. Our website issues will not be addressed until Summer 2003 at the earliest.

E. Homecoming Committee

Debbie Zakrzewski approached President Etheridge and the UPJ Alumni Association about her idea for a “Pitt”-B-Que at Homecoming. The Alumni Association had a meeting in January to work on plans for homecoming, but Debbie was unable to attend. She spoke with President Etheridge again in March and he noted that the University was still interested in the idea for the future but had not done anything with it.

F. Award Committee

George Letcher noted that only funded awards may be presented on Awards Day. Therefore, any money currently donated to the AAAB is being given to the Johnstown Education Foundation and designated for the AAAB. Once $10,000 is raised, these funds can be restricted and used for an AAAB scholarship award.

Faculty noted that donations to the University of Pittsburgh may be designated for a specific campus or department, but cannot be restricted for a certain use (such as a scholarship).

George Letcher suggested bringing Helen Golubic, from UPJ’s Institutional Advancement Office, to our next meeting to talk about how to best solicit donations and fund a scholarship. (Motion by Mr. Letcher, Second by David Braden.)

George Letcher noted that he sent Martin Fritz a list of all students. Martin had volunteered to help raise money for the AAAB Scholarship Fund. He will get in touch with Martin Fritz.

VIII. Other Business

David Braden asked if the accounting program is directly involved in recruiting new students into the program. He thinks that Oakland has a program in place where the Business School works with the Admissions to recruit business students. Faculty noted that UPJ does not do targeted recruitment for certain majors. Rather, the UPJ focus is on retention within the program.

Faculty noted that the Engineering program at UPJ had some involvement with the admissions process and it contributed to the growth of their program. Therefore, this may be something to consider.

Janice Rummell suggested focusing efforts on pre-business students, encouraging them to declare accounting as a major.

At the last meeting, the Board also discussed the possibility of talking to Undeclared students during Student Orientation. This effort would need to be
coordinated next spring (for Summer 2004 orientations) with the Admissions department.

Kim Dorchak asked what is happening to students as a result of the proposed 150 credit hour requirement for the CPA. Faculty noted that this requirement is not effective in PA, but it is in other states. In PA, it is optional as those with 150 credit hours have reduced experience requirements to obtain a license. Faculty noted that a mandatory 150 credit hour requirement will hurt UPJ, especially since there is no MBA program at the campus. Furthermore, UPJ has been unable to get a commitment from the University of Pittsburgh’s Katz Graduate School of Business (in Oakland) to accept all UPJ students into the program. Faculty also noted a general decline in student interest to pass the CPA exam.

Debbie Smiach Zakrzewski is trying to get an invitational Becker/Convisor review class to come to campus. The regular Becker/Convisor review course is currently offered at UPJ (currently approximately 12 people in the class). Both Debbie and Kim Dorchak serve as instructors. The review course is becoming more interactive but the classroom method is still popular.

IX. Adjournment

Dan King asked for a motion to adjourn. (Motion by Nikki Yost, Second by Rachel Loya.)

NEXT MEETING: Saturday, September 27, 2003 (Homecoming Weekend)