

BOOK REVIEWS

Norton M. Bedford, *A History of Accountancy at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign* (Urbana: Center for International Education and Research in Accounting, 164 pp., price not available)

Dale L. Flesher, *Accountancy at Ole Miss: A Sesquicentennial Salute* (Oxford: University of Mississippi School of Accountancy, 1997, 92 pp., price not available)

William G. Shenkir and William R. Wilkerson, *The University of Virginia's McIntire School of Commerce, The First Seventy-Five Years 1921-1996* (Charlottesville, VA: McIntire School of Commerce Foundation, 1996, 170 pp., price not available)

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To an observer of the current, sophisticated state of the many programs for business education, these programs may appear to be inseparable components of their universities. Notable characteristics of such business programs include well-developed curricula, organized faculties, consistent student bodies, and strong ties to the communities which the programs serve. Given such characteristics, these business programs may seem timeless, without any beginning. However, these programs did not always exist, and the characteristics which they display today are the result of development over time. Histories of such programs communicate how these developments occurred. An understanding of the historical evolution of programs provides an important context for evaluating current developments and challenges. Unfortunately, the body of histories of business programs is not large. Past contributions to this literature include C. Aubrey Smith's *Fifty Years of Education for Business at the University of Texas* [1962] and Maurice Moonitz's *History of Accounting at Berkeley* [1986]. However, new contributions are being added to this literature and additional histories can be expected. The purpose of this essay is to provide a brief review of the content and style of three recent additions – *The University of Virginia's McIntire School of Com-*

merce by William G. Shenkir and William R. Wilkerson, *Accountancy at Ole Miss: A Sesquicentennial Salute* by Dale L. Flesher, and *A History of Accountancy at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign* by Norton M. Bedford.

THE MCINTIRE SCHOOL OF COMMERCE

With 141 pages of text, Shenkir and Wilkerson's *The University of Virginia's McIntire School of Commerce* is the longest of the three histories. Part I covers the first 50 years of the McIntire School and takes up about one-third of the text. Part II, which represents the remainder of the text, spans the next 25 years of the School's history. Appendices list faculty members, trustees, student scholarships, and awards. While Part I follows a chronological ordering, the chapters of Part II are divided among several major themes, such as curriculum, faculty, students, and administration.

Shenkir and Wilkerson begin their history with a fascinating background of the founding of the McIntire School in 1921. While the study of economics dates to the early years of the University of Virginia, the effort to include business and commerce in the curriculum began in 1904 with the appointment of Edwin A. Alderman, the first president of the University of Virginia. Alderman, realizing the potential importance of business education in a modern economy, brought Thomas Walker Page to Virginia to establish the economics and commercial curriculum. The first step in this process was the founding of the Wilson School of Economics, made possible by a \$500,000 gift from Andrew Carnegie. As business practices continued to develop, spurred on by the economic demands of World War I, Alderman sought to provide more resources for education focusing on business administration and commerce. A gift of \$200,000 by Paul G. McIntire in 1920 resulted in a separate school for such instruction named in his honor [Wilkerson and Shenkir, 1996].

As a state institution, the University existed to provide Virginians with an education. However, the University also viewed itself as competing academically with the prestigious private institutions of the Ivy League. As a result, the University was forced to provide exceptionally high educational quality with comparatively meager resources. The authors provide an example of the concerns about quality in discussing the struggle to separate the administration of the McIntire School from the School of Economics in the late 1940s and early 1950s. While

the accounting faculty lobbied for separation from economics, the economics faculty argued that separation would lower standards. The resolution of this issue included the formal separation of the McIntire School, with its own dean, and the creation of the Darden Graduate School of Business Administration. Later, in 1971, the McIntire School established its MS in Accounting program, followed in 1989 by the creation of an MS in MIS.

Shenkir and Wilkerson effectively divide the recent history of the McIntire School into topic areas. This division allows the authors to present material in detail while maintaining a pleasant, readable style. For example, their discussion of the development of the current curriculum at the McIntire School illustrates how the curriculum has evolved in concert with changes in the business environment. This evolution is evidenced by the inclusion of concentrations in management information systems in 1974 and international business in 1994. Interestingly, Shenkir and Wilkerson also devote two sections of the text to the planning and funding of the School's infrastructure – "Physical Facilities and the Balfour Addition" and "Building an Information Technology Platform." The inclusion of this material further demonstrates the breadth of this text.

ACCOUNTANCY AT OLE MISS

Flesher's *Accountancy at Ole Miss: A Sesquicentennial Salute* follows a roughly chronological ordering through its 90 pages of text. The text is divided into 18 topic areas, beginning with the heritage of the School of Accountancy and concluding with a perspective on the School's future with reference to its current mission and objectives.

The entrance of the accountancy program into the curriculum at Ole Miss in 1917 seems less harrowing than the introduction of business as a discipline at Virginia. However, Flesher captures the many challenges which the program has faced since its inception. One such challenge was the integration of Ole Miss resulting from the civil rights movement. The author reports that the uncertainty and violence of this process led to the loss of at least one faculty member to another university. Inclusion of this difficult period in Ole Miss history gives readers a deeper understanding of the institution.

One of the most interesting achievements is the formation of the School of Accountancy in 1979. While the introduction of a business curriculum may have been tranquil, the founding of

the School of Accountancy was a fierce political struggle. The idea was considered as early as 1949 by faculty member Joseph Cerny. However, the first real progress began in June 1974, when the accountancy faculty voted in support of the AICPA's policy on the establishment of separate schools of accountancy. Flesher vividly explains the five-year confrontations between the accountancy department and the dean of the School of Business Administration, including the dean's threats of employment rejection and tenure denial for proponents of the separate school. This reaction was not surprising given the loss of power facing the School of Business Administration if a separate school became a reality. The accountancy department responded by pressing the issue with the support of donors who served on the Professional Accountancy Advisory Council. The continuing struggle led to the resignation of the accountancy department chair, who expressed his dissatisfaction with the dean's opposition in the local press. The director for accreditation of the AACSB joined the fray, warning that the establishment of a separate school might endanger the accreditation of the School of Business Administration. Ultimately, the accountancy department mustered enough support from alumni and professional accounting firms to win the endorsement of the chancellor of Ole Miss. In response to the creation of the separate School of Accountancy with its own dean, the dean of the School of Business Administration resigned his position.

In his coverage of more contemporary material, Flesher continues to provide a unique perspective. Discussing the establishment of the National Tax History Research Center in 1988, the author notes an indebtedness to donors of materials. One substantial contribution came from an alumnus who salvaged a wealth of materials nearly discarded by a public accounting firm. The inclusion of a brief section on the 1992 reaccreditation review of the Ole Miss doctoral program further illustrates Flesher's insight. The author succinctly captures the accreditation process and relates how Ole Miss addressed the process. With characteristic wit, Flesher comments on the conclusions of the AACSB visitation team, noting, "Although the team concluded that the faculty was underpaid and overworked (which they already knew), the accreditation report was quite positive" [p. 52].

Throughout, Flesher conveys a sense of the humanity of the participants. He tells of the brief service of one faculty member, Robert Kane, who left Ole Miss in 1950 for a position with the AICPA in New York. Flesher notes, "Unfortunately, the move

north was deadly to Kane, as he died while shoveling snow" [p. 8].

ACCOUNTANCY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

A History of Accountancy at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign by Norton Bedford contains seven chapters totaling 102 pages of text. Each chapter covers a 15-year period, beginning with 1900 to 1915. The final chapter conveys a sense of transition from the past to the future in its coverage of the years 1990 to 2005. Bedford titles each chapter with a theme for the 15-year period discussed: "The Origin," "The Organization," "The Stabilization," "The Standardization," "The Expansion," "The Restructuring," "The Future." Four appendices include listings of faculty, doctoral students, numbers of accountancy graduates, and the countries represented by visiting scholars since 1974.

Of the three histories discussed here, the Illinois program may call forth the greatest amount of interest from the larger academic community due to the preeminent role which the University of Illinois plays in the accountancy discipline. Throughout the monograph, readers will find evidence of the efforts that helped build this reputation. For example, Bedford relates the importance of the early leadership of Hiram T. Scovill, an Illinois alumnus, who joined the faculty in 1913. Not only did Scovill build a high quality accountancy program at Illinois, he also took on a leadership role in the American Association of University Instructors in Accounting. This leadership tradition has led to the current implementation of Project Discovery, a response to the proposals of the Accounting Education Change Commission. Throughout the text, Bedford pays careful attention to the evolution of the curriculum in concert with corresponding changes in accountancy theory and practice.

While no history can be exhaustive, readers may wish Bedford had shared more of his personal insights. Referring to A. C. Littleton, Bedford writes:

Over the period 1939-1943, A. C. Littleton served as advisor for all twelve of the first Ph.D.s granted by the accounting division. He was highly regarded by the Ph.D. students for his theoretical concepts and analyses. His open faculty office carried the welcome 'Come In' to which one admiring student added 'and crawl out' [p. 22].

Unfortunately, Bedford withholds any explanation for Littleton's apparent ominous reputation. He does, however, provide readers with a sense of his relationship with Robert Mautz, his fellow "Gold Dust Twin." In recounting their numerous awards and achievements, the author conveys not a sense of competition, but a genuine desire to contribute to the success of the Illinois program. Further, the author relates how the controversial appointment of E. J. Demaris as department head in 1965 resulted in innovations for the program. However, Bedford notes, "The task of change was a thankless endeavor and in 1974, Professor Demaris resigned as Head of the Department" [p. 55]. The change started by Demaris, and continued under the direction of Bedford as department head, included a transition in accounting research to respond to the explosive change taking place within the discipline.

Bedford's history is encyclopedic. Each chapter begins with listings of faculty serving at the beginning and the close of the time period under discussion as well as numerous tabular presentations. While this presentation is somewhat less readable than the Virginia or Ole Miss histories, this approach is not without merit. Bedford's history will serve as a useful reference for particular facts about the Illinois program.

COMPARING HISTORIES

One interesting contrast among these histories pertains to institutional relationships within the respective universities. Shenkir and Wilkerson convey a vivid sense of the early struggle for recognition for business education at the University of Virginia. Undoubtedly, scarcity of resources exacerbated this struggle. However, Shenkir and Wilkerson also demonstrate how benefactors can positively impact the development of an academic program. Such a struggle for legitimacy is not readily apparent at Ole Miss or Illinois. At Ole Miss, the University did not threaten the accountancy program. Rather, the School of Business Administration attempted to block the establishment of the School of Accountancy. Like Shenkir and Wilkerson, Flesher includes recognition of donors who support the Ole Miss program. In the case of Illinois, the author's emphasis differs from both McIntire and Ole Miss. Bedford conveys a sense of the tremendous efforts put forth by the faculty in forging and maintaining the discipline at Illinois. Also, the author portrays the Illinois faculty as providing leadership in national academic organizations. However, Bedford places less empha-

sis on the organizational dynamics which transpired between the accountancy area and the university administration at Illinois. Further, donor support appears to be an inevitable consequence of program excellence. This difference might lead to an interesting debate over the relationship between program excellence and financial support.

Another contrast can be found in the choice of material presented by the authors. The McIntire history is not as exhaustively detailed as Ole Miss and Illinois. This observation should not surprise readers. While both Flesher and Bedford focus solely on accountancy, Shenkir and Wilkerson have a broader scope of coverage. The other business disciplines included in the McIntire School require Shenkir and Wilkerson to adopt a more parsimonious approach. This parsimony is also illustrated when comparing the presentations of the development of curricula. In summary, while each history exhibits different presentation choices, those choices exhibit a sensitivity for the nature of each program.

There are also similarities among the three histories, including rich collections of photographs of buildings, students, and faculty. Such photographs allow the reader to associate a visual image with the individuals who played roles in these histories. Also, the works have broad appeal not only to the academic community but also to those interested in the educational needs of their community.

Perhaps the most important similarity to consider when comparing these histories is the role of the authors at these institutions. All of the authors have made important contributions to the success of these institutions and thus have participated in the histories which they have documented. This "participant as historian" model offers advantages and disadvantages. As eyewitnesses, the authors are able to report information unavailable to other historians, and their close relationships with other participants may result in greater candor. However, experiencing particular events as they take place may bias an author's characterization of those events.

Given the dearth of histories of business programs, these histories provide an important contribution to scholarship in this area. Moreover, as business and accountancy programs continue to mature, one should expect that more institutions will develop histories to provide constituencies with greater insights. As new histories are written, the pioneering efforts of Professors Bedford, Flesher, Shenkir, and Wilkerson will serve as a foundation upon which to continue to build this literature.

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Gary John Previts and Barbara Dubis Merino, *A History of Accountancy in the United States: The Cultural Significance of Accounting*, 2nd edition (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1998, 577 pp., \$55.00)

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Reading this book is a thoroughly enjoyable experience. While the first edition [1979] was a fine effort, this second edition is a much more academically rich achievement. The second edition has an overriding theme of the importance of property rights and its corollary in accounting, the proprietary theory. Reflecting the authors' academic and professional growth, the second edition is critical but hopeful. Likewise, the second edition is much richer in its historical discussion, reflecting Previts' experience in team teaching the history of American industrial enterprise, his presidency of the Ohio Society of CPAs, and his leadership role in the American Institute of CPAs; and Merino's long involvement with the critical school of historical thought. The authors took a much broader view of the field in this edition. For instance, the topic "Cost and Managerial Accounting" had 14 pages noted in the index for the first edition, while "Cost Accounting" had 70 pages and "Management Accounting" had seven in the second edition. The authors are also to be commended for highlighting the importance of the political nature of accounting in the United States.

The deepening of this second edition is also reflected by the following comparisons in Table 1.