

R E S P O N S I B I L I T I E S & L E A D E R S H I P
education

Bridging the Gap Between Professors and Practitioners

By Michael J. Krause

In 1992, *The Journal of Accounting Case Research* (based at the University of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada) issued its first volume, and the AICPA first published selections for its Professor/Practitioner Case Development Program. From 1992 to 2003, *The Journal of Accounting Case Research* published 227 cases, and the AICPA program produced 124 cases. While the AICPA case writing required at least one nonacademic coauthor, *The Journal of Accounting Case Research* generated significant input from accounting practitioners without a formal requirement.

The Problem

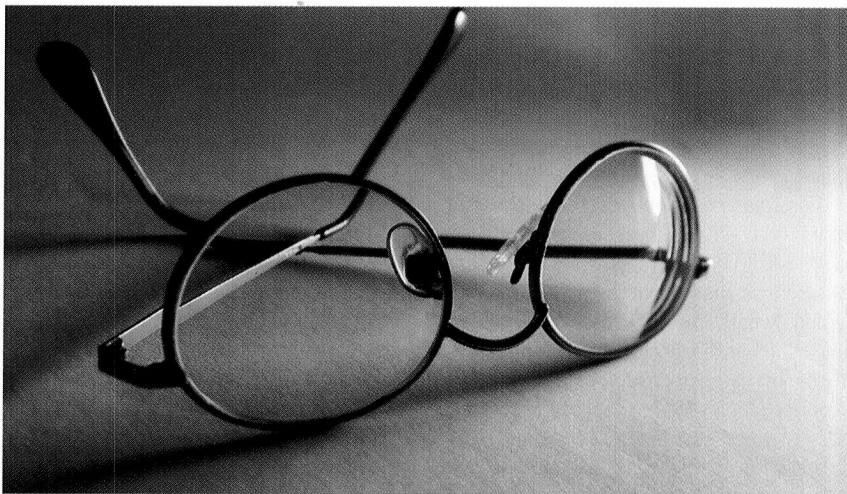
While the 12-year cumulative figures mentioned above appear to be healthy, looking at data organized by early years versus later ones reveals a declining momentum. During their first six years of operations, 199 cases were published, 57% of the 12-year total. The AICPA program experienced a 20-case decline, when comparing the program's first six years to its last six years. The outlook is slightly better for *The Journal of Accounting Case Research*, where the last six years produced three more cases than the first six years.

The AICPA monitors its published cases to make sure they continue to be relevant. Authors like David Dennis, who published eight cases through the AICPA program and recently retired from the University of South Florida, updated a previously published case upon the AICPA's request. The bad news is that the AICPA has permanently retired 20 cases because, in its judgment, they cannot be successfully updated. All 20 cases were published during the program's first six years. These retirements result in a 16% reduction in the total number of AICPA cases available. If 20

more cases were also retired for the period 1998–2003, projection shows a 38% decline in the most recent six-year database as compared to an actual 28% case removal for the initial six-year database. As witnessed when examining total cases

practitioners with private clients, public company data, and unsealed court records.

The end product produced by a local CPA firm has real potential to invigorate research used in undergraduate accounting education. Ultimately, for a case to be use-



actually published, analyzing retired cases also demonstrates that case writing as an academic priority has declined.

The Remedy

How can the bridge between accounting academics and practitioners be kept strong? Empirically trained accounting researchers should study why the case-study format has declined, if indeed it has. Accounting practitioners should get involved, be bold, and approach accounting academics with case-study ideas based upon their actual professional experience. The central problem that a case writer faces is securing real-life data. This dilemma reflects the reality that the accounting product is ultimately based upon numerous individual transactions whose volume and total dollar amount should have some degree of randomness and complete objectivity. Case writers are dependent upon individual prac-

ful, it must require that a student make a decision that leads to more than one possible solution. Based upon a practice analysis, an April 14, 2003, report by the AICPA Board of Examiners identified "judgment" as an entry-level CPA skill which by definition, enables the beginner to evaluate options in order to make decisions. This paper implicitly supports case writers searching for topics that incorporate decision making.

Accounting practitioners should donate their time by sharing with accounting academics a practical dilemma, actually experienced, that reflects professional accounting's judgmental nature. Rewards will accrue to the profession's future. □

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