

Faced with a growing need for top financial experts to help Canada's economy, the CA profession has produced a bumper crop of dynamic young students. **But don't let those fresh, smiling faces fool you; Canada's next wave of Chartered Accountants brings with it the dividends of passing through a rigorous qualification, education and experience process. Boldly stepping into the world of business, this year's CA students know –**



## CAREER DECISIONS MATTER

**F**or young Canadians in search of a fulfilling career, the Chartered Accountant designation offers challenge, lucrative and rewarding prospects,

and the opportunity to achieve their career aspirations as valued professionals in organizations around the world.

For corporate, not-for-profit, educational and government organizations, as well as accounting firms, the CA profession is a valuable source of tomorrow's business leaders.

"CAs are valued for their integrity and expertise," says Kevin Dancey, FCA, president and CEO of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants. "Becoming a Chartered Accountant requires a demanding combination of education and experience, which gives new CAs an excellent platform from which to launch their careers."

Paul Jewer is one example of a young CA whose career quickly soared. In 2002, at just 31 years of age, he was recruited to a very senior position at Sobeys Inc., one of Canada's two national grocery retailers. Today, some five years later, he is a recipient of Caldwell Partners' *Canada's Top 40 Under 40* award.

Mr. Jewer served as vice-president of finance in the student union of Acadia University and was inspired by that experience to pursue his CA designation. "What I loved about it then, and still love about it today, is the flexibility. Working in a professional services environment for a number of years provided me with the opportunity to interact with great people and learn a lot of skills – and then parlay that into whatever career I chose," he says.

In March 2008, Sobeys Inc. became the first corporate entity approved to train Nova Scotia CAs through the Chartered Accountant Training Office (CATO) program.

"The CATO program provides students with new options, and we believe that we offer a great learning experience. We're very proud to be an inaugural partner in the program," says Mr. Jewer.

"We offer training in all the core areas of accounting, with the added benefit of experience in operations, merchandising and information technology. This environment provides the full experience and mentorship necessary to develop the professional and ethical competence required of a CA."

Sobeys recognizes the value of the CA designation and its required training. "That's why it was absolutely critical for us to be first in line to become part of this program. It gives us a wonderful recruiting tool; students who join us have many opportunities to pursue their career ambitions," says Mr. Jewer.

For Chartered Accountant Christie Gradin, the designation represented both opportunity and challenge. "The CA profession is not all about numbers. It can take you into diverse and challenging corporate settings."

2008 UFE Honour Roll members (from left) Jennifer Chung, Katherine Den Bok and Jessica Jang

Today, she regards her CA designation as one of her most important accomplishments. It's taken her from a three-year stint in Bermuda to a challenging leadership position in a cutting-edge biotech research company in Saskatoon.

With the support of Saskatchewan's Ministry of Health, the company Ms. Gradin works for – Phenomenome Discoveries Inc. – is conducting clinical trials of a blood test with the potential to identify patients at risk for colon cancer. The privately held biotech company is also conducting promising research on biomarkers that may identify risk before a disease develops, as well as therapeutics designed to treat diseases such as Alzheimer's and multiple sclerosis.

"Working as a CA in Bermuda was a lot of fun; I was able to do that because of my career. Now that I'm back, I'm doing something I love. I work for a medium-size enterprise at a level where I can make decisions that affect the organization in a positive way."

With their extensive training and experience, she says, CAs are able to better evaluate and deal with challenges, so other people in the organization can sleep better at night. "Being a CA allows me to take on new tasks; to analyze, learn and understand. I can ask the right questions, which leads to better corporate decisions."

As head of the finance department, Ms. Gradin also has had the opportunity to apply her skills and expertise to the organization's IT department, operations and human resources. "And I've been able to choose where I want to be, to find the job and organization that's the right fit for me as well as the corporation."

Mr. Dancey says working for a CA firm exposes Chartered Accountants to a number of different clients and business situations. "It's a remarkable opportunity to get that variety of experience within different company structures and operations," he says, noting that mentorship, whether at a CA firm or one of the new CATOs, "is a very important element in the training experience."

The CA designation and training programs have been market tested and verified, he says. "We track ROB Top 1,000 companies in Canada, and in the six most senior positions, 24 per cent are CAs."

"That's a very good indication that CAs are capable of leveraging their financial expertise, business insight and leadership skills into many different careers. And it's a designation that is internationally recognized by all our major trading partners. For those for whom mobility is important, it is a portable profession." □