

Professor recognized for lifetime achievement in management accounting

by Vanessa Virbitsky - Monday, April 21, 2008

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Whether one is a Hollywood star, professional athlete or management accounting professor, every profession has an award to recognize the efforts of its most outstanding individuals.

By devoting 42 years to academia, authoring and co-authoring several journal articles and newspaper articles, actively participating in the Winnebagoland Chapter of the Institute of Management Accountants (IMA) and driving the management accounting bandwagon through Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh management accounting professor Lakshmi Tatikonda exemplifies excellence in her field.

Tatikonda has been honored by her peers as the 2008 recipient of the R. Lee Brummet Award — the highest level of award for management accounting teachers — for her lifetime commitment to the growth and continuance of excellence in management accounting,

Awarded by the Institute of Management Accountants, the largest professional organization for management accountants, the Brummet award is the academic equivalent of the motion picture industry's Lifetime Achievement Award.

“This whole experience has been quite thrilling,” Tatikonda said. “It shows that it’s not who you are or where you’re from, but it’s the work and the passion you use to help students and enhance the profession.”

The R. Lee Brummet award also has been won by Tatikonda’s role model and co-creator of the balance scorecard, Robert Kaplan of Harvard University Business School.

“Kaplan has been a person I’ve tried to emulate in my own research,” Tatikonda said. “To be recognized in the same class as him is an achievement in itself.”

Tatikonda is the first woman to win this highly coveted award in more than 10 years. Other winners of the Brummet award include management accounting heavyweights Robin Cooper of Emery University, Michael D. Shields of Michigan State University and David Stout of Youngstown State University.

Students of past, present speak up

“When compared to her astute colleagues, it is clear that Dr. Tatikonda is ahead of the pack, and I attribute the majority of my business knowledge to the Advanced Cost Management subjects I studied under her,” said Jeff Koga, '04, one of 20 student members of the [2004 All-USA College Academic Third Team](#). “Her passion for management accounting is infectious. In fact, whenever I attend a local business conference or event, I meet at least one person who was inspired to make management accounting their

profession or pursue their Certified Management Accounting (CMA) because of Dr. Tatikonda.”

Tatikonda’s students have had great success in taking the prestigious CMA exam. Tatikonda leads by example, having passed her own CMA with a Certificate of Distinguished Performance; Certified Financial Accountant (CFM), Certified Public Accounting (CPA) and Certified Internal Auditor (CIA) as one of the top 25 internationally; and Certified Production and Inventory Manager (CPIM) and Certified Quality Manager (CQM) certification exams on the first attempt.

“Why would you want to take it more than once?” Tatikonda asks her CMA exam students. “Although I think my standards are a little higher than the average professor, I teach my students to reach for excellence during all opportunities.”

Current UW Oshkosh business student Molly McCauley agrees that Tatikonda is more difficult than the average professor, but this only increases McCauley’s respect for her professor.

“She has a lot of work for her class, between homework, team assignments and quizzes,” McCauley said. “At first I use to really dislike having to do homework for every class period, but as time went by I realized that it was only helping my understanding of the topic.”

One of Tatikonda’s strongest trademarks is her ability to design award-winning, innovative courses. Using process orientation and applying lean methods, she transformed the routine number-crunching cost-accounting courses into practical and relevant cost management courses, a fact well recognized by employers. She has been described as “world class” among university faculty, and employers often ask students if they have taken cost management accounting courses from her.

Greatly exceeding the 35 to 50 percent national CMA passing average, 70 to 80 percent of Tatikonda’s students pass the CMA on their first attempt. She also was the instructor of Jeff Subat, BA '88 and BBA '92, the highest scoring individual in the 1992 CMA exam. Subat competed with more than 3,500 candidates from 50 states and four foreign countries in the 16-hour exam.

“Tatikonda’s most salient and consistent characteristic is her adamant resistance to intellectual stagnation,” Subat said.

Mark Muskevitsch, '04, Chief Financial Officer of JX Enterprises/Peterbilt of Wisconsin and Illinois, agrees with Subat.

“I don’t think I’ve met anyone with more certifications than she has,” Muskevitsch said. “Lakshmi is easily one of the best professors I’ve ever worked with. She was very willing to spend additional time coaching and helping to understand materials. She is a unique person, willing to move beyond current practices — truly a cutting-edge thinker.”

A history of excellence

The India native began her teaching career in the field of mathematics in 1966 and switched gears to teach accounting in 1976. Tatikonda’s teaching career has taken her to Eastern Illinois University, Nicholls State University, the University of Florida Gainesville, the University of New Orleans and, most

recently, UW Oshkosh, where she received the Distinguished Teacher Award in 1989.

“My experience at Oshkosh has been wonderful,” Tatikonda said. “There’s nothing better than the academic world. It is the most rewarding experience you can have.”

Tatikonda has been an active member of the Winnebagoland Chapter for more than 25 years, during which she initiated many unique initiatives including live CMA review classes, professional development seminars, and recognition of new CMAs and their spouses, a feature adapted by many other chapters. She serves as the Director of CMA programs and manuscripts and has been awarded the Member of the Year award seven times.

As for scholarship, Tatikonda has published several scholarly articles, some of which she co-authored with her husband and son, who also are college professors. Her articles are cited by students, academicians and professionals. Many were used as required readings in cost management accounting courses, and several received “Certificate of Merit.”

“UW Oshkosh students are getting the best class of management accounting by having it taught by Lakshmi,” McCauley said. “It will be a great thing to get to talk to future employers and coworkers about.”

The R. Lee Brummet Award will be presented June 14-18 at the 89th-annual IMA conference in Tampa, Fla.