Finding a Connection
Meaningful Communication is the Topic of February’s Seminar

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Providing dynamic leadership for the global profession of internal auditing
President’s Message

Dear Chapter Members:

I hope everyone had a wonderful Holiday Season and a Happy New Year! It’s hard to believe we are already halfway through our chapter year. We certainly wrapped up 2018 in a big way with our December Fraud and Security seminar at the Florida Aquarium. It is always a popular event but this year attendance was up almost 25%!! I hope everyone had an opportunity to visit the aquarium exhibits and participate in the penguin encounter! Member feedback produced some great ratings for our speakers and the venue. Please continue to complete your member survey after each seminar so that we can take your opinions into account when planning future events.

Our February seminar is going to be a great one. Don Levonius’s topic, “making powerful personal and professional connections” feels so relevant in our technology-driven world. With so much of our communication done via email, text and social media, it’s not surprising that connecting personally with others can be difficult. Registration is open so reserve your seat now.

We have also been working hard to stay involved at The University of South Florida to help advocate for our profession and educate students about the wide variety of internal audit careers our membership represents. We have one classroom presentation planned at USF and others in the works at other local universities.

Meanwhile, it is not too early to begin planning for next year, and we are looking for volunteers to assist us with chapter activities. If you would like to volunteer or are interested in getting involved in a leadership role, please contact one of our chapter officers or board members. We will also have a volunteer sign-up sheet at our February seminar.

As always, if you have questions or comments, please feel free to reach out to me or other members of our leadership. I look forward to seeing you at our next event.

Sincerely,

Kristina Simmons

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Preview our February seminar led by Don Levonius, which focuses on communications skills.

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As we welcome Don Levonius from Victory Performance Consulting to present at our February seminar, we asked Don to tell our members a little bit more about himself.

Q: Have you spent much time in the Tampa Bay area?
A: Tampa is a convenient getaway from our home in North Central Florida. In fact, my wife and I recently celebrated our anniversary at the Epicurean Hotel and Bern’s Steakhouse. Columbia is another one of our favorites! I also do a bit of work in Tampa. I just spoke at Armature Works in September. That place is cool!

Q: What is the coolest thing you are working on right now?
A: I just finished developing a new program called Promoting Civility in the Workplace. It’s something I’m extremely passionate about because there seems to be so much outrage, protesting, and divisiveness in the world today. Incivility has become a personal and organizational risk that isn’t on many people’s radar. Yet, 80% of employees who were subjected to uncivil behavior were so distraught that they lost significant work time. That type of toxic culture can ruin a company’s reputation, so I’m excited about this program and I look forward to helping good people respond personally and organizationally to incivility.

Q: What is something you have really enjoyed reading lately?
A: I just finished a spy novel titled Danger Close by William Boykin and The Third Option: Hope for a Racially Divided Nation by Miles McPherson. I highly recommend both!

Q: Do you have a favorite motivational quote?
A: Spend any time with me and you’ll probably hear me say (usually to myself), “Just because you can, doesn’t mean you should.” Although we have free will to choose our own actions, we should always strive to do what’s morally good and right.

Q: What is something that someone has done to help you in your career that you would like to pay forward?
A: I’ve worked for good leaders and bad leaders. What the good leaders and mentors did differently was they helped me discover what I’m good at and what I enjoy doing. Rather than telling me to “fix” what I’m not good at, they encouraged me to use my gifts and abilities. They helped me realize that life’s too short to be stuck in a job that was never intended for me, and that I am uniquely designed to fulfill a specific mission in this world. And that’s what I’d like to help others realize about themselves. Life is good when you know why you’re here.
Kristiana Hinsch serves as an example of the importance and value of education and advocacy as it relates to the internal audit profession. Kristiana enrolled in Saint Leo University as an accounting major, and completed her undergraduate degree in accounting in 2017. In the course of her studies, however, she took an auditing course, developed a keen interest in the topic, and when it came time for her to serve her internship, she chose to apply to Saint Leo’s internal audit department, which is led by our chapter’s Monica Moyer.

Today, Kristiana is a part-time staff auditor in Saint Leo’s internal audit department, having accepted a job offer following her internship, and she is a member of the IIA Florida West Coast chapter since Fall 2017. She also continues her studies at Saint Leo, working toward completing a master’s degree in accounting later this year. If that weren’t enough to keep her busy, Kristiana plans to sit for the CIA exam as well, after her master’s work is complete.

“I absolutely love what I do,” Kristiana says. “What drives my passion for internal auditing is working for a company that I am proud to be part of and being in a position to help it function better.

Current Role at Saint Leo University

In her current role, Kristiana primarily performs process and compliance audits, and doing that in a university setting, particularly one where she is an alumna, is something Kristiana finds both challenging and rewarding.

“My passion for internal audit really grew once I settled into the internship, when I realized I could protect and strengthen the university that I have come to know and love,” she says. “As a private, non-profit institution of higher education that houses its residential students, our university functions much like a small town. Therefore, maintaining compliance for a large variety of federal and state laws and regulations is integral to our ability to continue operations.”

Kristiana believes the work is a natural fit, in part because of her keen attention to detail. “Ever since I was about eight years old, I’ve had this uncanny knack for finding what doesn’t belong, especially typos,” she says. “Newspapers, textbooks – it used to drive me crazy. I would think, ‘How could something this small yet so obvious make it past the newspaper editor?’”

Kristiana says that she has gotten a lot out of her engagement with her local IIA chapter, and likes being able to take the skills and concepts she learns in seminars and apply them to her day-to-day work. She is also working toward getting certified to increase her competency and the value she adds to her team: In addition to the CIA, she plans to pursue the CISA and CFE designations as well over the coming years.

Kristiana has ambitious plans for her personal time as well. “One of my ongoing side projects is converting a half-acre side yard into a giant floral garden maze,” she says. “It will take about twenty years to complete and will feature separate paths that lead to various secluded seating areas.”

Like so many others in the internal auditing ranks, Kristiana did not set off down the path toward an IA career, but rather discovered it while on a path toward something else. As she likes to say, “I let the career choose me.”
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Two Harmon Scholarship Winners Pass CIA Exam

The John Harmon Scholarship is one of the many ways our chapter supports students who are pursuing careers in internal auditing. One of the ways scholarship recipients may use the award is to cover the costs of preparing, registering, and sitting for the Certified Internal Auditor (CIA) exam, and we are very pleased to announce that two former Harmon Scholarship recipients, Dhanisha Patel and Jordan Ghaemmaghami have passed the CIA exam.

When we caught up with Dhanisha, she had recently graduated from USF with a Master of Accountancy and completed an internship with TECO as well. “I had a great experience preparing for and taking the CIA exam,” she said. “I had a very strong foundation in the material covered on the exam from Dr. Engle’s Internal Auditing course.

“I want to thank the IIA Florida West Coast Chapter, Darren Cassels, Paul Jerome, and Dr. Engle for helping me achieve the CIA designation.”

Fraud & Security Seminar Draws Big Number

With 186 IIA and ISACA members on hand, our December Fraud and Security Seminar was one of our highest attended events over the past few years.

With the Florida Aquarium providing a fun and unique backdrop, attendees were treated to a great lineup of presentations, including an in-depth look into a fascinating real-world fraud case.

Attendees rated our speakers 91 out of a possible 100, and we received numerous positive comments about the venue, so we are thrilled that such a large attendance had a good experience.

Thanks to everyone who attended for a great turnout and to Sarah Reekstin for organizing the event.
In his book *Draft No. 4*, John McPhee, the longtime staff writer for *The New Yorker* and teacher of non-fiction writing at Princeton University describes a process called “greening.” For those of us who live and work in the Sunshine State, “greening” is probably most associated with the disease that is ravaging our precious citrus groves. But, McPhee wasn’t writing about citrus greening, which is a funny coincidence because in *Draft No. 4* he also recalls writing a 40,000-word non-fiction article for *The New Yorker* about oranges.

The “greening” McPhee describes is an editorial technique he encountered at *Time* magazine in which an author is asked to take a green pencil and mark enough words on his own article to equal the lines of text that need to be removed for the article to fit into the magazine. Needless to say, after weeks (or longer) of information gathering, pre-writing, writing, editing, re-writing and so on, it is daunting for a writer to look at a piece he considers finished and then try to identify words that add no real value to the article. Nevertheless, a colleague of McPhee’s at *Time* and *The New Yorker* said he found greening “a thoroughly enjoyable puzzle. I was surprised that what I had thought of as a tightly constructed [story] was unharmed, or even improved, by greening ten per cent of it.”

McPhee believes in the value of this skill enough that he imparts it upon his non-fiction writing students at Princeton, providing them copies of, say, the Gettysburg Address and challenging them to “Green 3” lines without damaging the content, tone, or style of the message. This is contrary to the challenge many students face in school, namely, how to make a 5-page book report out of a 3-page one. Unfortunately, the resulting bad habits often carry over into one’s professional writing, where it isn’t length, but rather clarity and persuasiveness that measure quality.

The next time you are about to submit an audit report, send an email, post a message on an intranet blog, etc., do yourself (and your reader) a favor and take a few minutes to go green.