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Passionate Number-Cruncher

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Mike Jones may owe the launch of his teaching career to an empty stomach. During a 3 a.m. snack break, while finishing a project for Arthur Andersen & Co., Jones glanced at his mail and found an ad seeking an accounting professor at Linfield College.

“If I hadn’t been hungry, I wouldn’t have seen the ad and I’d be rich and retired right now,” he said with a laugh.

Instead, as the Harold Ellington Professor of Accounting, he has spent the last 30 years teaching more than 4,500 McMinnville Campus students the intricacies of a profession that continues to excite and challenge him. He carries that passion into the classroom, sometimes so absorbed in his subject, he fails to hear the bell. His enthusiasm for accounting has taken him around the world, where he has honed his expertise in international accounting practices through skills he honed on foreign subsidiaries, import and export, and foreign accounting experience in multinational operations, accounting chapters in the textbook Advanced Accounting, and KPMG in Portland, said Jones inspired her to become an accountant, recommended her for a position at the firm and helped her prepare for her job interview.

“He challenges you and expects a lot from you,” said Michelle Lanouette ‘05, a senior audit associate at KPMG in Portland, said Jones inspired her to become an accountant, recommended her for a position at the firm and helped her prepare for her job interview.

“He challenges you and expects a lot from you,” said Lanouette, who hopes to attend graduate school in the fall and become a CPA. “Mike Jones, professor of accounting for 30 years, is known as an enthusiastic teacher and a mentor to countless Linfield students. His influence is not limited to students. Rich Emery, professor of accounting since 1986, considers him a mentor. Jones helped Emery through the promotion and tenure process and also found opportunities for him to serve the accounting profession in Oregon, such as his current position as chair of the Oregon Board of Accountancy’s Qualifications Committee.

“Mike sets high standards for himself and expects his colleagues to maintain the same standards, yet he does all that he can to help his colleagues excel,” Emery said. “He is extremely concerned with doing everything he can to make the business and accounting program at Linfield the best it can be. He constantly strives to stay current in the subjects he teaches and is always looking for new and better ways to reach his students by making the subject of accounting more interesting.”

Numbers aren’t the only things that feed Mike Jones’ soul. He says his perfect retirement job will be playing fiddle – or maybe harmonica – in a country music band. His time in Germany and Beijing only served to increase the depth of his knowledge in those areas,” he said. “The real neat for me is when we talk about comparative accounting and foreign subsidiary consolidations. It’s very technical and it’s not easy. For me, it’s fun to teach.”

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“Mike is passionate about a subject that you don’t think anyone could be passionate about,” said Dave DeLap ’80, who now heads the Portland accounting firm DeLap, White, Caldwell and Roy LLP. “He was exuberant in his classes and always smiling.”

Jones was attracted to teaching for a variety of reasons, including the urge to spend more time with his young family. It didn’t take long for him to realize he had a flair for it. “It’s fun to talk about things you know really well to people who are eager to learn them,” he said.

But even as he stepped into the classroom, he kept one foot in the accounting world and remains well-known around the state. For many years he assisted in administering the CPA exam, helped write regulations governing CPAs in Oregon and served on numerous professional committees. Those ties have paid big dividends for his students and he’s been able to match them up with accounting numbers, both large and small. Linfield alumni have established a reputation for high quality work and most years every accounting major who wants a job has one by the time he or she graduates. For example, DeLap hires Linfield alumni not through loyalty but because of their quality.

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