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April 2014 Issue

Third Huntsman Student in Two Years Wins Accounting Industry's Highest Honor



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Five Huntsman School students competed in another March Madness, going beyond the "final four" to claim an international championship.


Two student teams claimed first and second place in a competition sponsored by the Association for Information Systems that drew students from 28 universities and three countries.

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Hundreds of business leaders and students gathered on the USU campus in March to see what they could learn about management and leadership from a football coach whose team has been able to continue winning despite serious adversity.





What they got from Utah State University Head Football Coach Matt Wells, '96, Marketing, at the Partners In Busine...

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Friday, April 4, 2014

Third Huntsman Student in Two Years Wins Accounting Industry's Highest Honor

By Klydi Heywood

When Huntsman alumni Jill Aoki and Anthony Lemon received the 2012 Elijah Watt Sells Award, many marveled at the odds, but one Huntsman student took it as a challenge.

The American Institute of CPAs recently announced that Tyson Irwin, Accounting BS '12, MA '13, has earned the 2013 Elijah Watt Sells Award, the third Aggie to do so in the past two years. Just 55 people out of 94,000 candidates taking the exam this year earned the award, which is given to those who scored a cumulative average above 95.5 on all four tests required to become a certified public accountant.



2013 Elijah Watt Sells Award Recipient Tyson Irwin

"Tyson was always an outstanding student and was chosen as one of our Quigley Ambassadors because he exemplified the Huntsman values so well," said Dr. Larry Walther, department head of the USU School of Accountancy. "We are thrilled for his accomplishment at this level."

Graduates from Texas A&M, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Brigham Young University, University of Michigan, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and Purdue University were among those who earned the prestigious award.

Irwin credits his success on the exam to the School of Accountancy's roster of professors.

"The professors have a good mix of business and educational backgrounds that they bring to the classroom," Irwin said. "Additionally, the professors would often highlight how a specific topic relates to the CPA exam, or how what we were learning could be used in our future careers."

Scott Nixon, a partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers where Irwin now works, first met him at a recruiting event.

"I immediately recognized he was on the ball, displayed a mature executive presence and had a comprehensive understanding of our profession and how he could contribute to the success of our firm," Nixon said.

The odds of three students in two years winning the award is almost unheard of.

"It is no 'fluke' to have these winners of the Sells Award come out of the USU School of Accountancy for the past two years," Nixon said. "Instead, it is indicative of a trend that clearly demonstrates the incredible education the students receive. Combined with the solid work ethic that is integral to so many of the USU students. We hope that many more will follow the example of these past three winners."

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Monday, March 31, 2014

World champions

By Steve Eaton

Five Huntsman School students competed in another March Madness, going beyond the “final four” to claim an international championship.

Two student teams claimed first and second place in a competition sponsored by the Association for Information Systems that drew students from 28 universities and three countries.

“It’s nice to have some international champions roaming our hallways,” said David Olsen, head of the Management Information Systems Department. “This is the second year in a row students from our AIS student chapter have come out of this major competition with a first and second place win.”

Huntsman students Allan Follett, Conner Sorensen and Chad Williams, entered a contest that required them to create a video about information systems. Their production focused on explaining what the phrase “big data” means and why students who study in this area have increased job opportunities.

“We go through our whole education wondering if we are getting better at what we are doing,” said Williams. “We want to know how we’ll compare to the competition when we graduate. So this was a validation for us from a large organization and it was gratifying to know the judges liked what we created.”

Vishal Patel and Divya Reddy competed in the IT security category and took second place. To qualify as finalists they were asked to take on a case study that involved a company with very complex IT problems that wanted to simplify its systems and get a better return on investment. For the final competition Patel said they spent hours refining his group’s original proposal and after their presentation the judges told them that they were among the best prepared of any of the students at the event.

“It’s sort of hard to sell soft skills in a job interview,” noted Williams. “Companies want people who can work in a team and this win, which required lots of teamwork, is something we can point to as an example of what we are capable of doing while working with others.”

The contest was part of the AIS 2014 Student Chapter Conference and Competition that was hosted by Arizona State University and sponsored by major companies including Wal-Mart and State Farm.

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Wednesday, April 2, 2014

Wells on Leadership

By Steve Eaton

Hundreds of business leaders and students gathered on the USU campus in March to see what they could learn about management and leadership from a football coach whose team has been able to continue winning despite serious adversity.

What they got from Utah State University Head Football Coach Matt Wells, '96, Marketing, at the Partners In Business Leadership Conference was clear, concise and direct advice on leadership from the perspective of a coach. Coach Wells said that the people you lead must trust you and that everyone has to be prepared to meet high standards even in the face of adversity, which will always come.

Later in the day Coach Wells was recognized by the Jon M. Huntsman School of Business with a Professional Achievement Award.

Coach Wells led his team to 9-5 record and a 21-14 win against No. 24 Northern Illinois in the 2013 San Diego County Credit Union Poinsettia Bowl, despite the fact that five starters from his offense were lost to season-ending injuries during the year.

"You know adversity is coming," he said. "The minute you get comfortable or the minute I get comfortable and think this thing is going smooth, boom, something hits."

He said that he teaches his players to mentally prepare for rough times that come to everyone.

"It's just adversity," he continued. "It's called life. Deal with it."

He said there will always be stress but a leader's job is to "reduce the drama" that can come with challenges.

"There are only two things you can control in life and I'm not talking about death, and I'm not talking about taxes," he said. "I'm talking about attitude, and I'm talking about effort."

Throughout his speech he emphasized the importance of leaders earning the trust of the people they work with. He said from January to August his coaches meet weekly, one-on-one with each player, and in those meeting they do not discuss football. They talk about academics, family life and other aspects of life.



Coach Wells presents at Huntsman School luncheon

"You'd better have a relationship (with those you lead)," he said. "If you don't, all your knowledge, all your degrees, all the stuff that you have learned, goes right out the door; forget it."

"Give them something they can do and then demand that they do it," he advised. "Give your staff something that they can do physically, mentally and then demand that they do it."

At a private luncheon that day Dean Douglas D. Anderson presented Coach Wells with a Professional Achievement Award, saying that he was being given the award not just because of his wins on the field but because of the way he has succeeded.

He explained to Wells that he earned the award because of the "leadership you are providing and the leadership you are developing with our student athletes, and also the examples that you and the team are setting for this university."

"It's a huge honor, but I'm just the head coach of those guys and that staff, and it's a team effort," he said. "I couldn't do it without them. I couldn't do it without their attitude and their effort."

Coach Wells graduated in 1996 with a bachelor's in marketing, cum laude, from the Huntsman School of Business.

When people trust their leaders they will work hard to meet high standards.



Coach Matt Wells with Dean Douglas D. Anderson