

Career Advice from a Revenue Agent and MST Alumna

By Linda Yung, MST Student

In March 2012, I conducted an informational interview with Donna Rhody, an International Examiner with the IRS Large Business & International Division, who also happens to be a SJSU MST alum as well as an Advanced Certificate in Tax alum. As an International Examiner, Ms. Rhody's schedule was highly demanding with back to back meetings and onsite visits to various companies so we decided to have a telephone interview to accommodate her hectic calendar.

Ms. Rhody was helpful in answering my questions about working at the IRS and providing insight on how to succeed in the tax profession. According to Ms. Rhody, the most important step to being successful is to continue to learn as much as possible. She suggested pursuing an MST or other advanced degrees and keeping up with the tax news by reading tax articles and attending seminars. Given that we were on the topic of education, I wanted to know how the MST program at SJSU benefitted her tax career. In Ms. Rhody's opinion, the SJSU MST program was very beneficial to gaining an overall understanding of all the complicated issues involved in taxes. The MST program has professors from industry and the topics presented are relevant in the work world. The ideas were not abstract, but were applicable to her job at that time. In fact, she found the tax research class especially useful.

It is always interesting to me why people choose a particular place such as the IRS to focus their chosen professions so I posed this question to Ms. Rhody. For her, there was a great potential for career growth at the IRS and since her 26 years there, no two days have been the same. Ms. Rhody also finds it intellectually challenging because as an International Examiner, she gets to deal with the brightest people from the accounting firms, corporations, and legal firms. She recommended that students who are interested in positions within the IRS go to "USA Jobs" to search for internship and entry level job opportunities. Ms. Rhody also recommended volunteering for VITA to obtain invaluable tax experience that many employers are looking for.

My attention turned next to key attributes a MST candidate should have to be successful since I will be interviewing for a full time position in the fall. Ms. Rhody affirmed that to be successful, a MST alum should have good oral and written communication skills in order to express ideas clearly. Another attribute is self confidence, particularly under adversary conditions where clients may question the results of tax audits. Lastly, technical accuracy is important especially when dealing with tax laws.

I really appreciated Ms. Rhody's time and her commitment to helping out MST students like myself. Hopefully in the years to come, I will be able to

reciprocate and provide some of my own insights to students in the MST program.