Penn State Joe Cramer Wants More CPAS

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. — It was 1963. Joe J. Cramer Jr. had passed the CPA examination and was on the verge of obtaining a doctor of business administration degree from Indiana University.

The university set up a number of job interviews for him.

"Half of them were terminated when the interviewer walked into the room and discovered I was black," Dr. Cramer recalls.

ONE OF NINE

A professor of accounting at The Pennsylvania State University, Dr. Cramer is one of only nine blacks in the United States who holds a combination of CPA certificate and doctoral degree.

Currently, out of the more than 120,000 CPAs in the country, about 150 are black. Correcting this tremendous imbalance is one of Dr. Cramer's principal goals.

He has chosen to attack the problem on several fronts.

PROMISING MINORITY

"Since its inception in 1968, I've been a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants' Committee on Minority Recruitment and Equal Opportunity," he says.

"We try to identify promising minority group students in colleges and universities and offer them scholarship assistance.

"Most of our work is with schools where minority groups constitute a substantial portion of the student body.

"Thus far we've distributed $50,000 to each of five different traditionally black colleges," he continued.

SEPARATE FUND

"We also have a separate fund for students at other schools. Penn State, for example, received an AICPA grant to support a student during spring term and next year."

The AICPA Committee also hopes to increase the number of black professors in accounting by providing financial assistance to graduate students working on their dissertations.

Last summer, under AICPA sponsorship, Dr. Cramer designed and set up a one-week seminar in New York for accounting professors at traditionally black colleges.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

"We brought faculty members up-to-date on contemporary issues in the field," he says, "and provided an opportunity for them to get to know one another and discuss common problems and goals.

"At the same time, the committee was able to get first-hand information as to precisely what these professors thought we should be doing," Dr. Cramer added.

"The program was successful enough that we're planning another for the coming summer."

Efforts are underway to tap industry to endow chairs in accounting at predominantly black colleges.

The AICPA Committee underwrote the cost of one visiting professorship at Florida A and M, and next fall, Dr. Cramer will spend a term at that institution as the Arthur Young Visiting Professor of Accounting.

FIRST TIME

This is the first time that a major accounting firm has actually lent the prestige of its name to a black college.

Dr. Cramer will counsel students, teach, serve as a consultant on curriculum and graduate studies, conduct research and coordinate a symposium.

Dr. Cramer has also been active in the National Urban League's Black Executive Exchange Program.

DESIGNS COURSES

As coordinator of the accounting section, he designs courses and allocates topics to successful black accountants who volunteer to share their expertise by teaching for short periods at black colleges and universities.

A native of Texas, Dr. Cramer received his bachelor of business administration degree from Texas Southern University, where he met his wife, Beedie, a registered medical technologist.

They have three children. Duane is nine, Imelda, eight, and Cynthia, seven.

OPPORTUNITY FELLOWSHIP

After he graduated from college, his dean and department head encouraged him to apply to Indiana University. He received an Opportunity Fellowship from the John Hay Whitney Foundation.

"I passed my CPA exam and earned a master of business administration degree there in 1960," he notes. "I couldn't find a job which would provide me with the same opportunities available to others with my qualifications. Since I couldn't get a job I wanted, my only alternative was to continue for the doctorate."

He was named assistant professor of accounting at Penn State in 1963. During his nine years on campus, he has been active in college of business administration affairs, serving as acting head of the department of accounting and management information systems in 1971, chairing its graduate policy committee, working on its committee on faculty recruitment and in the honors program.

TECHNICAL ARTICLES

Dr. Cramer took an important role in helping design courses in introductory management accounting to be taught by computer-assisted instruction.

A member of the University's Committee on Black Studies and the Academic Advisory Committee of Upward Bound, Dr. Cramer was previously the treasurer and a member of the board of directors of the Renaissance Fund.

He also served on the University Senate. He has written numerous technical articles and co-authored a book, "Budgeting Problems," with Professor G. Kenneth Nelson.

His doctoral dissertation was published as a monograph, "Accounting and Reporting Requirements of the Private Pension Trust."

IMPORTANT TOPIC

"This is still an important topic," Dr. Cramer points out, "since about $136 billion is now held in these trusts, and legislation to regulate them is before the present Congress.

"I believe that in addition to their usual annual reports, corporations should be required by the accounting profession to publish separate financial reports concerning the operations and status of their private pension trusts.

It's necessary because of the peculiar nature of these trusts.

The accounting practices of conglomerates is another of Dr. Cramer's research interests.

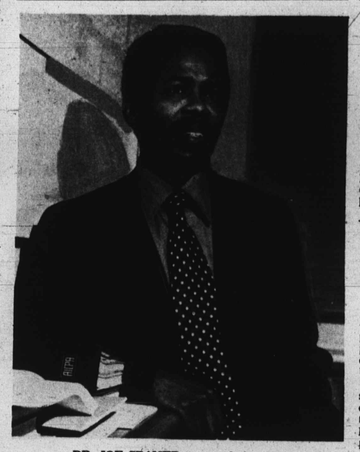
EXCITING FIELD

"The failure of a conglomerate to report completely its diversified economic activities results in the disappearance of important financial data," he maintains.

Overall, accounting is an exciting field to be in now, Dr. Cramer feels, and it is still one of the few where the demand exceeds supply.

"About 16,000 to 17,000 accountants enter the profession each year. We could use 33,000," he points out, noting that Penn State graduates the second largest number of accounting majors in the country.

"I feel that the most significant contribution I can make is to work within a growing profession — in both its teaching and professional accounting aspects—to produce outstanding accountants and to enlarge the horizons for blacks."



DR. JOE CRAMER. . .one of nine CPAs.

Black ratio

STANFORD, Calif. (UPI) — Blacks make up only 3 percent of the enrollment at predominantly white colleges, a Stanford University professor reports.

"The impression has sometimes been created that colleges are overcommitted to minorities," said Frank Newman. "Blacks as a percentage of total enrollment are barely holding their own."

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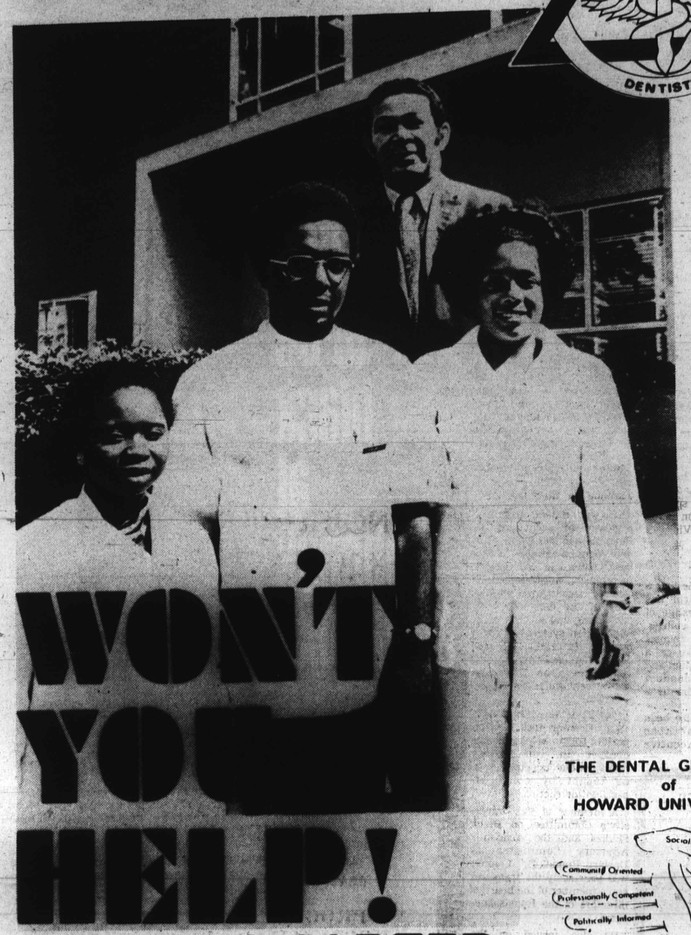

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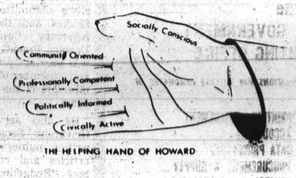

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