

Nobody disputes that the Sri Lankan University system has produced leading academics and world class intellectuals. We also find some business leaders and top professionals who are happened to be university graduates. However, if someone said to you that a Sri Lankan university degree programme producing **world class employable graduates**, that's something we not seen often in our university system. After 25 years since the first intake of the students to this tremendously successful programme, we reflect on the journey led by a man who changed thousands of lives by his sheer determination, vision and the uncompromised dedication to student wellbeing.

With the introduction of B.Sc. Accounting (Special) Degree Program in the year 1992, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, revolutionized the academic accounting education in the university system. This was at a time when the country's professional accounting education was mainly limited to privileged few and dominated by professional bodies such as CIMA and ACA. Prof. Wickramarachchi's vision paved the way to introduce a four-year Degree Program with the guiding philosophy of producing "**employable graduates**".

B.Sc. Accounting (Special) Degree programme was designed with a curriculum structure to suit the latest developments in the accounting profession encompassing a **two-year compulsory Internship Program**. Further, the Degree Program is conducted in **English medium only** to meet the national and international demand for graduates who could fit in to both public and private sector. By incorporating these two primary requirements of the employment market, this Degree Program certainly challenged the universities' traditional obsession of producing graduates who are rich in their academic intellect, however somewhat lacked employability in modern business organizations.

The B.Sc. Accounting (Special) Degree Program was a phenomenal success from its inception. As an outcome, graduates of this Degree Program are now holding top and middle level managerial positions in the corporate sector and public sector organisations both locally and overseas. Further, the majority of these graduates have simultaneously gained accreditations from professional accounting bodies - ACCA (UK), CA Sri Lanka, CIMA (UK), CPA (Australia), ICAANZ, ICAEW, IIA (USA) and ICMA.

From the beginning, the academic staff led by Professor Wickramarachchi, developed

A visionary leader who transformed Accounting education in Sri Lanka.



Prof. M. W. Wickramarachchi

the curriculum of the Accounting Degree Program by studying the accounting education models of USA, Canada, UK, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. The curriculum of the Accounting Degree Program consists of core accounting and finance subjects as well as Business Strategy, Economics, Advanced Information Technology, Business Communication, and Political and Social Sciences. Graduates of the Accounting Degree Program are armed with knowledge, skills and abilities pertaining to a broad spectrum of subject areas, which make them capable of facing ever increasing challenges of the accounting and wider business world.

With these credentials, the B.Sc. Accounting (Special) Degree Program has been well received by the corporates and public sectors. Not only that, many of them have made their mark in international workplaces. Perhaps the most evident statistic about the success of this programme is that, **out of approx. 180 graduates from first 3 intakes of the programme, more than half currently work or live overseas**. These graduates not only make our university proud, but also adding value to large organizations of the western world with their skills and fundamentals learned through the programme. Prof. Wickramarachchi and the staff of the department must be very proud of their efforts to produce world class professionals and good citizens.

Over the years, popularity of the degree programme has been clearly demonstrated by the overwhelming demand for admission to the Program. Accreditation of the Degree Program by international professional accounting bodies such as ACCA, CIMA, CPA Australia and ICAEW is

a testimony to the quality of graduates produced year after year, and also thanks to the hard work by the academic and admin staff of the department. Dr Athula Manawadu, the right-hand man of Prof Wickramarachchi was instrumental in developing the curriculum with right blend of knowledge and skills. With the competitive position that it has achieved over the years, the Department of Accounting is working to realise the mission of "**to be the premier centre of excellence in accounting education, research and industry engagement in South Asia**", under its core values: **wisdom; intellectual rigour; professionalism; truthfulness and ethical conduct; equality; and helpfulness and compassion**.

Having successfully implemented the B.Sc. Accounting (Special) Degree, now the Department of Accounting has also introduced a Master's Degree in Professional Accounting to non-accounting graduates to provide the opportunity for them to pursue a career in the accounting. Further, the Department is conducting two diploma programmes – Diploma in Computer Based Accounting (DCBA) and Advanced Diploma in Computer Based Accounting (ADCBA). These diploma programmes also provide an opportunity for those who unfortunately missed out on gaining admission to university system. In this eventful history of the Department of Accounting of University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Professor Wickramarachchi served as the father figure and guide of the alumni, students and academic staff. He has always shown the academia, alumni, and students a broad viewpoint and encouraged them to think outside the box. Prof Wickramarachchi turned 75 this year, the degree programme completed 25 years since its first intake of under graduates and the time is perfect to pay tribute to Professor M W Wickramarachchi who rendered a yeoman service to the accounting education in Sri Lanka. Accountancy graduates, lecturers of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura and their families living in Australia are organising yet another memorable event to pay gratitude to Emeritus Professor M.W. Wickramarachchi, the founding father of Department of Accounting.

This event has been organised to celebrate the success of this pioneering programme, to pay tribute to the man who made it all possible, and to mark his 75th birthday. The event will be held in Melbourne,

Australia on 10th June 2018. For further details please call Lal Gamage- 0422 454 906

A little about major milestones of Emeritus Professor M.W.Wickramarachchi's illustrious career

- Prof. Wickramarachchi obtained the Bachelor of Arts honors degree in Economics from the Vidyodaya University of Ceylon in 1965.
- Master of Economics in Accountancy and Financial Management degree was obtained from the University of New England in Australia.
- Doctor of Philosophy in Commerce degree was obtained from the DBA Marathwada University of Maharashtra in India.
- Became a Fellow Member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka, the Institute of Public Finance and Development Accounting of Sri Lanka and the Institute of Certified Management Accountants of Sri Lanka.
- Retired as a Professor of Accounting from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura in 2008 at the age of 65. However, the Department of Accountancy & Financial Management was fortunate to have his service for three more years through a strategic partnership with prominent accounting firm "Ernst & Young"
- After the retirement, the University of Sri Jayewardenepura awarded him the title of "Emeritus Professor"
- In 2009, Prof Wickramarachchi was offered the Doctor of Science honorary degree by the University of Sri Jayewardenepura,
- In 2011, the Sabaragamuwa University offered him another Doctor of Science honorary degree.
- In 2015, he was inducted into the "Hall of Fame" by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka, the most
- In 2017, he was inducted into the "Global Management Accountants Hall of Fame" by the Institute of Certified Management Accountants of Australia.

Lal Gamage

On behalf of the Accounting Alumni Association of Sri Jayewardenepura University (AAA)