



American Institute of Certified Public Accountants
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Paula Bevels Thomas

**2004 Distinguished Achievement in
Accounting Education Award Winner**

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Paula Bevels Thomas is currently the Advisory Board Distinguished Professor of Accounting and Interim Chair of the Department of Accounting at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). She joined MTSU in 1983 and has also taught at Mississippi State University and Murray State University.

Paula's primary teaching area is financial accounting; she teaches classes at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Throughout her career at MTSU, students have consistently rated her overall performance as among the top of her departmental rankings. Her former students show her to be a caring, devoted and motivational educator and role model. They learn the importance of accounting in a contemporary, complex business world and also how to be effective communicators and problem solvers. Perhaps the greatest compliment from her students is that they respect her view of them as individuals with unique situations and ambitions.

Her excellence in classroom teaching has also been recognized by both academic and professional organizations. At MTSU, she was awarded the *Accounting Advisory Board Distinguished Professor* (2002–2004) and the *College of Business Outstanding Faculty Member* (2002). The Tennessee Society of CPAs selected her to receive the *Outstanding Educator Award* (1997), an award recognizing a Tennessee accounting educator for outstanding service during the first 20 years of the educator's teaching career. Paula was the first recipient of this award and she received it after only 13 years in higher education. She received the *Award for Outstanding Performance in the Accounting Profession* (1997) by the Beta Alpha Psi MTSU Chapter.

Paula's approach to innovative classroom teaching focuses on remaining current in both pedagogical and technical issues. Continuing curriculum development is an integral part of this process. She has been actively involved with curriculum development at both the college and departmental levels at Middle Tennessee State University. She recently chaired her College's Curriculum Committee during revision of the college core curriculum and the Financial Reporting Task Force as part of her department's curriculum revision process. She initiated the Department's participation in the University's Honors Program by developing a course proposal for an honor Principles of Accounting class, attaining Honors Faculty status to teach the newly developed course, and collaborating with other departmental faculty to develop additional honors course proposals. She has also been involved in revising the department's assessment processes built around the AICPA's Core Competency Framework. Paula's active involvement in the AICPA and AAA gives her "front-line" exposure to many diverse and contemporary curriculum issues.

Paula feels that professional service is an integral part of a faculty member's responsibility. Further, she believes that service should be broadly defined to extend beyond the university and into the professional and business communities. She has actively served civic and non-profit organizations in her local community,

including First United Methodist Church, Middle Tennessee Medical Center, and various public schools. Within the university, she has served in numerous capacities at the departmental, college and university levels. She received the 2001–2002 *Outstanding Public Service Award* from MTSU.

Paula served on major committees, in numerous leadership positions and as an involved member of numerous national and state professional accounting organizations. She was a member of AICPA Council, the Academic and Career Development Executive Committee, and the Work/Life and Women's Initiatives Executive Committee. She is currently a member of the Board of Examiners, the Education Task Force Committee, the Pre-Test Task Force and the Virtual Grassroots Panel. She chaired the AICPA Curriculum and Instruction in Accounting Education Subcommittee, the Core Competency Framework Strategic Planning/Coordination Task Force, and the Pre-Professional Competencies for CPAs Task Force. She also served on numerous American Accounting Association committees. She chaired the AAA's New Faculty Consortium Committee, the Gender Issues in Accounting Section, and co-chaired the Joint AICPA/AAA Collaborative Award Committee. She was Treasurer of the Tennessee Society of CPAs and a member of various committees. She is currently a member of the Society's Council.

In addition to exemplifying the philosophy of the CPA Vision in her teaching and professional involvements, Paula has been intricately and actively involved from the beginning in the AICPA's efforts to bring the CPA Vision to the academic community. She chaired the Core Competency Framework Strategic Planning/Coordination Task Force that developed a framework of knowledge and skills for use by colleges and universities in implementing the Vision Statement into their curricula. The task force identified and defined competencies necessary for success for entry-level accountants regardless of their career path. In 1999, the task force issued the AICPA Core Competency Framework for Entry into the Accounting Profession. Since its development, Paula has worked tirelessly to expose the Competency Framework to the appropriate constituencies. She has also continued to be actively involved in the development of the Educational Competency Assessment Web site, a resource to help educators integrate the skills-based competencies needed by entry-level accounting professionals.

Paula received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Middle Tennessee State University and D.B.A. from Mississippi State University. She obtained her CPA certification from Tennessee.

Paula is married to Earl Thomas, a management professor at Middle Tennessee State University. She and Earl have three children. Kate, age 19, is a sophomore at Emory University and a member of the Emory Eagles softball team. Ben, 16, is an accomplished guitarist, completing his sophomore year in high school. Abby, 12, is a middle school student and plays on her school's softball, basketball and soccer teams.