Meet Our New Faculty:
Dr. Sandria Stephenson, CPA

The J. Whitney Bunting College of Business at Georgia College & State University is pleased to welcome Dr. Sandria Stephenson, Assistant Professor of Accounting, to our faculty. Dr. Stephenson brings an array of accounting knowledge of and is dedicated to incorporating the liberal arts principles into this field, which is often thought of as very static.

While growing up, Dr. Stephenson wanted to be a meteorologist, as she was fascinated by the weather and its impacts on the landscape. This dream shifted, however, while pursuing an internship in accounting during high school. Dr. Stephenson is fascinated with accounting, but not just with the numbers, or debits and credits. She sees accounting similarly to the weather; accounting is everywhere, it impacts people’s lives every day. Dr. Stephenson notes that accounting provides a social understanding of the world, beyond simply highlighting financial results. Accounting helps to build the foundation and the framework through which people view their socio-economic experiences.

Over the years, while working in various capacities in accounting, including in public accounting, Dr. Stephenson became interested in sharing her knowledge of accounting. Therefore, she began her teaching career as an adjunct instructor. After the birth of her son, Dr. Stephenson made the decision to pursue teaching full time. She did her research and found that the statics were staggering – less than five percent of Ph.D. graduates were minorities and even fewer black women. Dr. Stephenson knew if she wanted to advance in the field of higher education and garner the respect as a professor, she would need to earn a Ph.D. More important than wanting to advance to the pinnacle of higher education was her desire to learn the philosophical aspects of teaching and learning; she wanted to be a teacher-scholar, and a Ph.D. and post-doctorate have helped her achieve that vision.

As a Black woman who has earned a doctoral degree, Dr. Stephenson is among the very few within academia who achieved this milestone. However, it wasn’t until a conversation with a university administrator that the impact of this reality became a rallying cry to help other minorities achieve their academic potential. During that conversation, he asked her if she knew how powerful she was. This conversation make her realize she had the power to guide and make needed changes to the institutions around her. Since that time, she has used her position and encouraged those around her to see themselves as powerful, not as the “other.”

The more of “us” there are, the more opportunities there are to effectuate positive changes in society,” Stephenson said. It is with this goal in mind that Dr. Stephenson founded HELP initiative to mentor minority doctoral students to help them achieve their goals of earning a Ph.D.

It was the liberal arts concept of bringing diverse groups, disciplines, and concepts together that enticed Dr. Stephenson to Georgia College. The university’s mission as a public liberal arts institution to provide students with a breadth of understanding in areas such as history, philosophy, psychology, etc., combined with a business education, perked Dr. Stephenson’s passion of making us move forward together. The liberal arts mission aligns with her teaching philosophy of educating students for more than just finding a job. She encourages them to become critical thinkers and student-scholars. She emphasizes to her students that accounting goes beyond grades and numbers. She wants them to understand how accounting fits within their daily activities. This approach helps them understand S.M.A.R.T Learning. This is a term Dr. Stephenson coined to teach students how to situate accounting scenarios using their daily activities. When teaching concepts, whether it is intermediate accounting, fraud, or any of her graduate courses, she puts the numbers and events into context, showing the students that every action has a reaction. Accounting becomes more than “numbers on a page; it becomes people and their experiences. Using the skills, and the ability to think critically, students learn to add their judgement when helping to move us towards a prosperous society,” said Stephenson.

Dr. Stephenson is looking forward to continuing her career at Georgia College and to leveraging the liberal arts within the College of Business. She hopes to mentor students on their undergraduate research and to highlight alternate pathways in the field of accounting, other than the traditional public accounting path. She hopes the Department of Accounting will continue to grow and pursue endorsements by external organizations, like the Institute of Management Accountants, which could propel the program into the national and international space. Most importantly, she is excited to blend the liberal arts with business and to give her students much to look forward to as they grow personally and professionally.

To learn more about the accounting programs and other programs at the J. Whitney Bunting College of Business, visit the website at gcsu.edu/business.