

## **Making Quality a Career**

*By Nicole Adrian*

In addition to serving as *ASQ Higher Education Brief* editor, I also oversee the Quality in the First Person column for ASQ's flagship publication, QP. These columns usually detail authors' journeys into quality. I've found that many times, the authors don't necessarily study quality in college or begin their careers with the intention of working in quality—it's something they stumble upon and find they enjoy working with the tools and concepts.

After reading this month's *ASQ Higher Education Brief* feature articles—which focus on careers in quality, and quality programs in higher education—it appears that may be changing. With more quality programs at the university level, particularly in community colleges, students are exposed to what quality can offer them while they are in school and provide foundations they can take with them as they become professionals.

Dan Lowery, vice president of academic affairs at Calumet College of St. Joseph, writes about a master's program in quality assurance that was developed at the school in 2006. Before the program was launched, administrators conducted extensive research to gauge the extent to which quality professionals might benefit from earning an advanced degree. The research revealed that professionals were interested in the advanced degree because of the prospect of increased pay and more job opportunities.

Lloyd Kilmer of Western Illinois University writes about the quality tools and methods, such as fishbone diagrams and affinity diagrams, the educational leadership department uses to train principals, superintendents and regional leaders. By embedding these quality tools and concepts in the leadership program, students can learn not only how to use them, but also how they can enhance school operations, Kilmer notes.

In his article about community colleges and quality programs, Richard Brown of Cleary University describes his experience with the colleges' flexibility in implementing quality programs to work with local businesses. Brown points out the key attributes of using a community college, including having a group of professionals that can do the instruction, being flexible in the classes they can offer and having facilities that can be used in training, as resources for a quality improvement program. Additionally, this issue points to two valuable ASQ resources. One is the online Career Center, in which job seekers looking for a position in quality can search through hundreds of jobs. The other is ASQ's training and certification programs, which allow professionals to enhance their quality knowledge at any point in their careers.

More programs like the ones mentioned in this issue mean more students are exposed to subjects and careers they might not otherwise know of or be interested in. Who knows? Maybe a future Quality in the First Person author is sitting in a quality course at a community college classroom right now.