

# One Firm Goes Higher

BY KATHRYN MULLAN



**Ryan & Wetmore, P.C.** is a full-service accounting and advisory firm, founded by Peter Ryan (left) and Michael Wetmore (right) in 1988 to provide financial and accounting services. Since then, the firm has grown substantially as a top accounting provider in the DC metro area, with office locations in Bethesda, Md., Frederick, Md., and Vienna, Va. The firm has rapidly expanded in recent years, seeing 50% organic growth, and their practice focuses on government contractors, construction companies, and medical practices in the DMV. In 2023 and 2024, they were named one of the top 500 Accounting firms out of 46,000 firms in the United States by Inside Public Accounting.

**“I was told when graduating** from high school that the friends you make in high school set you up for college, and the friends that you make in college set you up for life. The contacts we have made through Catholic University have proven that.”

This is what Mike Wetmore, CPA, says about what the University means to him and his business partner, Peter Ryan, CPA, MBA, both from the Class of 1983. In their high-rise office building in Bethesda, Md., overlooking a growing commercial hub just outside Washington, D.C., business is booming.

These two accountants are not the typical introverted number-crunchers as they laugh and share stories about their college and career journey together. They shared the same residence hall at Catholic University and became friends via shared classes — there were only 23 accounting majors in their graduating class. They took different corporate jobs after graduation but stayed in touch, and in 1988, they decided to buy a small accounting practice together, expanded it over time, and the rest is history.

Now, 40-plus years later, their excellence in accounting growth and hiring and mentoring more than 100 Catholic University graduates continues to set a gold standard. They truly live out the mission of the school by connecting and engaging with the best and brightest of the next generation.

They each came to Catholic from different paths: Wetmore was from Gaithersburg, Md., and transferred in junior year. Ryan came from New Jersey and was recruited to play football as an offensive tackle.

“This was back in the days when many of the varsity sports were Division I — only football was Division III,” says Ryan. “My football coach was Joe Pascale...and wouldn’t you know, we still talk once a week.”

Because their accounting program was so small, they created a tight bond with both classmates and professors. One professor in particular, Dr. Frank Fraunhofer, had a profound effect on their careers, and they kept in touch until he passed away in 2006.

Ryan in particular stays involved with activities on campus and keeps up with various people he has met over the years.

“My wife is also a Catholic University graduate, and we’ve gone to 75% of the home football games in the last 40

years,” says Ryan. “I have known all the athletic directors, and Bob Talbot and I are good friends. I’m on campus a few times a month!”

Ryan and Wetmore stay engaged with the University’s alumni and athletic activities, in addition to career and networking nights, as a way to keep doors open for fresh talent, young interns or graduates with similar principles and ways of working, and a way to pay this goodness forward. They also rely on word-of-mouth and phone calls within their web of contacts.

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— Mike Wetmore

“What Catholic University taught me was the importance of a moral compass,” says Wetmore. “In our business, people entrust you with their money and their personal family relationships, and that is a big responsibility. The moral compass I formed at Catholic has guided me in my practice. And this is what we look for in every new hire that joins our firm — and we know that when we hire a CatholicU graduate, we will get high quality.”

When they graduated in 1983, the accounting department was part of the School of Arts and Sciences. The ultimate goal was to get hired by the top six firms, but Catholic University wasn’t really on the map yet.

“In terms of how far Catholic has come, when I was getting ready to graduate, I applied to Deloitte, Haskins, and Sells and had to interview at Georgetown University — they didn’t even come to our campus,” says Wetmore. “I got rejected because they were looking for a certain type of student, but now, to the best of my knowledge, all four of those big firms interview on our University campus.”

But these two wouldn’t change a thing about the path that led them to where they are — owning their own firm that they have grown organically, with Catholic University squarely in the center of their multiplication model.

“Honestly,” says Wetmore, “Getting hired by the Big 6 was one of the best things that never happened to me. If it had, I would be stringing wire with my dad as an electrician now!”

“For Mike and I, it’s always been about taking advantage of the web of friendships and networking opportunities we have through Catholic,” says Ryan. “To other firms and alumni of all years, we would say reach out and leverage those opportunities wherever you can.” ♦