Tell me a little bit about you. What are your career plans in Government Finance?

Carmen: Hello GFOA members! My name is Carmen and I am currently based in Ottawa, Canada, where I work as an analyst at the Privy Council Office. Since the onset of the global pandemic, I’ve supported economic policy development related to the federal government’s small and medium-sized business support measures, and foreign direct investment work. Previously, I worked in the Debt Management Division at the Bank of Canada, where I supported the bank’s role as fiscal agent for the government. I’m also pursuing a Master of Arts degree in International Economics and Finance from Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies. Through this degree, I hope to move forward in a career that allows me to improve the welfare of others through public policy and sound government finance. I’m particularly interested in developing and implementing macroeconomic policy with positive micro-level impacts that advance financial stability and opportunity.

Ashley: I work as the Accountant/Analyst II in the Finance department for the City of Grand Junction, Colorado. Amongst other things, I perform a wide variety of professional accounting duties involved in the analysis, maintenance, and review of accounting records, including reconciliations and financial reporting for the city’s, as well as the Grand Junction Joint Sewer System’s, comprehensive annual financial report (CAFR). Each year, I also coordinate the citywide physical inventory and maintenance of capital asset records and assist with the yearly audit in preparation for the CAFR. Almost daily, I have the opportunity to provide technical assistance and training to other finance department employees, and others in various departments, regarding implementation and...
continuation of processes and procedures, policy compliance, our ERP system, and internal controls. I love that each day in my role is different, and I never leave the office without having learned something new.

I’m also enrolled part-time in Boise State University’s Masters in Science of Accounting program, with an anticipated graduation date of April 2021.

How will the GFOA scholarship help you pursue your career plans?

**Carmen:** With the generous support of GFOA, I will be able to further increase my chances of success by spending less time worrying about the financial commitment of a graduate degree and focusing on the learning and professional growth opportunities that Johns Hopkins University can offer me. Also, access to the GFOA network and the opportunity to meet many of its members at next year’s annual conference will enable me to learn from experienced and exemplary professionals who may be able to share their insights and advice as I continue to forge my career path.

**Ashley:** GFOA’s Government Finance Professional Development Scholarship provides me with more resources and support to achieve my goal of furthering my education, thus furthering my skills and experience as an accountant for the city. Through the MSA program that this scholarship is allowing me to be a part of, I hope to gain a better understanding of accounting at a higher level, add skills to my personal toolbox, and learn how to utilize those skills in leading a variety of individuals in a positive and productive manner. I am confident that the program will challenge and teach me the skills to become a better business professional and leader for the municipality that I am lucky to call home, the City of Grand Junction.

What got you interested in local government?

**Carmen:** I am personally motivated by a sense of service, and I have a great passion for creating inclusive economic opportunity. My undergraduate degree was in economics and international development and, as such, I have always been particularly interested in understanding how governments can promote and protect socioeconomic welfare. These personal interests, along rigorous experience in domestic debt management at the Bank of Canada, sparked an interest in me to understand how governments fund themselves to advance equitable prosperity among its citizens.

What advice would you give to other people hoping to pursue a career in this field?

**Carmen:** I have greatly benefited from cultivating mentorship relationships with former managers and bosses, and I would highly recommend it to my peers. I currently have a few previous supervisors who I regularly contact for career and professional development advice. We have known each other for several years and I find it most beneficial to hear stories of their own career paths and to get their sense of opportunities for continued learning and development. I have learned greatly from these experienced professionals who have faced similar challenges and career choices and from the opportunities that their mentorship has given me to self-reflect.

What are your future goals?

**Ashley:** More than anything, I am seeking the knowledge, skills, and proficiency necessary to be an accomplished accountant and an exceptional leader to those around me in any of my professional and personal ventures, regardless of my title or position within the City of Grand Junction. While my professional career goals do involve gaining a supervisory role in the finance department at the city, I believe that the soft skills of leadership coupled with advanced knowledge and technical skill are more important than the title of management. My participation in the MSA program will allow me combine what I’ve gained from my employment and educational opportunities to better equip me with the skills and confidence I seek to achieve my personal and professional goals.

What advice would you give to other people hoping to pursue a career in this field?

**Carmen:** I have greatly benefited from cultivating mentorship relationships with former managers and bosses, and I would highly recommend it to my peers. I currently have a few previous supervisors who I regularly contact for career and professional development advice. We have known each other for several years and I find it most beneficial to hear stories of their own career paths and to get their sense of opportunities for continued learning and development. I have learned greatly from these experienced professionals who have faced similar challenges and career choices and from the opportunities that their mentorship has given me to self-reflect.

Any student who’s interested in GFOA scholarships should visit gfoa.org/scholarships. Applications for next year open in late October 2020.