Foundation Board Chair  Single Mom
Gymnast  Dale Carnegie Instructor
CPA  Community Volunteer
Felicia O’Carroll ’76 (accounting)

What I’ve Learned

When I attended the University, I never thought much about the future. I got married during my senior year of college and changed majors from nutrition to accounting. During my senior year of accounting, I was offered an internship with Kafoury, Armstrong & Co., a certified public accounting firm, which led to full-time employment with the firm when I graduated. Today, I have been with the firm for 37 years and was elected the first female shareholder in its history. Deciding to work for Kafoury, Armstrong became Great Decision No. 1.

Kafoury, Armstrong has been like a second family to me. It understands that, when people are happy with what they do outside of work, they become better employees. When I first started as a CPA, there were very few females in the profession. It was quite an ordeal to become the first woman shareholder, but I had great role models and mentors who helped me. Now females constitute 60 percent of Kafoury, Armstrong’s shareholder group, and being a positive role model for our female accountants is one of my top priorities. I seriously considered leaving only twice in 37 years, but still remain today—Great Decisions No. 2 and 3.

The birth of my son T.J. was a pivotal point in my career. His birth grounded me personally and professionally. Raising him as a single parent put everything in perspective and helped me balance my life and work. Today, I seriously consider leaving only twice in 37 years, but still remain today—Great Decisions No. 2 and 3.

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The birth of my son T.J. was a pivotal point in my career. His birth grounded me personally and professionally. Raising him as a single parent put everything in perspective and helped me balance my life and work. Today, he has a master’s in accountancy from Nevada and is getting a second master’s in sport management at the University of San Francisco, while living his dream as an intern with the San Francisco Giants. Our bond remains my anchor.

Ten years ago, I accepted a position on the University’s Foundation Board, which reconnected me to my University roots and became Great Decision No. 5. As a trustee, I have served with four University presidents and several inspirational board chairs. Each brought a different skillset to the table and inspired me in different ways. As the incoming board chair, I want to live up to their examples to motivate and inspire, and help spread the word about the remarkable things happening on campus.

I believe education is the key to success and enlightenment. My Nevada education is the primary reason for where I am today. The College of Business’ accounting department provided a strong foundation which prepared me to sit for and pass the CPA exam and progress in my career. As an undergraduate, I competed on the women’s gymnastics team for four years, which kept me on campus for long hours each day and enriched my college experience.

What I’ve learned through all of my “Great Decisions” is that life is about problem-solving, people skills and humility. We all face challenges every day and it is how we respond to those challenges that reveal our true character. We need humility to admit when we don’t know the answers and when to admit when we need help. Humility allows us to learn and grow. I strongly believe that everyone who crosses my path does so for a reason; either I am supposed to learn from them or them from me. The challenge (and fun) is figuring out that connection.

From a conversation in November with Crystal Parrish, director, corporate and foundation relations. O’Carroll, a 1976 Nevada accounting graduate, is the 2013 Foundation Board Chair. She received her master’s in taxation from Golden Gate University in 1988. She is the managing shareholder of the Reno office of Kafoury, Armstrong & Co, a statewide certified public accounting firm. She received the Nevada Alumni Association’s professional achievement award in 2008 and supports numerous programs on campus, including scholarships, the Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center, the Silver and Blue Society and Nevada Athletics. She has served on many local and national boards and professional associations, including the Sanford Center for Aging.

Photo by Theresa Donna Douglas