



My CEBS!

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In early 2012, my employer decided to start recruiting for a benefits manager. Our company, Whiting Petroleum, had experienced significant growth and, with that growth, the task of benefit administration had increased to a point where we felt we could use some additional help. At the time, I assisted the vice president of human resources with the benefit work in the HR department, and the thought was that I would continue in that role and be mentored by the new benefits manager.

Our chief executive officer requested that the new hire have the CEBS designation. Although we narrowed our selection to two qualified candidates, our department was divided as to who would best fit the opening. We ultimately decided against hiring either of the benefit professionals. So, in June 2012, I approached my boss and asked if I could start the process of obtaining the CEBS designation and keep the benefits job in-house. She agreed with my proposal, and I looked into starting the process.

I started with the GBA 2 course and opted for self-study. It took a while to get into a routine but, once I did, I found my rhythm. I opted to do a bit of reading each night after dinner, typically an hour each evening, and additional reading on the weekend if I couldn't get through the entire weekly assignment. I completed this first course and arranged to take the exam, which I passed. While I was nearing the end of the first course I signed up for the next class, GBA 1. This time I tried the online class and liked the additional tools and resources it offered. I especially liked the games and the quizzes. They were very helpful in studying for the

finals and staying on task with the assignments.

I stayed with the online format for the remainder of my CEBS courses because it worked best for me. During each course I stayed with the lesson schedule as outlined on the syllabus. I also participated in the review sessions and used the practice exams to see where I needed further studying.

Then—on to the next course. During the eight classes, I only sat out one semester during an especially busy time in my home and work life. As soon as things settled down, I enrolled in another course. It took me three years to earn my CEBS at this pace.

Last fall I began receiving materials about the ISCEBS Employee Benefits Symposium in Vancouver. I was very interested in attending the conference and decided to set the goal of attending at my annual performance review. I needed to finish my last two classes and would be ready to participate in the conferment ceremony in Vancouver if I stayed on track. With my boss's approval, I registered for the conference.

On June 11, I passed my final course, RPA 3 (Asset Management), earning my CEBS designation. I felt a great sense of accomplishment at reaching the goal I had set for myself. I am most proud of my ability to balance my busy home and work life with studying for the designation. I work full-time, am married and have three children and two grandchildren. I have a large extended family and managed to find the time to study in spite of my many family commitments. It took some juggling, but it was totally doable.

Attending the conference was a well-deserved reward for all of my hard work. My husband joined me on the trip, and we added some days on the front and back end of the conference as vacation time. We both enjoyed our time in Vancouver immensely. We attended the conferment and the reception afterward. We also participated in the sign and dine and took one of the tours the British Columbia Chapter arranged. My husband also went to the informational session about sightseeing in Vancouver while I attended the conference sessions.

I enjoyed the keynote speaker on multigenerational benefit challenges and the various sessions on topics ranging from the ACA to retirement income adequacy. Additionally, I met a lot of great fellow benefit professionals, including my local contingent from Colorado.

All in all, my experience over the past three years has been very positive. I feel like I am much better equipped with my newfound knowledge to tackle the benefit situations I encounter at work daily. I also have built a support system of like-minded individuals whom I can reach out to when I have questions or concerns. I hope others will read about my experience and be inspired to continue on their journey or take the first step in this exciting endeavor.

Learn more about the CEBS program and the steps to get started at www.cebs.org.



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