

National American University Offered Couple “Exciting and Relevant Education” and Life Long Connections

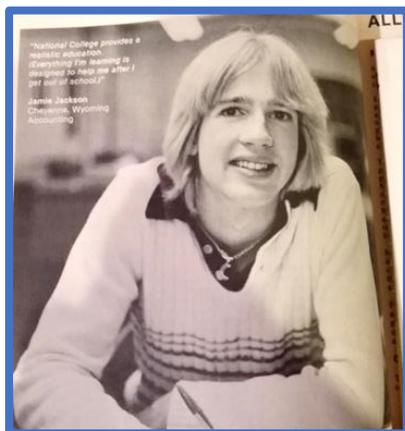
In 1978, Michelle West was contemplating where she would go to college. She considered state colleges in other states, but they seemed too far away. National College in Rapid City, South Dakota caught her eye because it was a smaller college that was relatively close to her hometown of Gordon, Nebraska. The greatest draw for her, however, was that she didn’t have to wait to begin taking the classes that interested her.

“National College offered career-related courses right from the start. I think that makes education more exciting and relevant,” Michelle explained for the National College catalog while she was pursuing her computer programming and accounting degrees.

Although some family and friends ribbed her about going to a business college, she was confident in her decision. “I didn’t want to party. I even avoided living in the dorm,” said Michelle. “I was pretty focused on my goals and knew that National College would be a good fit for me.”



Michelle (West) Jackson in 1981 in the National College Catalog.



Jamie Jackson in 1981 in the National College Catalog.

Meanwhile, about this same time, Jamie Jackson, from Cheyenne, Wyoming, heard from a National College recruiter. Like Michelle, Jamie was focused on earning a degree that was “realistic,” one that would have immediate application upon graduation. Jamie had a strong interest in business and accounting, so attending a business college made sense.

Thanks to their overlapping accounting classes, the two met. Michelle graduated in 1981 and they married shortly after. Jamie graduated in 1982, “and the rest is history,” said Michelle.

While attending National College, Michelle worked for the late-Dallas Dietrich, a fellow alumnus who also served as the college’s placement director. Michelle was hired to communicate with alumni and interview them to help support placement data. She also coordinated national companies to interview graduating students. One of the most popular companies hiring graduates at the time was NCR

of cash register fame. At that time, NCR hired many computer programmers from National College's data processing department.

"I spent a lot of time on the phone," Michelle recalls. "It was a challenge keeping track of everyone because we didn't have the internet back then."

After graduation, Michelle put her computer knowledge to work at ComputerLand, a retailer of the first Apple and other computers, in downtown Rapid City. As Jamie approached graduation, Michelle's ComputerLand boss asked her to deliver a computer to a customer in Idaho. Since they were already driving west for the Idaho delivery, they arranged for Jamie to have an interview with the international CPA firm, Ernst & Whinney (E&W) (now Ernst & Young) in Salt Lake City. Michelle remembers "When Jamie interviewed with Ernst & Whinney, they saw his potential even though he hadn't yet graduated or taken the CPA exam." The job offer and acceptance happened quickly.

Back in South Dakota, and shortly before graduating, Jamie took and passed the Certified Public Accounting (CPA) exam. He and fellow National College accounting friends had traveled to Pierre, SD to take the test. Michelle laughed when stating "None of the group studied much the night before the test. I think they played cards!" Michelle credits the NCB faculty at the time for having the group well-prepared. "We had such great teachers," said Michelle. "They were actual accountants and professionals in their fields. They taught from the real world and not just from textbooks."

The Jacksons moved to Salt Lake City shortly after Jamie's graduation. As Jamie began his accounting career, he soon learned that he passed the CPA exam, a career highlight at the time. He was on the E&W audit team at Morton Thiokol in Brigham City, Utah when the Challenger space shuttle blew up in 1986. Morton Thiokol manufactured the O-ring that was at fault causing the explosion, and the cultural environment at the plant flipped like a switch overnight. "My public accounting experiences have been so valuable to my overall knowledge and leadership development," Jamie explains.

Michelle got a job setting up and opening a computer supplies and accessories store which was affiliated with a small personal computer outlet in Salt Lake City. Eventually she was moved into purchasing for the whole store. "It was an exciting time of development in the industry of small computers. Apple and IBM were just getting into the small computer market. Every customer wanted a computer, but the supply was just being cracked open," Michelle remembers.

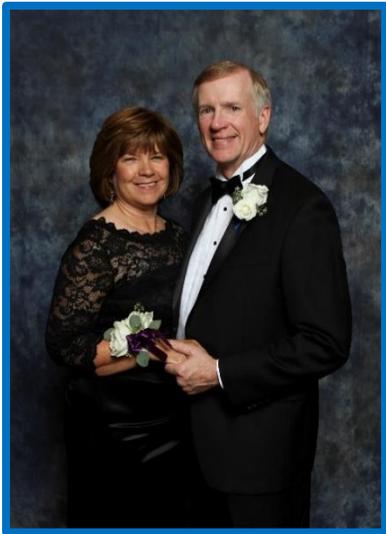
In 1988, six years after moving to Salt Lake City, Jamie's career took another positive turn. He was hired by Harman Management Corporation, the first and one of the largest franchisees of Kentucky Fried Chicken. He briefly worked in Harman's accounting department in Salt Lake City before moving to its corporate headquarters in Los Altos, California. All of this transition occurred right in the middle of having their second child. The baby was six weeks old when the Jacksons moved to the heart of what is now Silicon Valley. A few short years later Jamie became the company's Chief Financial Officer. He served in that role for 23 years before becoming Harman's CEO in 2015, the position he continues to hold.



Jamie Jackson is the President and CEO of Harman Management Corporation, which is the first and one of the largest franchisees of Kentucky Fried Chicken.

The change in employment fit what the Jackson's wanted in life: balance. Harman's was then, and remains, very supportive of work-life balance. The company focuses equally on working hard when at work, but also respecting the employees' time with their families.

"Early on, many local stores were operated by husband and wife teams," explained Michelle. "The founder, Pete Harman, recognized that in the restaurant business, married couples often had to split their home and work lives to run the business and manage a family. That didn't leave much together time, so Mr. Harman planned company conventions and encouraged spouses to attend. This philosophy extended to the corporate executives too, so I often was able to join Jamie on Harman's conventions." For Michelle, who was now taking time off from her own career to raise their three children, being able to travel with Jamie was a nice benefit.



On a recent trip back to Rapid City, South Dakota, Jamie and Michelle stopped by their *alma mater*. Although the name has changed from National College to National American University and the campus has moved, the mission of the university is unchanged. NAU continues to strive to offer its student an education that is "exciting and relevant," taught by faculty who are professionals in the field.

On behalf of Harman's, Jamie has also offered internship and career opportunities to NAU business students. The Harman system includes over 300 restaurants in several states, each of which is a separate company with individual managers and owners. "There is opportunity for NAU students to get real world management and business experience in our restaurants," said Jamie.

Likewise, NAU is poised to provide interested Harman employees, including the owners, managers and employees of individual restaurants, with the opportunity to pursue college degrees. Harman Management Corporation believes that employees are its greatest assets and is supportive of employees who have dreamed of a college degree, regularly providing scholarships to employees who have been with the company for 12 consecutive months.

"I'm excited about the possibility of providing internships for business students, as well as the possibility of providing scholarships and tuition discounts for employees," said Jamie, who with Michelle, are proud alumni.

Jamie and Michelle agree, "We received a relevant education in our chosen fields in addition to being 'job ready.' We stayed in touch with several National College teachers for years. We treasure friendships with National College friends who we still see occasionally. We enjoyed the Black Hills and the Rapid City location, and we found each other. What more could we want in a college?"