



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

Louis J. Grabowsky '73

To Louis J. Grabowsky for his distinguished career in accounting and finance and his dedication to business education at Penn State.

Louis Grabowsky grew up in the small town of Brownsville, Pa., the youngest of five children in a coal mining family of modest means. Scholarships enabled him to enroll at Penn State Fayette, making him the first person in his family to go to college. "It just opened up my eyes to a different view of what life could be," Grabowsky said.

His life's journey has included a distinguished career of more than three decades in accounting and finance, culminating in the chief operating officer position at Grant Thornton LLP, one of the world's largest accounting firms. Serving in this role since 2009, Grabowsky has been responsible for all day-to-day operations of the U.S. firm for Grant Thornton, which employs more than 6,000 people and generates \$1.2 billion in annual revenues.

Grabowsky joined Grant Thornton in 2002 and also served as managing partner of the firm's central region. Previously, he had a lengthy career with Arthur Andersen LLP, where he held positions including partner-

in-charge of the assurance practice for the firm's Dallas office; consumer products industry leader for the Southwest region; head of the business process outsourcing practice for North America; and managing partner for the Great Lakes region. He also served as the chief financial officer for a Fortune 1000 company. He plans to retire from Grant Thornton this summer.

Grabowsky said that, as a college student at Penn State Fayette and then University Park, he originally chose to study accounting because others told him that major would ensure that he always had a job. Eventually, he came to view accounting as the "language of business" and realized that, "if you can communicate effectively in that language, then you're always at the center of the action."

A member of Grant Thornton's national senior leadership team, Grabowsky said the career challenges he has faced—including the collapse of Arthur Andersen following the Enron scandal—formed the basis for later success. "If you can address challenges effectively and stay focused on the future, and if you realize that the important thing in life is to stay committed to your values, you can actually move yourself further and faster than you would ever imagine," he said.

Grabowsky credits his alma mater with instilling the values that have helped him advance in his career. "Penn State molds a person with the right ethics and values and principles for going out into the world with an attitude of how to contribute and add value to an institution," he said, noting that this also explains why corporate recruiters have repeatedly named the Smeal College of Business the best U.S. undergraduate business program in *Bloomberg Businessweek* polls. "The students graduate asking what can I do to help versus what's in it for me." In return, he said, those students benefit from an amazing network of alumni who "will always be there for you."

The Grant Thornton executive is himself one of those dedicated alumni. He is vice chair of the Smeal College of Business Board of Visitors, a member of the Accounting Advisory Board, and a member of the stewardship committee of *For the Future: The Campaign for Penn State Students*. He also has served as an alumni adviser to the Sapphire Leadership Program, and he was the spring 2014 commencement speaker for the Smeal College of Business. In 2011-2012, the Department of Accounting named him the Penn State Accounting Alumnus of the Year.

Having lived in Dallas, Chicago, and Cleveland throughout his career, Grabowsky has been involved extensively in civic and community organizations, particularly those supporting children, education, health, and human services.

Grabowsky is a member of the Penn State Alumni Association. He and his wife, Donna, have three adult children: Lauren, Jennifer '05, and Bryan.

