

## UW MBA Executive Leadership Speaker Series – Aaron Beam

A strong emphasis throughout the MBA program at the University of Wyoming is placed on providing students with real-world experience. Throughout the year, the program hosts a Friday Leadership Speaker Series comprised of experienced business professionals and executives.

Steve Farkas, Director of the MBA program commented, "I encourage our guest speakers to share as much real-world experience with our students as possible. Speakers will share a variety of topics with students from industry trends, strategic challenges, management styles, career management, and networking."

On Monday, October 21<sup>st</sup> the MBA students met with Aaron Beam to learn first-hand how important business ethics are to ones career. Beam was the first CFO at HealthSouth Corp., and as a co-founder witnessed first-hand the series of accounting, stock manipulation and leadership failures that led HealthSouth to the \$2B securities fraud scandal and ultimate prosecutions of Richard Scrushy.

Beam related to students the heights of success, followed by the unethical and illegal mistakes that led to his professional downfall. Serving three months in federal prison for his role in approving fraudulent quarterly numbers in 1996 and losing his CPA credentials, led Beam to his current speaking career; trying to make a positive difference by educating others about the pitfalls of unethical business practices.

"I found the meeting with Mr. Beam extremely interesting. I was surprised how open he was about his failures and unethical behavior. It was beneficial hearing about a real-world fraud situation; it reinforced the importance of ethical business practice. Mr. Beam's story will be one that I will remember for the rest of my life," Tiffany Young, first year MBA candidate.

Through his Ethics First message to the MBA students, Beam identified early warning signs, influences, and the bad choices he and others made at HealthSouth.

Uffe Janus, first year MBA shared "when Mr. Beam started his presentation, my first thought was along the lines of "There is no way of explaining fraud like that." However, as Mr. Beam explained the events chronologically, from his initial employment with Healthsouth and Richard Scrushy to his

arrest, he told a story of how a combination of success, greed, pressure, and even bullying could change his integrity."

"What made the biggest impression on me was how I found myself able to suddenly acknowledge that turning criminal could happen to an otherwise honest person. I left that day with an awareness of the importance of recognizing and reacting to patterns and circumstances like the ones he described. His story was one that could happen again, and to people otherwise not considered prone to such things."

The MBA program focuses heavily on ethical leadership and has worked to implement The Code of the West into coursework.

<http://thecodeofthewest.com/>

For more information on Beam's story, visit  
<http://www.aaronbeam.net/bio.php>