French set out to twist this lemon into something more palatable. He’d shown an affinity for numbers while managing the Barron Farmer’s Union Co-Op tire center when the accident happened, and some aptitude tests confirmed that talent. His interests and skills pointed him in a new direction – a career in accounting. He started classes at WITC, and continued to work nights at the Co-op.

Finding time to go to classes, study, spend time with his family and continue to work wasn’t easy. He got up every morning as early as 3 a.m., studied until 5 a.m. and then headed to class. Even before finishing his associate degree, the hard-working French was hired as operations manager at Midwest Computer Services in Rice Lake. But with a WITC accounting degree and finance degree under his belt, he moved on to several accounting jobs – including one that had him commute to Hudson – and each with more responsibility than the last. Later he became Barron County’s finance director and internal county auditor.

A lifelong learner, French earned a Master of Business Administration in 2007 from Lakeland College, and in 2008 was appointed interim county administrator. After succeeding at holding the two county jobs for six months, French was chosen from a field of candidates to singularly hold the county administrator position.

This man who didn’t let a back-breaking accident crush his life is now responsible for Barron County’s day-to-day operations. That means days filled with budgets, research, back-to-back meetings and brain-breaking decisions that he honestly enjoys.

French wants to be a positive influence in others’ lives, because he feels fortunate to have had so many mentors in his life. “I want students to have the same opportunities I’ve had,” he says.

Considering Finance or Accounting?

No longer relegated to a cube in the back with a computer and calculator, accounting and finance graduates in today’s business world are an integral part of the management team, says Scott Elza, WITC Accounting instructor.

Ask yourself some questions: Do you like calculations, analyzing data, designing spreadsheets, taking raw numbers and formulating business conclusions? And importantly – are you self-motivated? Take a career assessment test and try out some general education requirements at WITC to see what career feels right for you.