Fisher School of Accounting Students Support Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA)

About 150 students from the Fisher School of Accounting prepared approximately 750 tax returns for low-income families this spring.

"This is a situation that can help both parties," said Michael Moss, VITA [Volunteer Income Tax Assistance] program director for Alachua County. "They're [Fisher students] helping low-income people and getting work experience in the area they're training in."

Fisher students endured four training sessions by IRS representatives and were required to pass a certification test to participate. Moss said the families received $1.2 million in tax refunds and saved an estimated $150,000 in tax preparation costs.

Catherine Pao, a graduate student at Fisher, volunteered for the program last spring and served as a program director this year. She said there were about 100 more volunteers this year than last year allowing the program to expand to 11 area sites, including seven in Gainesville.

"I was interested in doing taxes and helping out the community," Pao said. "I was very involved in that first year, but I felt like I could have more of an impact."

Moss said it is students like Pao who make area programs like VITA successful. And Moss said the contributions of Fisher students are not lost on the community.

"They're quite appreciative," Moss said. "It's a win-win situation and students are at the center of the whole thing."