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*After completing the CEBS program, I feel even more motivated to dedicate my career to this industry and in doing so, go forth with one of the most highly recognized designations in this field.*

**Felicia A. Berry, GBA, CEBS**, Analyst, Mercer Health & Benefits, Atlanta, Georgia  
*Felicia Berry earned the CEBS designation in July 2009. Read about her journey and how her perseverance has paid off!*

*At the conferment ceremony, Felicia Berry, CEBS receives congratulations from Dr. Jerry S. Rosenbloom, CEBS Academic Director at the Wharton School.*



**W**hen asked to write the new graduate article, I knew I wanted to reflect on the path I took toward earning my CEBS designation, why I began the program and, most importantly, what kept me motivated throughout my journey.

I entered the CEBS program at the very beginning of my career in employee benefits. I initially started the program to gain a well-rounded foundation of benefits, and to give me a solid understanding of my new chosen career. Little did I know that going through the CEBS program would do so much more for me than just learning about an industry in order to be successful in my job.

Completing the CEBS program gave me an overwhelming sense of accomplishment and pride in my work. While completing the last exam needed to become a CEBS graduate, I reflected back on every exam I'd taken and how hard I'd studied for each of them over the past four years. I thought about the reading, the writing and the mental exhaustion I'd experienced with every exam taken. I thought about the material I may have struggled with and how I stayed motivated to conquer it. Following each exam, I always thought of what it would feel like once I obtained such a valuable designation.

I believe with any journey that we embark on in our lives, at the end of it all, we reflect on what we have learned from our experiences. It continues to surprise me how much CEBS has taught me, from both a professional and personal standpoint. Going through the program has taught me how to stay committed, to be even more determined and focused, and most importantly, remain undeniably disciplined. What kept me motivated throughout my journey were not only the professional rewards associated with this designation and the support of my employer, but the qualities that have built my character that I feel are so much more evident now.

One of the many rewards offered to designees of the CEBS program is participating in the ISCEBS Symposium. At the Symposium, designees attend conferment, receive the CEBS pin and are allowed the chance to be among those who have achieved professional excellence. During the conferment ceremony, many statistics were quoted, but there was one that stood out in my mind above all the rest: Only 10% of those who begin taking the exams actually go on to complete the CEBS program. A select group indeed!

The keynote speaker this year in Las Vegas, Dallas Salisbury, gave his perspective on

the industry which brought light to everything I'd been challenged with while going through this program. He shared that we are industry professionals helping individuals figure out how to make benefit choices to realize a better life. It is the essence of employee benefits. Listening to his speech gave me a better sense of the big picture of this industry and how important our work here really is. We all know that employee benefits are divided into several specialties; however, no matter what area you may work in, we all have one thing in common—we help people make extremely important decisions which affect both themselves and their families.

Our roles are even more critical now with the shape of the current economic situation and the uncertainty surrounding reform. To be among other professionals who fully understand these challenges and have obtained a designation held in such high regard in order to help others was quite amazing to say the least. We get to spend every day helping develop programs that touch employees' lives. After completing the CEBS program, I feel even more motivated to dedicate my career to this industry and in doing so, go forth with one of the most highly recognized designations in this field.

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Certified Employee Benefit Specialist Program  
P.O. Box 1270, Brookfield, WI 53008-1270  
Phone: (262) 786-6710, ext. 8579  
Fax: (262) 786-8650  
E-Mail: [cebs@ifebp.org](mailto:cebs@ifebp.org)  
Web Site: [www.cebs.org](http://www.cebs.org)

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