

The Added Touch

Hotel and Restaurant Management Program

Fall 2016

GREETINGS FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

It is my great pleasure to once again bring greetings from the Hotel and Restaurant Management program at Auburn University and to invite you to read the latest installment of our annual newsletter, "The Added Touch." As with previous years, it has been an especially busy period for faculty and students alike, so I will do my best to keep my comments brief.

From a faculty perspective, there is much to report. I am delighted that we are once again "solid" with a full faculty cohort working on both undergraduate and graduate programming. Faculty continue to set a very high standard on the teaching and advising fronts, continuously ensuring one of the highest on time graduation rates and, by definition, lowest attrition rates on campus. They continue to pride themselves on their very open door approach to doing business: ensuring timely accessibility, up to the minute program information and a highly rewarding student engagement experience. They also continue to set a very high standard on the research productivity front. Of particular note, this past year was our hosting of the South Eastern, Central and South American CHRIE Federation Conference (SECSA) held at The Hotel at Auburn University and Dixon Conference Center. This was the first such conference held at the federation level and we were greatly honored to play the role of host.



I am happy to report that our partners at the hotel did us proud as they always do. Faculty continue to publish the results of their research in the very best journals in our field. This past year faculty published papers in a host of highly ranked journals including the Cornell Quarterly, the International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, the International Journal of Hospitality Management, the Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Education, the Journal of Food Science Education, the Journal of Food Service and Business Research, and the World Leisure Journal. Faculty and their graduate students also presented their work at many regional, national, and international conferences including the aforementioned SECSA conference, International CHRIE, and the Consumer Behavior in Tourism Symposium held this past year in Munich, Germany. I am also happy to welcome two new members to the Auburn Family! Baby Jeeda Ayoun and baby Alandra Celene Jackson were born this past spring semester and Dr. Ayoun and Dr. Douglas (Jackson) are very proud and happy parents.

Dr. O'Neill, Dean June Henton and Dale Katechis at The Hospitality Gala.

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GREETINGS FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

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Programmatically there is much to report. As you may or may not know, we have been talking about the retitling of our degree program for some time now and also the introduction of a series of more concentrated study options. I am very pleased to report that the Board of Trustees approved the following at their Sept. 16 meeting:

1. The retitling of our degree program to BS in Hospitality Management, and
2. The introduction of three (one current and two new) study options as follows:
 - a. Hotel and Restaurant Management – essentially the current degree in its entirety.
 - b. Event Management, which has always been in demand; and
 - c. Culinary Science which there is an absolute need for at the state level.

All three options were approved and now move to the Commission for Higher Education for final ratification this coming semester. Our intent at this stage is to offer the new Event Management option beginning fall 2017, but to delay the Culinary Science option until the fall of 2019. This, of course, brings me to our other really BIG piece of news, which is that the Board of Trustees have also approved the project initiation for a new Culinary and Hospitality Education Center at Auburn. We have been researching this for some time now and we have finally been given the green light to proceed. Put simply, this will enable us to offer a very differential educational product both in-state and nationally and will almost certainly cement Auburn's place as a program of quality. While much work has yet to be done, we are all very excited about the potential here and will keep you posted as we continue to make progress. The facility will be located at the intersection of College and Thach Avenue adjacent to the hotel and conference center and will exist to support the academic and operational needs of our instruction mission. My recommendation at this stage is please continue to watch this space!

We held another very successful Gala event in the fall semester of 2015. Our honoree and Star of the Industry Award Recipient was Auburn alumnus Dale Katechis of Oskar Blues Brewing fame. As you may know, Oskar Blues is partnered with our graduate-level Brewing Science program and has been a huge supporter of our efforts since the launch of the program. It was my great pleasure to introduce Katechis to the Auburn Family at the event and help present him with The Horst Schulze Award for Excellence in Hospitality.

He was a very worthy and humbled recipient and continues to serve as a global ambassador for all of our programs. What is even more fantastic is the fact that he has also created an annual endowment to help students offset the cost of their brewing education. To this point Oskar Blues has supported seven students on this program. The event also proved to be the highest grossing fundraiser in Auburn's recent history, with some \$300,000 raised to support program initiatives as well as faculty and student development. Hans van der Reijden and his team, along with HRMT faculty member Dr. Douglas and her partner, HRMT graduate student Gwen Barker, excelled once again in making this an event of truly international renown and we are all indebted for their efforts.

We have continued to engage wholeheartedly with our international programming efforts, with students taking programs in Fiji, New Zealand, all across Europe, South Africa, and Southeast Asia. We also concluded programmatic initiatives with the Management Center of Innsbruck (MCI), Austria at the graduate level and with the Dublin Institute of Technology, Dublin, Ireland at the undergraduate level. While we continue to strongly push all students to engage in international education we decided to remove our mandate on study abroad due to financial and time release concerns shared by certain students. While we remain strong proponents of international education, it seems to make more sense to remain flexible and responsive to individual student circumstances.



Dr. O'Neill and former HRMT faculty member Dr. Rozzy McMullan in Ireland.

GREETINGS FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

(Continued from Page 2)

Developmentally we have continued to afford and subsidize a variety of student and faculty initiatives. Faculty and students at all levels have once again attended a number of professional meetings including, but not limited to, The Hotel "X"perience Show, the Club Managers Association of America Annual Meeting, the National Restaurant Association Show, SECSA CHRIE, International CHRIE, and the Annual Graduate Research and Education Conference for Students in Hospitality and Tourism. Students were also afforded the opportunity to sit for their Introductory Sommelier examination with the Guild of Master Sommeliers and the Certified Specialist in Wine program with the support of Trinchero Family Estates and the Society of Wine Educators.

Add to this our annual study tour of the California wine region, the Eta Sigma Delta National Honor Society Breakfast and meeting, and a variety of other on-campus initiatives and you will see that it has been a very industrious year for all concerned.

In closing I once again want to thank our faculty, alumni, students, donors, Industry Advisory Board members and industry partners at the Capella Hotel Group for their continued support whether time, treasure, or talent. We could not do what we do without all of you and we are indebted to you for the ongoing trust and support you display in our efforts at Auburn.

As always please take a few minutes to read the following updates in detail and drop by and say hello in person when next on campus.

War Eagle!

Dr. O'Neill

FACULTY UPDATES

Dr. Martin O'Neill has been appointed as the Horst Schulze Endowed Professor in the College of Human Sciences Hotel and Restaurant Management program.

Dr. Baker Ayoun received a 2016 Outstanding Graduate Mentor Award from Auburn University's Graduate Student Council.

Dr. Alecia Douglas will lead the Bahamian study abroad program in summer 2017.

Dr. David Martin has officially assumed the role of Associate Professor with Tenure, starting October 2016. Dr. Martin continues to teach the Internship Class and provides leadership for the Annual Career and Internship Fair.

Dr. Yee Ming Lee published four papers in peer-reviewed journals this year and she also received the Best Faculty-led Research Paper award at the SECSA CHRIE Federation Conference. In addition, Dr. Lee's research project has been awarded an internal fund by the Office of Undergraduate Research.

Dr. Imran Rahman published three papers in peer-reviewed journals this year. He is also teaching the Introduction to Sustainability class in the Honors College.

STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM

European Backpacking Trip

By Imran Rahman

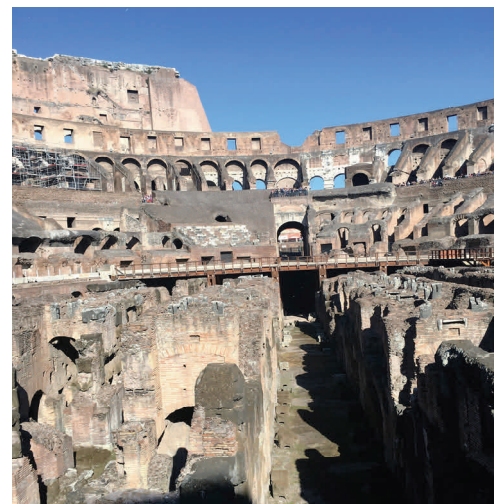
The HRMT program continued its summer European Backpacking study abroad trip. Led by Dr. Martin O'Neill and Dr. Imran Rahman, 11 students participated along with graduate assistant, Erol Sozen. The group spent a month traveling through major European cities such as Paris, Bruges, Amsterdam, Berlin, Prague, Budapest, Munich, Germany, Salzburg, Florence, Rome, and Dublin.

By Victoria Kirby

The experience I had this summer is one I will never forget. I traveled with other Auburn students and professors to 11 different cities in Europe. Going into the trip, I didn't really know what to expect, but since I love to travel, I knew I would have a great time no matter what. I had an even better experience than I anticipated! Even though it was an exhausting trip, (traveling to a different city about every three days), it was so much fun, and it was amazing to see the differences in each location. (It's a very eye opening experience when you're in a city where English is not the predominant language and you're not sure what food you're actually ordering.)



My favorite aspect of the trip was the overall emersion I got from simply walking around each city and noticing the differences in the food, people, and culture. The theme of our trip was Culinary Tourism, which proved to be a great learning experience for my major, HRMT. The best experience on this trip was traveling to wineries in Florence, and getting to see and taste the beauty of wine making. I would love to go on this trip again, and I recommend it to any student!



STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM

European Backpacking Trip

By Jennie Nolen

When I first discovered the Europe Backpacking Trip, I thought that it was too good to be true. It was a month long adventure through amazing places with incredible food. As we made our way from city to city we were able to gain hands-on knowledge about the history, culture, and cuisine of each location. From the Palace of Versailles, to the Berlin Wall, to the vineyards of Tuscany, to the Coliseum in Rome, and to the fish n' chips of Dublin, each new place provided an unforgettable experience. There was something special about every city we traveled to. However, my favorite place was Florence, Italy. I loved the people, the architecture, the markets, everything...I just wanted to stay.

Studying abroad is something everyone should do. I learned so much more than I ever thought I would. From the outside looking in, it seems like a glorified vacation with a little class work here and there; but it is so much more. From beginning to end it is a challenge.

It teaches you how to manage money, time, and priorities. Most importantly it teaches you to live life to the fullest. After backpacking Europe with HRMT, I am a more independent, confident, ambitious, and cultured person. It is a decision that I will never regret and something that I will cherish for the rest of my life.



Study Abroad in Dublin, Ireland

By Jacob Hoop

Spring semester 2016, I was able to be one of the first students to do the HRMT study abroad in Dublin, Ireland at the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT). Though taking 18 credit hours of core HRMT classes, I still had plenty of time to travel all over Ireland and the rest of Europe. I was able to travel to roughly 24 cities in eight countries over the four and a half months. While in Ireland, I was able to be a part of the St. Patrick's Day Celebration and the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising, which was the revolution between the Republic of Ireland and the Great Britain. Exploring all of the cultures was an eye-opening experience that has led me to be more interested in studying and working with different beverages and cuisines. Being involved with the exchange student group at DIT, I was able to become friends and network with people from all over the world.



Jacob at the Cliffs of Moher in Ireland.

I highly encourage students to study abroad. I was able to find another place to call 'home' in Dublin. I believe there is only so much you can learn in a classroom setting. Being able to go out and apply/refine the knowledge in different cultures is something that can set someone apart from others. Through this study abroad, I was able to experience things that most people would never imagine doing and, for that, I am forever grateful for the HRMT program, Dr. O'Neill and Dublin Institute of Technology.

Picture taken by the Ha'penny bridge in Dublin



HRMT PROGRAM EVENTS

The 12th Annual Epicurean Tour of Northern California

By Yee Ming Lee

From May 8-14, 14 undergraduate and graduate students from the HRMT program joined the 12th annual Epicurean Tour of Northern California. The participants had the opportunity to visit some of the world's most spectacular wineries and vineyards, renowned luxury resorts, and award-winning restaurants during this seven-day study tour. Students were selected through a very competitive interviewing process. They were evaluated on their passion and work experience in the food and beverage industry, professional communication skills, and their understanding of the purpose of this trip. Students chosen for participation in the study tour attended a series of pre-departure meetings to equip them with proper knowledge of wines, history of the venues, and proper dining etiquette.

Participants visited more than 14 different venues this year, including Carmel Valley Ranch, Bernardus, Joyce Tasting Room, Jarman Winery and Holman Ranch, Trincherro Family Estates, Stags' Leap Winery, Auberge du Soleil, Culinary Institute of America (CIA), Franciscan Estates, Far Niente, Quintessa, Robert Sinskey Vineyards, Domaine Carneros, and Fisher Vineyards. Participants were honored to have been greeted by the proprietors, owners, winemakers, and/or managers at the front entrance of each of these venues. Their genuine demeanor and warm hospitality were felt by all of the participants. The participants toured the grounds and enjoyed panoramic views of the vineyards, while being educated about how each glass of the elegant wine was produced.

Many interactive and educational sessions were offered during the trip, including a wine blending competition at Franciscan Estates, the Aroma Wheel of Fortune at Trincherro Family Estates, a barrel-making demonstration at Seguin Moreau, and a progressive wine and food pairing at CIA. The participants also had the privilege to meet and hear from Gary and Margarette Pisoni of Pisoni Vineyards, Carol Chorbajian, the owner of CCM&E, and Master Sommelier Emmanuel Kemiji of Miura Vineyards and Clos Pissarra. The students were inspired by their success stories and gained valuable insight to help face the challenges in their future endeavors.

Lunches and dinners were memorable, as participants were seated to enjoy scrumptious meals prepared by some of the most talented chefs in the country. These chefs included: Chef Sean O'Toole (Torc), Chef Tim Wood (The River Retreat at Carmel Valley Ranch), and Chef Greg Karjala (Will's Fargo). Each meal was prepared to perfection and dessert offerings were far beyond decadent.

In addition to the wine and dine experience, the participants also visited Oxbow Market and Shed in Healdsburg. They serve not only as a market place for the locals to shop for fresh ingredients, but also to promote the new concepts of sustainable agriculture and architecture. Participants took a short stroll at the picturesque Carmel by the Sea and St. Helena downtown where many award-winning restaurants and unique shops are located.



Picture (right): Douglas Rennie, Master Coopers and Amanda Hamme were assembling the staves.

Picture (left): Students joining the 12th annual Epicurean Tour of Northern California this year.

HRMT PROGRAM EVENTS

The 12th Annual Epicurean Tour of Northern California

(Continued from Page 6)

This annual trip was made possible through the close working relationship Hans and Lisa Van Der Reijden established more than 11 years ago, with these incredible vineyards, resorts, and restaurants. The Van Der Reijdens have dedicated their time extensively to leading, planning, and coordinating all of the exciting activities for the week-long tour. The success of the trip was also attributed to the hard work of Kristy Myers, director of development for the College of Human Sciences, who continually secures funding for this unique study trip for the students and faculty of the department. Special thanks also

goes to six donors, who believed and shared the vision of the HRMT program. Their generosity and support allowed students to participate in the trip with all expenses fully paid. Students also benefited from the donors' career advice and words of wisdom.



Participants played the Aroma Wheel of Fortune at Trincherro Family Estates.

Two participants of this year's trip, Haley Hurt and Skylar Albritton, will share their personal testimonies on how this annual Epicurean Tour of Northern California was truly a life-changing experience for them. Cheers!

By Haley Hurt

As I think back to the beginning of this summer, all I can remember is visiting my favorite spot in Napa Valley and telling my friends and family about it numerous times before and after my trip with Auburn University. Flash forward to today, a few days before I graduate, and I am about to begin working at that favorite spot, Auberge Du Soleil. With this, I cannot begin to express how great the opportunity was to attend the 12th annual Epicurean Tour of Northern California.

The entire week spent in California was not only a wonderful adventure to the West Coast, but also a great educational and professional learning experience. Those of us selected to go on this trip had the chance to visit numerous wineries, resorts, and restaurants. Many of these places we may never get to visit again and we all continue to realize how influential many of the people we met are. Without a doubt, we all were in awe throughout the week as we began to realize the insane responsibility we had been given as we went from place to place meeting industry professionals in every hospitality field.

To conclude, to any incoming students, freshman, or sophomores I cannot explain enough to you how important it is to realize the connections and networks that Auburn can give you. Each member of the hospitality faculty has so much to offer, and each of you only have four years to take advantage of that incredible opportunity.

Haley Hurt (left) is a Manager-In-Training at Auberge Du Soleil, while Jenna Webley (right) is interning at Trincherro Family Estates. Picture taken at Carmel Valley Ranch.



HRMT EVENTS

The 12th Annual Epicurean Tour of Northern California

By Skylar Albritton

The day after Auburn's spring commencement, students from the Hotel and Restaurant Management program boarded a plane for wine country. I was one of those selected for the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. But it wasn't at all what I thought it would be. I had been warned about the high pace, but I hadn't been warned that halfway through the week I'd need to buy a new dress to accommodate the extra weight generously provided by the many, *many* courses of food and wine. I didn't expect to fall in love with the romanticism of wine country as told by Gary Pisoni, Robert Sinskey, and the Auburn Family at Holman Ranch. I even found myself with a growing affection for the Cabernet Sauvignon I'd once sworn I would *never* willingly order. And while I thought I was going to learn about how to provide my event and wedding clients with knowledgeable food and wine pairings, I would really learn what makes up successful business.



Skylar Albritton is an Associate Licensed Planner

Gary Pisoni inspired me to never let go of something I believe in - even if it means growing grapes behind your dad's back. While the Trinchero family reminded me that following dad's orders can result in the revolutionary creation of White Zinfandel. Carol Chorbajian taught me that I only get out what I put into my community. And the team at Auberge du Soleil shared the importance of maintaining the local culture. From Jerry Comfort, I learned that every one is different and therefore there is no right or wrong to guest preferences. The Quintessa team taught me that it is not "woo-woo" if it works. And Robert Sinskey impressed upon us the ideal of doing things in a pure way - even if it takes 20 years to turn a profit on your rosé. At Seguin Moreau, I was taught that melding tradition and technology does not need to be painful. From the donors, I learned that laughter and love are the keys that make all of these worthwhile.

Trinchero Trip



By David Martin

This past spring, 12 students were selected to participate in the annual Certified Specialist of Wine trip which is hosted by Trinchero Family Estates. Students participated in a series of immersive wine education classes designed to help them prepare to pass the Certified Specialist of Wine (CSW) exam. Generous support was provided by the Trinchero Family Estates, which includes accommodations at the Historic Sutter Home Inn, tours of Mumm Napa and Antica winery, the CSW study guide, and the cost of actually taking the exam.



A group picture taken during the Certified Specialist of Wine trip.

HOSPITALITY GALA

By Alecia Douglas

The Hospitality Gala is the signature event for the HRMT program to raise funds to support the undergraduate, master's, and doctoral degrees. For 2015, the event was held in the fall semester for the first time on Nov. 12 and, as has been the trend since 2009, it was a phenomenal success with over \$300,000 raised in a single night from live and silent auctions and ticket sales. This is the fourth consecutive year that the gala broke the record for the most money raised at an academic fundraiser by any academic program at Auburn.

The evening started with a cocktail reception sponsored by Taittinger Champagne, during which guests enjoyed conversations with internationally renowned chefs and winemakers while savoring various wines and appetizers. A silent auction featuring entertainment, lifestyle, and travel and leisure packages was held concurrently, followed by a four-course plated dinner. The talented chefs featured were Yehuda Sichel, Adam Evans, Michel Nischan, Kim Wiss, Leonardo Maurelli, David Bancroft, Rob McDaniel, and Walter Brown. Guests enjoyed wine pairings from Barry Wiss of Trinchero Family Estates, Glenn Salva of Antica Napa Valley, and Hunter Lowder of Jarman wines.

Dale Katechis, founder of Oskar Blues Brewery, was recognized with the Horst Schulze Award for Excellence in Hospitality for his contributions to the growth of the craft brewery industry and to his alma mater, Auburn University. Katechis' Oskar Blues is credited with becoming the first craft brewer to put its beer into cans and is now a multi-state, international, and multi-million dollar brand.



The program continued with the highlight of the evening, the live auction, where \$190,000 was raised from 11 fantastic packages to some of the most unique and famous tourist attractions in the world such as Las Vegas, Napa Valley, Thailand, and Hawaii. The crown jewel of the live auction was a seven-night ultra-luxury travel experience for one couple aboard The World, the largest luxury private yacht on the planet.

The success of this event would not be possible without the generous contributions from friends of the HRMT program and the many local, national, and international companies who continue to support this annual event. We also credit much of the success to the hard work of the faculty and students enrolled in the Catering and Event Management class, who involved themselves in all facets of the event including set up, registration, guest services, overseeing both the live and silent auctions, and the overall execution of the event.



The continued success of The Hospitality Gala can also be directly linked to the strong partnership between the Department on Nutrition, Dietetics and Hospitality Management and the Capella Hotel Group at The Hotel at Auburn University and Dixon Conference Center. The hotel team, under the guidance of partner and general manager Hans van der Reijden, gives generously of their time and talent to teach the students how to create and execute this elaborate event. The students are fortunate to learn from professionals working at the hotel in all aspects of the process from event planning and vendor selection to the operational details of the event night itself including the one-of-a-kind opportunity to work with the visiting chefs and winemakers. The department is truly fortunate to have this dynamic and valuable industry partnership.

HRMT EVENTS

HRMT Career and Internship Fair



By David Martin

The Hotel and Restaurant Management program hosted the 28th annual Career Fair on Oct. 26 at The Hotel at Auburn University and Dixon Conference Center from 10:00-12:00. More than 50 companies from across a wide range of industry disciplines including Restaurants, Hotels, Private Country Clubs, Beverage Distribution, and Management Companies came to recruit their potential employees at this career fair. Many of the companies were represented at the corporate level. Students had not have the opportunities to obtain jobs across the entire country and globe! For more information about the Career Fair and how to participate, please contact Dr. David S. Martin 334-844-3291, or via email martida@auburn.edu.

Club Managers Association of America (CMAA) World Conference

By Imran Rahman

The 89th annual Club Managers Association of America (CMAA) World Conference was held in the beautiful Marriott Marquis in San Diego, California. HRMT graduate students Bruna Moore, Gwen Barker, Jon Floody, and senior Luke Adams, along with Dr. Imran Rahman represented Auburn University. Auburn's CMAA student chapter currently has 17 members. Moore is serving as the president and Adams is the vice president this year.

Major highlights of the conference included remarkable student and manager education sessions. Additionally, students had the opportunity to network with club managers from all over the world and attend a career fair that showcased multiple job opportunities in the club industry. Besides witnessing the beautiful San Diego bay area, students had the unique opportunity to interact with industry leaders, develop industry-specific key competencies, and learn about current and future trends and issues affecting the club industry. Next year's conference is scheduled to be held in Orlando, Florida on the second week of February.



Luke Adams, Dr. Imran Rahman, and Bruna Moore at the CMAA world conference.

HRMT EVENTS

Student Scholarships

By Alecia Douglas

A total of \$7,500 in scholarship monies were awarded to four HRMT undergraduate students from The American Hotel & Lodging Educational Foundation for the 2016-2017 academic year for tuition, fees, and books. The scholarships were awarded on the basis of merit and are co-administered through the HRMT program. Additionally, two HRMT undergraduate students were awarded a total of \$2,500 for the Alabama and Tourism Industry Scholarship Award administered through The Alabama Travel Council and four HRMT undergraduate students were awarded a total of \$4,250 from the Alabama Restaurant and Hospitality Alliance Foundation's Kirk Kirkland Scholarship. Students interested in external industry related scholarship opportunities are encouraged to contact Dr. Alecia Douglas (acdouglas@auburn.edu) to obtain more information on the many options available.

2016 Alabama and Tourism Industry Scholarship Recipients:

Alexandra Howard
Madison Kreamer

2016 American Hotel & Lodging Educational Foundation Scholarship Recipients:

Madelyn Denton
Mary Howser
LeAnne Huber
Emily Nagle

2016 Kirk Kirkland Scholarship Recipients:

Rayme Batts
Mariah Budd
Alexandra Howard
Jo-Copeland Nipper



Hans Reijden, Alexandra Howard, and Dr. Imran Rahman at the Alabama Governor's Conference on Tourism.

Eta Sigma Delta (ESD) International Hospitality Management Honors Society



Picture taken during ESD trip to New York City.

This past academic year (2015-16), the Auburn University Chapter of the International Hospitality Management Honors Society welcomed nine new students to the membership while saying goodbye to eight graduating members. Under new leadership for the 2016-17 academic year, the society looks forward to welcoming 18 HRMT undergraduate and graduate students in the annual Fall Initiation Ceremony to be held on Sunday, Nov. 6, 2016. The new ESD Board comprises of President Madison Kreamer (senior), Vice President Mary Cameron Taylor (senior), and Secretary Abbie Gordon (senior). The society is currently active in the planning of upcoming annual ESD trip to New York City on Nov. 10-14 to participate in the National ESD Breakfast and General Meeting sponsored by Marriott International as well as attend The Hotel Experience Show at the Jacob Javits Center. The event is the largest, most dynamic exhibition for the hospitality industry in the world, and students will participate in some of the seminars, meetings, and vendor sessions. As it relates to service initiatives of the organization, the society will head efforts to support a spice drive for the local food pantry, service bi-monthly at the Food Bank of East Alabama, and organize the annual spring Auburn/Opelika Restaurant Week.

For more information on ESD activities for the 2016-2017 academic year, contact President Madison Kreamer (msk0017@auburn.edu) or Dr. Alecia Douglas (acdouglas@auburn.edu).

GRADUATE PROGRAM UPDATES

Southeastern, Central and South American Federation of the Council for Restaurant and Institutional Education

Auburn's HRMT program hosted the first annual Southeastern, Central and South American Federation (SESCA) conference for the Council for Hotel Restaurant and Institutional Education (CHRIE) Feb. 25-26 at the Hotel at Auburn University and Dixon Conference Center. This event attracted faculty and students from throughout the southeast and South America representing most major hotel management programs.

Auburn faculty member Dr. Yee Ming Lee won the Best Faculty-led paper award for her paper with Erol Sozen, HRMT doctoral student. Similarly, Auburn graduate students Han Chen, Andrew Barnes, and Auburn faculty member Dr. Alecia Douglas won the Best Graduate Student-led paper award on that day. This event was a great success for Auburn and we hoped we will have the opportunity to host many more such meetings in the future.



Four award recipients, Dr. Yee Ming Lee, Erol Sozen, Andrew Barnes, and Han Chen.

Dr. Martin O'Neill with the organizing committee.

The 21st Annual Graduate Education and Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism



By Baker Ayoun

During the past year, HRMT graduate students have accomplished much. Aahed Khalifeat, Khalid Eyoun, Han Chen, Amy Bardwell, John Stephan, and Patti Northcutt presented some of their research projects at the 21st annual Graduate Education & Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism in Philadelphia, PA in January.

Some of the HRMT faculty and graduate students at the reception and career fair, 21st annual Graduate Education & Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism.

GRADUATE PROGRAM UPDATES

Graduate Student Association

By Erol Sozen

Last fall, the HRMT Graduate Student Association was established to serve as an organization for the graduate students in the program to be able to connect both socially and professionally. After an election in October of 2015, Erol Sozen, Han Chen, and Brook Ladner were elected as president, vice president, and secretary/treasurer respectively to lead the organization along with Dr. Baker Ayoun as the organization's advisor. In its first year, the HRMT GSA coordinated several social gatherings, along with a professional volunteer opportunity. In December, a holiday potluck was organized, which received much positive feedback and interest. In February, members volunteered to assist with the Southeastern, Central and South American Federation conference for the Council for Hotel Restaurant and Institutional Education hosted by Auburn.

In April, a picnic in Town Creek Park was held for the faculty and graduate students, and served as an opportunity to celebrate the upcoming graduates of the program. A Facebook page was created to enable current and former graduate students to receive and share relevant information regarding the association and to share photographs from related events.



Picnic at Town Creek Park, Auburn.



Holiday potluck in December.

Other Significant Achievements and Updates

By Baker Ayoun

The paper co-authored with Khalid Eyoun and Han Chen won the third place prize award by the industry-oriented ICHRIE Penn State Research Reports journal, and was presented during the Summer ICHRIE conference in Dallas. The paper was titled "The influence of cultural distance on the experience of hospitality expatriates in the Middle East."

The Graduate Program congratulates Hui 'Michelle' Xu, Alana Dillette, and Kyle Townsend for earning their Ph.D. degrees (Summer 2016) and Cheng Wang and Yujia Wang for earning their MS degrees (Spring 2016) ; the program welcomed three new students starting fall 2016: Ana D'Ambrogi (MS program) and Jeanna Lee and Debora Lee (Ph.D. program).

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Hunter Compo

Hunter Compo received her degree in Hotel and Restaurant Management and Business Administration from Auburn University. Before opening her own company, she began her luxury hospitality work experience at the quintessential wine estate, Quintessa, located in the heart of wine country: Napa Valley, California.

From fine wines to luxurious stays, Compo moved to Lake Tahoe to work at The Ritz-Carlton. There she worked with the top vendors and high-end clientele in Northern California. Compo became a certified Ritz-Carlton Wedding Planner and received the Employee of the Quarter award in her first year of employment.

Opportunity for growth moved her to Squaw Valley Ski Resort where she managed 36,000 square feet of meeting space as well as some of the property's largest events including Wanderlust Festival, Mountain Travel Symposium, US Alpine National Championships, and Last Chair Music Festival. Whether it was a marquee corporate event a smaller associations event, Compo implemented seamless event executions with precision and attention detail.

In early 2013, Compo decided the time was right to blend her passion for the epicurean lifestyle, design, and the great outdoors to introduce Hunter & Company to California. Paired with her education and luxury resort experience, Hunter & Company brings you a laid back style for stress-free planning.

It is with a focus on destination weddings that Compo decided to open a second location back in her home state of Virginia. Hunter & Company will continue providing a luxury event experience for clients on both the east and west coasts.

The skills and tools learned during her time in the Hotel & Restaurant Management program at Auburn was an essential piece to her success and continued growth in the hospitality industry. The small class size and close relationships with her professors and fellow students allowed her passion for the hospitality industry to be developed, to later flourish as an alumni of the program.

Compo has continued to maintain a relationship with the HRMT program, working with students to provide internship opportunities at her company, as well as her continued support of the Epicurean Tour of Northern California. This program was the experience that changed the course of her life and continues to have an impact through personal connections and business opportunities.

Auburn University and the Hotel and Restaurant Management program will continue to have an impact on the success of Compo as she grows her company and remains an active part of the luxury hospitality industry.



NEWS FROM THE HOTEL AT AUBURN UNIVERSITY AND DIXON CONFERENCE CENTER

Meet the new Director of Education & Human Resources



Keisha Echols is a human resources professional with over 20 years of experience in the field. Her HR career began with Sara Lee Corporation in 1996 and after relocating to Atlanta in 1999 from Chicago, Echols joined The Coca-Cola Company in staffing and has worked for other great companies such as The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, Talent Plus Inc., and Chick-Fil-A Corporate. She first worked at the Hotel at Auburn University and Dixon Conference Center in HR in 2004 and is really excited about returning as director of education & human resources.

Echols is a 2001 graduate of National-Louis University with a bachelor's degree in applied behavioral science and a 2015 graduate of Brenau University with a master's in business administration. She obtained her Professional in Human Resources (PHR) certification in 2006 and her SHRM-CP certification in December 2015. She is currently teaching the Professional Development class for the HRMT program.

Echols is married to Roderick Echols and together they have a 7-year-old son Preston and a 5-year old daughter Pria.

The Hotel at Auburn University & Dixon Conference Center

Centrally located near the shops and restaurants of downtown Auburn, AL, The Hotel at Auburn University & Dixon Conference Center is just a short walk from the excitement of Auburn University and a diverse array of cultural and entertainment attractions. Whether in town for the big game, a special party or a productive business meeting, the hotel is the front door to Auburn with 236 guestrooms and suites that offer true Southern hospitality in an ideal setting. For a modern-Italian atmosphere with dishes inspired by Italy and the Mediterranean, visit Ariccia Trattoria (A*T), located inside the hotel. An open kitchen and outdoor terrace add character to this restaurant which serves breakfast, lunch, dinner, cocktails, Sunday Brunch and offers take-out service. A*T features an espresso bar and unique wine list, and has a private dining room for special events. Located next to A*T, Piccolo is Auburn's only true lounge experience for specialty cocktails and a large variety of appetizers and desserts. The menu features a variety of small plates perfect for sharing, refreshing cocktails and Piccolo Bottle of Champagne. Live jazz performances take place on Fridays and Saturdays (except on home football game weekends). The property is managed by the Atlanta-based Capella Hotel Group. For additional information or reservations, please call (800) 228-2876 or visit www.auhcc.com.





Auburn University HRMT Program

The Added Touch
HRMT Newsletter edited by:

Yee Ming Lee, PH.D., R.D., C.H.E.
Assistant Professor
Department of Nutrition, Dietetics, and
Hospitality Management
College of Human Sciences
Auburn University
Email: ymlee@auburn.edu

For questions or enquiries about the HRMT program, please
contact:

Tanya Stringer
Administrative Support Assistant
Department of Nutrition, Dietetics, and Hospitality Manage-
ment
328 Spidle Hall
Auburn, AL 36849
Phone: 334-844-4261
Fax: 334-844-3279

Please visit our website at: <http://www.humsci.auburn.edu/hrmt/>