GREETINGS FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

It is my great pleasure to bring greetings from the Hospitality Management Program at Auburn University and to invite you to get caught up on all the happenings with #AUHOSP on the plains and further afield. Please bear in mind that we are in the midst of a rebranding exercise given our new degree nomenclature (BS in Hospitality Management) and while HRMT is still near and dear to all of your hearts, we will be working with Hospitality Management from this point forward. 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 I am delighted to welcome our newest faculty member, Ms. Nicole Gaillard. Some of you may remember Nicole as Ms. Britton, who worked with us some years back. Well after an eight-year hiatus with student affairs she has decided to return to her home department and college. Nicole will be heading up on our new Event Management study option and assisting with recruitment, which is her real strength and passion. She will be teaching a number of classes on both the Hotel and Restaurant Management and Event Management options and has settled well back into her old office in Spidle Hall. I am also delighted to welcome back Mrs. Keisha Echols, director of human resources at The Hotel at Auburn University and Dixon Conference Center. Keisha rejoins the team as an adjunct faculty member and will oversee our Practicum course.

Dr. Ayoun was recognized this past summer for excellence in teaching the Smith Travel Research Certification in Hotel Industry Analytics (CHIA) program. He has successfully led many of his students through this certification scheme over recent years and on one occasion has actually set a 100% pass rate standard that has yet to be beaten by any other school nationally or internationally. Dr. Douglas was successfully elected to the position of secretary of International CHRIE this past spring and was formally sworn onto the ICHRIE Board of Directors this past August. She will now begin a two-year term and will have the opportunity of representing our program and its students at the very highest professional level while serving in this role. Dr. Rahman was invited to develop and co-edit a new edition of one of the leading Introduction to Hospitality Management course texts and this will serve to provide additional visibility for our program among students and faculty who adopt this text for their studies.

Of course, the other faculty remain busy with their day-to-day activities and continue to set a standard for teaching excellence within the college and across the university. Additionally they continue to engage with their various research programs and continue to publish and present their findings in the fields’ leading journals and at national and international meetings. Please also join me in congratulating Ms. Tanya Stringer, our wonderful departmental secretary who has just begun her 10th year of service with the department. As you all know, Tanya has been a very hard working and loyal staff member since joining the department. It is not surprising therefore that the faculty and partners have sought to nominate her for the AU Spirit of Excellence Award. All being well she will hear something soon.

(Continue on Page 2)
I am pleased to report that we are already making waves with our event management option. Interest and enrollment have been growing and a number of students have already engaged in what can only be described as a very differential learning experience with Susan Gage Catering in Washington, DC this past September. Susan Gage is one of the premier catering and event management companies in the nation and they sponsored a visit for two students and one faculty member to engage with them in the execution of a number of high level events in Washington. These students were chosen competitively from our Catering and Event Management class with a view to bringing back ideas that might be incorporated into the planning of this year's Hospitality Gala. Of course, last year's gala was another amazing success story raising some $310,000 to support programming and development efforts for faculty and students. This was the highest grossing event in the university's history and we hope to raise the bar further at this year's event which is scheduled for November 9. Thank you to all those involved in last year's event. Dr. Douglas, hotel partners and students continue to exceed all expectations for this event, both from a fundraising and execution perspective.

Our students and alumni continue to make great waves in terms of scholarships and placement and they continue to carry the good name of Auburn University and its Hospitality Management program far and wide. We had three scholarship award winners honored at this year's Alabama Governors Tourism Conference in Birmingham. Ms. Ashley Schurr, Mr. Alex Conlon, and Ms. Samantha Orum were all honored for their excellent academics and record of industrial experience. Further, Ms. Caitlin Cotton, Ms. Rachel Hickman, Ms. Emily Nagle, and Ms. Aubrey-Joy O'Brien were all honored by the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Foundation for their excellent academic and industrial contributions to this point. Please join me in congratulating Mr. Ryan Penso (2006), Director of Operations for Global Brand Development with P.F. Chang's, who was honored at last year's Hospitality Gala as our third Outstanding Program Alumnus. Congratulations one and all!

Of course the list of success stories is way too long to include everyone. Moving forward, it is my goal to begin a practice of showcasing as many of these success stories as possible; so please be sure to connect to our program Facebook page so that we can continue to keep up. Please feel free to post your news to this page as often as is possible.

In closing I once again want to take my hat off to our entire Auburn Hospitality Management family: alumni, students, donors, faculty, and advisory board and industry partners. Your ongoing support and passion for what you do and the good name of Auburn University make all of our jobs much easier to do and we the faculty remain indebted for your unwavering support. Particular thanks go out once again to our educational partners at The Hotel at Auburn University and Dixon Conference Center who enable us to make a real difference in all that we do on a daily basis.

Please do take a few minutes to enjoy the following updates in stop by and say hello any time you are on campus. I must admit, I get a little upset when I see that you have all visited for football and don't stop by Spidle for a short visit. Remember, it's all about family!

Dr. O'Neill with two alumni, William Rentschler and Michael Smith at International Quality of Life Award (IQLA).

War Eagle and fingers crossed for a successful season of Auburn Football!

Martin
Auburn University Board of Trustees honors Rane, family for commitment to new culinary science center

AUBURN, Ala.—James W. “Jimmy” Rane and the Rane family were recognized at the Sept. 15 meeting of the Auburn University Board of Trustees for their $12 million commitment to building a Culinary Science Center on campus.

The board in April approved the naming of the facility as the Tony and Libba Rane Culinary Science Center in honor of Rane’s parents.

Anthony “Tony” J. Rane, the son of Italian immigrants, was a World War II veteran, an entrepreneur and a businessman. He enjoyed a diverse career, owning several restaurants, retail stores and hotel franchises. He was known for his love of travel, cooking and the hospitality that he and his wife, Libba Mills Rane, generously shared with others.

Tony and Libba’s son, Jimmy, is a 1968 Auburn alumnus and a member of the Board of Trustees. He founded Great Southern Wood Preserving, Inc. in 1970 and currently serves as chairman, president and chief executive officer.

The new Culinary Science Center will ultimately serve as an academic resource for students interested in a culinary-focused career, an educational aspect Auburn has been lacking.

For a number of years, the administration in the College of Human Sciences has watched students graduate from Auburn and pursue their interests at private culinary institutions in California, New York, Providence, Rhode Island or Charlotte, North Carolina. The decision is an added expense for students and delays entrance into the workforce.

Auburn saw opportunity to become a leader in the field. The plan was two-fold: rename the Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management to a Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management, with options in hotel and restaurant management, event management and culinary science; and erect a building specifically for culinary science.

Last fall the Board of Trustees approved the initiation of the building project and renaming of the degree. Today the board approved the selection of Cooper Carry of Atlanta and Hoar Program Management of Birmingham as project architect and construction manager, respectively.

Martin O’Neill, head of the Department of Nutrition, Dietetics and Hospitality Management in the College of Human Sciences, said decisions to create a new building and change the curriculum were meant “to support ongoing and expansive programming efforts in hospitality at Auburn, while also satisfying demand from prospective and current students, and the ever burgeoning state tourism sector.”

O’Neill shared that he was honored to have met and broken bread with the junior Rane and his father in 2005: “It quickly became clear that they were both very passionate about the university and supporting the development of a differential culinary program at Auburn. Mr. Tony reminded me of the importance of family and the central role of good food and a good kitchen to personal wellbeing and development. For very obvious reasons, it’s a great honor to have this level of trust placed in our hands as we endeavor to carry his legacy of ‘La Famiglia’ forward.

“As Alabama’s only professionally accredited hospitality program, this support and the curriculum changes will present Auburn with better targeted programming options and appeal in areas key to the state’s continued tourism development,” he added. “It also will afford prospective students the opportunity to finish their studies in an area much more germane to their specific interest.”

June Henton, dean of the College of Human Sciences, called the endeavor a “5-star opportunity for our students.” She tasked Hans van der Reijden, managing director of The Hotel at Auburn University and Dixon Conference Center, to lead the research, planning and setting of the vision for the new building, which will be located adjacent to the hotel at the corner of South College Street and East Thach Avenue.

“Every decision we’ve made for this building has been driven by students and the market,” said Van der Reijden. “We are confident the result will be mutually beneficial to our students and the Auburn community.”

Many believe the new building will influence the decision of those students currently in top culinary programs in Alabama high schools to attend Auburn.

(Written by Amy Weaver)
FACULTY UPDATES

Dr. Baker Ayoun was awarded the “Impact Award” for “Significant Support of, and Contribution to Industry Relevant Hospitality Education.” The award was presented during the ICHRIE conference this past summer.

Dr. Alecia Douglas was selected as the Secretary of International CHRIE. She and Shaniel Bernard received the Best Student-led presentation award at the SESCA conference. Dr. Douglas graduated one doctoral and one masters student this past summer.

Dr. David Martin graduated two doctoral students this past summer. He was awarded the Certified Hospitality Educator (CHE) for another seven years. He continues to teach the Internship Class and provides leadership for the Annual Career and Internship Fair.

Dr. Yee Ming Lee served as Co-PI for a research project titled “Menu Label Reading Behavior and Purchase Intention,” which was funded by Foodservice Systems Management Education Council (FSMEC). She published two journal papers this year with several still under review.

Dr. Imran Rahman joined the month-long summer study abroad trip to Fiji. He published three academic journal papers in peer-reviewed journals in the academic year and co-authored multiple conference papers with the graduate students. He also graduated one doctoral and two masters students this past year.

Ms. Nicole Gaillard serves as the advisor for the student advisory board. She is also in charge of students’ scholarships.

Getting to know Mrs. Gaillard

Nicole Gaillard, former faculty member of the program, has returned to assist with the teaching of the courses in the new Special Events track. Gaillard has over 20 years of combined industry and higher education experience. Gaillard earned her bachelor and masters degree in Hotel and Restaurant Management from Auburn University.

During her time away from the program, she advised students in the Academic Counseling and Advising Center and assisted with the development and advisement of the Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies program at Auburn. In addition to her teaching load, Gaillard will serve as the program scholarship coordinator, advise the Hospitality Student Advisory Board and assist in recruiting efforts for the program.

Dr. Rahman in Fiji

By Imran Rahman

This summer I had the privilege of leading a group of ten passionate Auburn University students to Fiji for a month. We spent the majority of our time on a beautiful small island called Vorovoro located about a thirty minute boat ride from the town of Labasa, Fiji. Throughout our stay we mixed and mingled with the Fijians and adopted their sustainable lifestyle and wonderful cultural values.

We lived with no electricity, internet, and running water on the island. We consumed local food, learned about the different uses of local plants, practiced different fishing techniques, snorkeled the beautiful coral reef surrounding the island, learned how to weave mats and make oil, milk, and soap from coconuts, immersed in the local culture, customs, and traditions of the Fijians, and above all learned how to live in harmony with nature with limited resources. We also spent some quality time in two farms working hands-on with tasks that included harvesting sugarcanes, feeding animals, milking cows, planting trees, growing vegetables, watering gardens, and harvesting honey from bees.

Last day of the trip, we visited Denarau, the world-famous upscale island which is home to some of the most luxurious resorts in the world. Students got to see the stark contrast between the two sides of Fiji in that final day. We came back to Auburn with a wealth of experiences, education, and memories to cherish forever. I am greatly thankful to Auburn University and Fijians for this astounding experience.
STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM

European Backpacking Trip

By Molly Arnett

Backpacking across Europe was a once in a lifetime opportunity that I was ever so lucky to experience this past summer. Traveling through 12 different cities and 7 different countries in 34 days with a group of 16 was not only physically, but also mentally challenging. The knowledge and experience I have gained from this trip is irreplaceable. The best way to fully experience the culture in a different place is to fully engulf yourself into every aspect, and that’s exactly what you’ll do while studying abroad with Auburn.

The countries all through Europe hold so much of our world’s history; they are rich with tradition and culture. We had the best chaperons for this trip who taught us information about the history and happenings in the cities we visited!

The culinary aspect of the trip is out of this world! Being exposed to the different cuisines throughout Europe was my favorite part of the trip. You can tell a lot about the history and people of a country through the food they eat and how they prepare it.

Not only will you gain cultural knowledge, you’ll also gain friends! I am thankful for the friendships I have gained and bonds I have made. I have learned time management, planning, and personable skills, team building skills, etc. Through this trip and spending time with the fellow travelers, I have learned to live your best life and live it to the fullest. Studying abroad was by far the best decision I have ever made. I am now cultured in ways I never dreamed of and I’ll forever be grateful for the lifelong lessons, friends, knowledge, experience, and memories!!

By Emily Nagle

This past summer I had the privilege of being able to backpack Europe with 14 other students and 1 professor. We ventured to 12 different cities in 7 countries in only 34 days. I could not have imagined a better trip for my first time out of the country. The mission of this trip is to study international tourism. Each student was assigned one city to plan our excursions and lead the group around and about. On these 34 days, I experienced more emotions than I knew I had, became closer friends with these people than I ever could have imagined, and learned more about the world around me than I’ve ever known.

We started in Paris then ventured to Amsterdam, Berlin, Prague, Budapest, Vienna, Salzburg, Munich, Innsbruck, Florence, Rome and finished in Dublin. My favorite memories from this trip are simply venturing up some large hill to get a better view of the cities, or exploring the different food markets and eating the local food. Other than these memories, my top 5 favorite activities we did include exploring the Versailles gardens (even in the rain), getting to walk around the Anne Frank House and museum where her family hid from the Nazi’s in Amsterdam, seeing Gustov Klimt’s “The Kiss” in the Belvedere in Vienna, going to pay our respects to a most tragic time in human history at two concentration camps in Germany, and seeing the incredible art work inside the Vatican. I’m so glad I chose to do this trip because some of the cities I never would have thought about going to ended up being my favorites, like Prague and Vienna.

This was the best month of my life without a doubt. Every single day since, I yearn for this time in my life and smile at the memories I made. I cannot wait to hopefully explore more of the world around me sometime soon and perhaps get to go back to some of my favorite cities.
The Thirteenth Annual Epicurean Tour of Northern California

By Alecia Douglas

On May 7-12, 11 Hospitality students participated in the 13th Annual Epicurean Tour of Northern California. After being selected from a competitive pool of candidates, students were exposed to some of the finest wineries, vineyards, resorts, and restaurants in the famed wine region during an intensive six-day study tour. Successful students presented strong evidence of work experience in food and beverage, catering or hotel operations, had a good knowledge of the program and its goals, and clearly demonstrated or articulated their passion for the beverage industry.

The annual tour delivered on the promise of offering a variety of exceptional and unique experiences from exclusive tours and rich learning exercises to decadently catered meals. From “vine” to “dine,” it provided students with a firsthand view of all aspects critical in the production of wine and champagne to their pairing with the finest and freshest produce the region has to offer. This “classroom in the valley” experience was enriched with conversations from prominent leaders in the California wine country who highlighted their experiences in the industry while giving students much appreciated advice on navigating their prospective careers.

Sites included in this year’s tour were Carmel Valley Ranch, Holman Ranch, Trinchero Family Estates, Franciscan Estates, Quintessa, Single Thread Farm, Culinary Institute of America, Far Niente, Oxbow Market, Robert Sinskey Vineyards, Seguin Moreau, Domaine Carneros, Fisher Vineyards, Opus One, and Auberge du Soleil. Each venue was simply incomparable, outstanding in its own right, and provided unique insights for this year’s participants who were actively engaged with professionals at the height of their careers. Students learned from and engaged with thought leaders in the culinary and wine industries such as Gary Pisoni of Pisoni Vineyards and Carol Chorbajian of CCM&E Destination Management Services, as well as winemakers Dan Karlsen and Matt Viotto.

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The Thirteenth Annual Epicurean Tour of Northern California

(Continued from Page 6)

The trip is made possible through the extensive planning and networking efforts of tour organizers, Mr. and Mrs. Hans and Lisa van der Reijden, who have led and coordinated a challenging array of activities in the program for eleven solid years. Instrumental in securing funding for the “all-expenses paid” experience could not have been possible without the deep relationships formed by Mrs. Kristy Myers, director of development for the College of Human Science.

Faculty involved in the selection process and intensive pre-trip preparation classes help to ensure that HRMT’s best students are sharpened ahead of the life-changing experience. Overall, the passion and support of the team has been backed over the years by the generosity of many donors who share in the vision of providing life-altering learning experiences to the next generation of hospitality and tourism leaders. Without the continued support of all our wonderful donors, this hallmark trip would simply not be possible.

The rolling hills and valleys of Quintessa.

Hospitality Industry Scholarships

By Alecia Douglas

A total of $7,500 in scholarship monies were awarded to four Hospitality students from the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Foundation for the 2017-2018 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, three Hospitality students were awarded the Alabama Hospitality and Tourism Industry Scholarship Award administered through the Alabama Travel Council. Students interested in external industry related scholarship opportunities are encouraged to contact Mrs. Nicole Gaillard (gaillnb@auburn.edu) to obtain more information.

Alex Conlon, Samantha Orum and Ashley Schurr, the recipients of scholarships, and Dr. O’Neill at the Alabama Governors Tourism Conference.
HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM EVENTS

Trinchero Family Estates

By David Martin

This past spring, 12 students were selected to participate in the annual Certified Specialist of Wine trip 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.

Group picture taken at the Trinchero Family Estates.

Eta Sigma Delta (ESD) International Hospitality Management Honors Society News

By Alecia Douglas

This past academic year (2016-17), the Auburn University chapter of the International Hospitality Management Honors Society welcomed 17 new students to the membership while saying goodbye to 9 graduating members. Under new leadership for the 2017-2018 academic year, the society looks forward to welcoming 11 Hospitality undergraduate and graduate students in the annual Fall Initiation Ceremony on October 29. The new ESD Board comprises of President Brooke Forsyth (senior), Vice-President Peyton Alexander (senior), and Secretary Emily Nagle (senior).

The society is currently active in the planning of the annual ESD trip to New York City on November 10-14 to participate in the National ESD Breakfast and General Meeting sponsored by Hyatt Hotels, 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 2017-2018 academic year, contact President Brooke Forsyth (baf0025@tigermail.auburn.edu) or Dr. Alecia Douglas (acdouglas@auburn.edu).

Pictures taken during the ESD trip to New York.
By Caitlin Cotton

In late September, students Samantha Orum and Caitlin Cotton were given the chance to travel to Washington, DC for an externship opportunity with Susan Gage Catering. This opportunity was provided to two students from the Catering and Event Management course, and they were accompanied by Nicole Gaillard and Adam Keeshan. During their stay in DC, these students toured Susan Gage’s facilities, served at a wedding, and finalized décor decisions for the upcoming Hospitality Gala.

We arrived in Washington on Thursday September 21. From the moment we arrived, everyone from Susan Gage was charming and full of hospitality. Chap took us out to dinner that night after two Auburn University alumni members of the sales team gave us a tour of a few of Susan’s prime catering venues, including the National Portrait Gallery and the Kreeger Museum.

On day two, we traveled out to Maryland to tour their headquarters. They opened their current facility after their last location could not meet their sales demand. From the moment we walked in, Susan’s expert touch was prominent. It was a clean and clear environment that was expertly designed for maximum productivity. They do everything in-house, including making their own linen. Their company is extremely efficient, and they try to eliminate as much waste as possible. Additionally, they use the leftover linen from shaping their tablecloths to make ties for their servers. Susan Gage is considered an ecofriendly company, and they recycle everything they can, as well as bring their own water in reusable coolers for their employees to cut plastic waste.

While we were at their primary office, we worked with Stacey Benefield, an Auburn alumna, to finalize details for the Hospitality Gala. She is a prominent member of their sales team, and guided us through the process of deciding linen colors and proper lighting procedures. With her guidance, we laid out the floor plan of the event, and strategized on how to best make use of the opportunity that the marquee will provide this year.

On Saturday, we were given the chance to serve at a wedding that Susan Gage was catering at the National Pharmacy building. We were members of a team led by one of their top servers, and we worked alongside her in passing cocktails and setting up furniture for the event. Susan Gage practices synchronized service for their receptions, so they trained us in the proper execution of that procedure, which was troublesome, given the fact that they allow their guests to choose from a variety of entrees. However, their system was coordinated expertly, and dinner service went smoothly. The team was nothing but warm and inviting to us while we learned the finer details of their program.

Overall, Susan Gage and her team were a delight to be around and to work alongside. Their company has a strong family-oriented policy, and everyone is treated with equal respect and courtesy. This was truly a once in a lifetime experience, and we would like to thank the Hospitality Program and Susan Gage Catering for allowing us to be a part of such an amazing opportunity.
HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT EVENTS

Club Managers Association of America (CMMA) World Conference

By Imran Rahman

Auburn University hospitality management students attended two CMAA conferences during the academic year. Bruna Moore, a master’s student and former president of Auburn University's CMAA student chapter, attended the 2016 National Student Education Conference in Philadelphia, PA. In spring, students Luke Adams, Samantha Orum, and Emma Royster attended the 90th World Conference on Club Management and Club Business Expo in Orlando, FL.

It was yet another successful year for Auburn University’s CMAA student chapter. The chapter won second place in the student recruitment contest in the small chapter category. We were awarded with several free registrations for students to attend the two main CMAA conferences. As always, the chapter was able to fund a good portion of students' conference registration, travel, and accommodation related expenses.

We highly encourage students to attend the two CMAA conferences. As part of the two events, students get to tour a number of country and city clubs, attend educational sessions, listen to industry leaders, visit career fairs, network with club managers, faculty, and students, and learn about contemporary trends and issues the club industry is facing. In addition to these national conferences, students have the opportunity to take part in regular meetings and retreats sponsored by Alabama CMAA chapter.

CMAA offers numerous scholarships and job opportunities all over the nation. Every year several hospitality students receive internship and full-time job offers from renowned country and city clubs across the nation through CMAA. Our CMAA student chapter currently has 12 registered members. We are in the process of recruiting new members for this academic year. Students also have the opportunity to serve in several leadership positions. Clubs are a great avenue to work for students interested in management, events, sports, service, lodging, and restaurant operations. We are also on schedule to offer club management for our undergraduate and graduate students in spring 2018.

Career and Internship Fair

By David Martin

The Hotel and Restaurant Management program hosted the 28th annual Career Fair on Oct. 25 at The Hotel at Auburn University and Dixon Conference Center. Forty-five companies from 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 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.
HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT EVENTS

HOSPITALITY GALA 2017

By Alecia Douglas

The Hospitality Gala is the signature event for the Hospitality program to raise funds to support the undergraduate, masters, and doctoral degrees. For 2017, the event will be on November 9 and, as has been the trend since 2009, it was a phenomenal success last year with over $310,000 raised in a single night from live and silent auctions and ticket sales. This was the fifth 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 will begin with a cocktail reception sponsored by Taittinger Champagne, during which guests can enjoy conversations with internationally renowned chefs and winemakers while savoring various wines and appetizers. A silent auction featuring entertainment, lifestyle, and travel and leisure packages will be held concurrently, followed by a four-course plated dinner. The talented chefs featured are Chef Kyle Knall, Chef Erik Niel, Chef Alex Harrell, Chef Antony Osborne, Chef Rob McDaniel, Chef David Bancroft, Chef Leo Maurelli, Chef Miguel Figueroa, and Chef C. R. “Robbie” Nicolaisen. Guests will enjoy wine pairings from Juelle Fisher of Fisher Vineyards, Axel Schug of Schug Carneros Estate Winery, and Randy Snowden of Snowden Vineyards.

Students in the 2017 Gala class.

A silent auction item in The Hospitality Gala last year.

Chef Frank Stitt, owner and executive chef of Highlands Bar & Grill, Chez Fonfon, and Bottega, will be recognized with the Horst Schulze Award for Excellence in Hospitality for his contributions in the culinary world. Highlands Bar & Grill has been nominated for the prestigious James Beard Award for Outstanding Restaurant each year since 2009. Stitt received the foundation’s award for Best Chef: Southeast in 2001, and was nominated in 2008 for Outstanding Chef. He also received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Southern Foodways Alliance and was inducted into the Alabama Academy of Honor in 2009, the most distinguished award given to an Alabamian.

In 2011, Stitt was also inducted into Esquire magazine’s Restaurant Hall of Fame and to the James Beard Foundation’s “Who’s Who of Food and Beverage in America.” His restaurants are regularly featured in top regional and national outlets such as The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Food & Wine, Saveur, Men’s Journal, Esquire, Garden & Gun, and Southern Living.

The continued success of The Hospitality Gala can be directly linked to the strong partnership that the Department on Nutrition, Dietetics, and Hospitality Management has with the West Paces Hospitality 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.

Picture taken during the live auction last year.
GRADUATE PROGRAM UPDATES

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

By Imran Rahman

Graduate students Shaniel Bernard, Han Chen, Wlla Obeidat, and Erol Sozen and Drs. Alecia Douglas and Imran Rahman attended the 2017 Southeastern, Central, and South American (SECSA) Federation Conference at Florida International University – Biscayne Bay campus, Miami.

Bernard, a doctoral student of the Hospitality Management program and Dr. Douglas received the Best Student-led Presentation Award at the conference.

Faculty and graduate students at Florida International University.

Shaniel Bernard and Dr. Alecia Douglas received the Best Student-led Presentation award.

The 22nd Annual Graduate Education and Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism

By Baker Ayoun

During the past year, graduate students from the Hospitality Management program have accomplished much. Shaniel Bernard, Han Chen, John Stephen, and Erol Sozen presented some of their research projects at the 22nd annual Graduate Education & Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism at Hilton University of Houston, TX in January.

Faculty and graduate students at Hilton University of Houston.
GRADUATE PROGRAM UPDATES

Significant Achievements and Updates

By Baker Ayoun

The Graduate Program congratulates five students, Amy Bardwell, Han Chen, Sara Ghezzi, John Stephen, and Sarinya Thayarnsin for earning their PhD and Savannah (Brook) Ladner for earning her MS degrees (Summer 2017). The program welcomed five new students starting fall 2017: Morgan Robinson, Meredith Bragwell, and Jeannie Perry (MS program) and Yoonah Kim and Seyedeh Samira Sobhani (PhD program).

Drs. Amy Bardwell, John Stephen, and David Martin at the graduation ceremony.

Drs. Han Chen, Sara Ghezzi, and Baker Ayoun at the waiting room prior to the graduation ceremony.

Graduate Student Association

By Erol Sozen

This fall, we are very excited to have two new PhD students (Yoonah Kim and Seyedah Samira Sobhani) and three Master’s students (Morgan Robinson, Meredith Bragwell, and Jeannie Perry) as part of our graduate program. We will also host Andrea Weiler as an exchange student from Innsbruck, Austria. Welcome and good luck to our new additions.

Two years ago, the HRMT Graduate Student Association (GSA) was established to serve as an organization for the graduate students in the program to be able to connect both socially and professionally. Last October, myself Erol Sozen, Andrew Barnes, and Wila Obeidat 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 two years, the HRMT GSA coordinated several social gatherings, along with professional volunteer opportunities. This fall, we are planning to organize a holiday potluck which received much positive feedback and interest last year. Our Facebook page, Auburn University HRMT GSA, is still running to enable current and former graduate students to receive and share relevant information regarding the association and to share photographs from related events. We are also very excited about switching the organization’s status from provisional to permanent in December 2017.
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Leonardo Maurelli III

Leonardo Maurelli III was born and raised in the Republic of Panama. He and his family immigrated to the United States in 1990. Maurelli comes from a large Latin/Italian family and he grew up in his grandmother’s and mom’s kitchen. Maurelli always knew that he wanted to be a chef. He started working in a restaurant at the age of 14, and fell in love with it. He has been in and out of kitchens for 26 years since then. Maurelli has worked with numerous talented chefs and did his apprenticeship under several of them for several years.

Maurelli chose the Auburn Hospitality Management program because he felt it was important to have a solid understanding of the business side of hospitality, and knew that it would help set him apart from other chefs working on their skills in kitchens as he was, as opposed to formal training at culinary school. It was important to him to have a solid foundation and a bachelor’s degree from a great university.

The cooking part was developed over the years while working his way up through various kitchens. Maurelli has served as the executive chef for Amsterdam Café, Railyard Brewing Company, Central 129 Coosa and The Hotel at Auburn University and Dixon Conference Center (AUHCC). He is currently the director of culinary operations for the AUHCC. He brings the artisan craft to the hotel with a strong emphasis on local responsibility. He actively seeks distributors who support the local community in regards to farming efforts and conservation. Maurelli has an inquisitive nature and a deep drive to understand and learn. He prides himself in his work ethic and he has just as much love for this business today as he did coming into it!

Maurelli provides some advice for anyone pursuing a career in any facet of hospitality. He advises the students to get involved in the hospitality management field sooner rather than later and not be afraid to try different facets of the industry because they need to know where their passion truly lies. Once they have determined where their passion lies - PURSUE it with reckless abandon, dedication, and good work ethic. The hospitality industry provides tremendous opportunities for growth, travel, once in a lifetime experiences, and lifelong connections. The students should be savvy and realize when opportunity knocks, they need to dive right in, but they also have to create one for themselves. Students are advised to set goals for themselves and work tirelessly to achieve them.
The Hotel at Auburn University & Dixon Conference Center (AUHCC)

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 West Paces Hospitality Group.

The executive team at The Hotel at Auburn University, managed by The West Paces Hospitality Group, has partnered with Auburn University since 2003 to develop a world leading curriculum for the university’s BS degree in Hospitality Management and graduate degrees in Hotel and Restaurant Management. This unique partnership aims to provide students with both classroom theory and laboratory experience based on a model of continuous quality improvement as part of the students’ degree requirement. Such partnership has allowed the hotel executive management and Hospitality Management faculty to work together in team teaching courses, such as the Food Production lab, Professional Development, Hospitality Practicum and Catering and Event Management class. The Hotel at Auburn University & Dixon Conference Center also serves as practicum site for the program.