DINING WITH GEORGE POLL
“It’s all in the details.”
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From the Dean…
Hello SHA Family,
We know that you want SHA to take a leading position in the industry, so—with the help of your generous donations—we are investing heavily in new technology. In April 2011 we gave all of our faculty and staff new iPad 2s. We are restructuring our core curriculum to take advantage of the tablet technologies, with interactive textbooks and real-time student polling of learning outcomes. We have also created two “mobile computing labs” so that faculty members can blend new learning material into any of their courses, in any classroom, beginning this semester. To ensure success with these initiatives, we recently upgraded our beautiful building, making it the most WiFi-enhanced facility on the entire BU campus.
We have also upgraded the Marriott Board Room with new sound and HDMI projection, so that we’ll be able to take advantage of state-of-the-art video conferencing technology, allowing us to attract leading guest speakers from around the globe.

As part of our new technology focus, we have created Curriculum 2015, geared toward the essential skills this year’s freshmen will need upon graduation. This will include the creation of a personal “e-Portfolio,” a focused collection of digital materials created over their four years at BU.
Next in line will be the replacement of our desktop computer lab with a wireless, interactive, tablet-based learning classroom. This will be an incredible place for cutting-edge, team-driven, challenge-based learning projects, as well as executive education seminars.
There are many other initiatives we can talk about when you visit SHA, such as the recent additions to our faculty and staff (see pages 1 and 2) and our new electives in hospitality design, event planning, and social media marketing. We are also proud to report that once again more than 90 percent of our recent senior class had job offers within three months of graduation.
Change is happening, but we’re also keeping the best of what has worked so well for the past 25 years. Your continued support, through gifts to the Annual Fund and participation in alumni events, makes it all possible. Thank you for checking in with SHA.

Chris Muller
Dean
Boston University School of Hospitality Administration
For personalized career advice, or to lend your expertise to the next generation, contact Marta Wyrodek at mwyrodek@bu.edu
Some restaurants now hand diners iPads instead of a printed bill of fare. “The hospitality industry has taken to using the iPad—and other tablet computers—in a whole raft of ways,” says SHA Dean Christopher Muller, and the School of Hospitality Administration is adapting, even leaping ahead. “Rather than trying to react to what the industry is doing, we feel we should move as fast or faster,” he says. “As educators, we need to ask ourselves, ‘What skills will the students need when they graduate four years from now?’”

That’s why SHA purchased 60 Apple iPads for use in all classrooms beginning this fall. Students learning about facilities design now use the devices to view and manipulate three-dimensional diagrams and drawings of equipment and floor plans. “It’s a wonderful way for the students to see interior spaces,” says Muller. In financial accounting, instead of students buying entire textbooks or even professors photocopying only the parts they’ll need, single chapters are now available on the 8.5-by-11-inch tablet. And “an interactive textbook is very different from a flat textbook,” says Muller. “The entire way we look at a text is changing.”

Students can virtually highlight text and bookmark pages, so they aren’t losing options. (They can also gain access to videos and interactive illustrations, relevant links, and definitions of terms. Whether it’s kitchen design or the workings of the Securities and Exchange Commission, concepts students need to master come to life with an impressive vividness.

Associate Professor of Hospitality Administration Peter Szende, who is pioneering a series of self-contained learning modules for students of food and beverage management, says his project is “just perfect for tablet devices because the modules are manageable chunks and because the tablet is very instructor- and student-friendly, with very rich applications.” Furthermore, SHA’s iPads will boost efficiency for all concerned by reducing the amount of paper used and eliminating time spent making copies, Szende says. “This is a benefit because BU is restricting the number of pages students can print,” thus shrinking the University’s carbon footprint.

“The iPad is just a tool,” Szende points out, and increased efficiency doesn’t mean professors need to work any less diligently. “We still have to make sure we convey the right information, that the students learn those competencies and skills that will help them be competitive.”

At the same time, the School’s embrace of the tablet is part of the SHA competitive advantage, says Muller. “Our location in Boston, our study-abroad program, and now our cutting-edge technology are three key things that will make our graduates stand out from everybody else in the country.”

Incidentally, the iPad won’t replace SHA students virtually wandering off to update their Facebook status. “There’s an app that lets the leader of the group,” i.e., the professor, “control the other iPad so they can’t go and do other things on them,” says Muller, flashing a smile.—PATRICK I. KENNEDY

Trip of a Lifetime

CATCHING UP WITH THE RECIPIENT OF THE R. C. KOOPF PRIZE, SARAH NYESTE

Recent graduate Sarah Nyeste (GS09, SHA11) is among the six national winners of this year’s prestigious R. C. Koopf Prize, an award that includes $10,000 cash and a two-month tour of wineries associated with Kobrand Corp. throughout California, Italy, and France. The travel experience, arranged and funded by the Koopf Family Foundation, began in September. Check In caught up with Nyeste just after she arrived in Venice to begin the European segment of the tour.

Which location has been your favorite so far?

The experience is so surreal that I don’t think I can pick a favorite part yet; although, I must say that eating at the French Laundry [a five-star restaurant in California’s Napa Valley] is definitely up on the list. Also, Benziger was the first winery where we were able to actually see the grapes being harvested and crushed.

What have you learned that has surprised you the most?

I have consistently been surprised by the differences between the wine properties. For example, Cakebread Cellars has its own chef but not a restaurant because it’s in Napa, and they have regulations against profiting from ventures not purely associated with the winery. Domaine Carneros [also in Napa Valley] looks like a chateau dropped in from France. It offers food “tasting courses” that you can order with different flights to showcase their wines.

Which European location are you most looking forward to visiting?

I am very excited to travel to the Burgundy region of France. I’ll be able to practice my French and, best of all, see how they pair their wine with food. This is a wonderful, exhaust- ing, thrilling, exhilarating, fattening, awe-inspiring, and glorious scholarship, and I am lucky to have this opportunity.—CS

In July, the Washington Post ran a list of recommended summer reading for business leaders that included the book from the Marriott executive’s spring visit to campus. Senior Allison Harvey (‘11, SMGCTI) now a summer intern and the front office supervisor at Boston’s Ames Hotel—packed the book in her suitcase and read it poolside during her spring break trip to Miami.

“I thought it was a great hands-on look at what the high-level executives of hospitality companies do on a daily basis,” Harvey says. “So many of us work at the property level and can’t see the larger picture—how what these executives do affects our jobs and the service the customer receives.”

The Washington Post praised Fuller’s explanations of how to connect and do business with people in any culture. Building cross-cultural relationships is a skill Honk has honed over two decades as head of international lodging for Marriott, logging millions of frequent-flier miles as he’s visited hundreds of Marriott properties on six continents. His book includes insightful anecdotes from his business dealings in cities from Tokyo to New Delhi, Mexico City to Baghdad. The book’s lessons, Fuller writes, are intended not just for fellow globetrotters but for anyone looking to succeed in today’s multi-cultural business environment.

—CORINNE STEINBRENNER

The full list of recommended summer reading is available online at washingtonpost.com/business. You can also download a copy to your iPad using the Kindle app. Look for the book on the list and tap the Download button.
Chopsticks. Wood or ceramic? Disposable or reusable? Loose or wrapped in paper? Blank paper or paper printed with your logo? Logo printed vertically or horizontally? Two ink colors or one?

“It’s always the details, the little details,” says George Poll (CGS’82, SHA’84) as he discusses the six—soon to be seven—restaurants that he and his older brother, Gillis, have launched and are now successfully running on their native Long Island. Their impressive portfolio includes Toku, a sleek, upscale Asian restaurant in Manhasset, where a diner savors her Ja Jaing mein with a pristine set of disposable, wooden chopsticks that come wrapped in bright white paper imprinted with the horizontal version of the restaurant’s red and black logo. While Poll insists there are many, many factors that determine a restaurateur’s success or failure, it may be his and Gillis’s painstaking attention to detail that enables them to thrive in the notoriously risky restaurant business.

“Salt and pepper shakers. Who cares about salt and pepper shakers? Any saltshaker would be fine—a thin one, a fluted one, a fat one. But is it the right one? You think no one cares, but subliminally, they do,” says Poll, who chose traditional paneled-glass salt and pepper shakers to sit atop every white tablecloth of his flagship restaurant, Bryant & Cooper Steak House, which the New York Times has rated the best of Long Island’s steak emporiums. Customers may not remember the shape of the saltshaker, the heft of their knife, the typeface used in the menu, or the sheen of the floor, says Poll, but they do remember eating in a restaurant that looked and felt just right. Subconsciously, diners do notice the saltshaker, he says, “and it helps make the experience what it’s supposed to be.”

Poll is, of course, punctilious in the choice of the food he serves, having learned the importance of quality ingredients from his father and older brothers. When Poll was a boy in the 1960s, his father owned and ran Pappas, a seafood institution in Brooklyn. Poll often tells the story of how his father traveled to the fish market early each morning to personally select fresh seafood for his restaurant, and of how the three Poll sons followed his example, making predawn treks to the waterfront markets themselves when they reincarnated Pappas on Long Island in 1979.
A ROCKY START AT ANOTHER RESTAURANT REINFORCED FOR THE POLLS THE NEED TO GIVE EVERY ASPECT OF A NEW VENTURE THEIR UNDIVIDED ATTENTION.

When the brothers opened Bryant & Cooper Steak House in Roslyn in the mid-1980s, they applied the same exacting standards to the selection of their prime beef. They also fully renovated the building they’d purchased, bringing a sophisticated Manhattan style to Long Island and making choices that would affect every aspect of a customer’s experience—from the genuine leather banquets to the heavy “Daniel Boone” style steak knives. After seeing how powerful such design choices could be, they decided to renovate Pappas 3; they hired an experienced architect, replaced the previous owner’s “kind of corny” portholes and nautical flourishes with dark wood and antique light fixtures, and rechristened the restaurant Riverbay.

Since then, middle brother Dean has amicably split from the partnership, taking Riverbay with him, and George and Gillis have continued to launch and operate restaurants with keen attention to every detail: the garlic mashed potatoes at Majors (two locations), the brick ovens at Cipollini, the illuminated onyx bar at Toku, and the mosaic tile floor at Bar Frites. This fall, Poll is constantly fielding calls from his architect, his general contractor, his banker, and various other parties involved in the launch of his latest venture, a restaurant and catering hall near Bryant & Cooper Steak House called Hendricks Tavern.

Poll says, “It’s a historic building,” Poll says. “It’s a lot of—what’s the word?” Not problems . . . challenges. A lot of challenges.”

“Some people want to be entertained; some people, they just want a drink”), and noticing customers’ needs (“if a person is looking up, he needs something”).

With so many elements to pay attention to—the level of service, the balance of the menu, flavors, pricing, styling, wages, food costs, and on, and on—there’s no one area that restaurateurs thrive or fail, says Poll, “but we try to put as many positives as we can on our side.” Among the most important of these are love of the work, a hunger to succeed, devotion to the customer, and consistency in food and service, he says. “The rest is in the details.”

Bryant & Cooper Steak House’s dry-aged prime beef is hand selected and then hand carved at the Poll brothers’ butcher shop, located next door to the restaurant.

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Of course, Poll doesn’t expect Bar Frites—or any of his restaurants—to coast from here. On the day of our interview, he had a 3 p.m. appointment to taste new items for Toku’s menu. “The restaurant has been open four years,” he explained. “You can’t let it get stale.” He also monitors the level of service his restaurants provide. He keeps an eye on his waiters, to ensure they’re reading their tables properly (“some people want to be entertained; some people, they just want a drink”) and noticing customers’ needs (“if a person is looking up, he needs something”). He brings any problems to the manager’s attention. But, he says, “It’s not always about finding something that’s wrong. Then you’re the negative guy. It’s good to tell someone when they’re doing something right, too.”

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Live from LA

Hannah Bartell ’04 comes from a family of hoteliers; now she’s continuing that tradition in style. Bartell is a senior sales executive for the JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton—two hotels in one 54-story tower—at L.A. Live. The JW-Carlton entertainment complex is also home to the Staples Center and the Grammy Museum.

The coolest thing about L.A. Live is that three years ago, none of this existed. Now we have a $2.5-billion district, which is home to half-a-dozen award shows [e.g., the Grammys and the Emmys], has 14 restaurants and a billion-dollar hotel tower, and is the most sought-after entertainment destination in Southern California.

Being in sales, you eat everywhere. We have two celebrity chefs, Kerry Simon is similar to his on-screen image in that he’s very laid back, creative, down to earth, and great to talk to. Wolfgang Puck is charming, funny, witty, but at the same time very professional—and their food is amazing.

While we have two hotels here, we have the same general manager; they’re operated as two distinctly different hotels in the same building. We do have departments shared between the two, such as housekeeping, but each brand has its own standards. When you’re at the Ritz-Carlton, you feel like you’re at a Ritz-Carlton, and when you’re at the JW Marriott, it’s a completely different experience.

Growing up, every Sunday night, we ate dinner at one of our restaurants. Starting when I was five years old. I remember eating in our restaurants and discussing how the food was, how the service was, what dishes we didn’t keep, what dishes we shouldn’t keep.

Boston Celtics or LA Lakers? I don’t know if I can answer that. You know, the Lakers have won the last couple of years, but Boston is in my heart…

Interview by Andrew Thurston
Each year SHA’s distinguished lecture series—a spring-semester course that draws roughly 100 students from all class years—brings hospitality heavyweights to campus to share their stories and insights. The series is designed to introduce students to the industry’s leading companies and provide them the opportunity to meet the people responsible for the companies’ success, says Dean Christopher Muller, who oversees the course. Each lecture is followed by a roundtable discussion that allows 25 SHA seniors to interact on a more personal, informal level with the week’s presenter.

We spoke to four recent lecturers and asked them to share their words of industry wisdom with Check In readers.

**Manny Costa**  
(CGS’72, CAS’74)

**Marc Bruno**

**Peter Christie**

**Robert Earl**

**Interviews by**  
CORINNE STEINBRENNER
Concierge Fast Facts

- While some believe the word “concierge” is based on the Latin term “curare” (to care for), others say it comes from the Old French term de cerciers (“keeper of the coasts”), a royal officer who tended to palace visitors in medieval times.

- Many hospitals now offer concierge services for patients and visitors.

- Mary Cabrelli, global account director for Omni Hotels & Resorts, is among the many hotel executives who began their careers in the concierge desk.

During her first weekend night alone as concierge at a luxury apartment building, Laurel Kramer (‘12) had to deal with a toilet overflowing and leeking into the apartment below, a fire alarm that wouldn’t stay off, and a princess (an actual princess) who needed a prescription refilled immediately. Another time, she had to make dinner reservations for eight members of yet another royal family, at one of Boston’s hottest restaurants—on a Saturday night—in half an hour.

You’d think she’d relish the quiet times behind the front desk at the 176-unit South Tower of the Residences at the Ritz-Carlton in Boston. Instead, Kramer has used the off-peak time to conceive of and create a welcome newsletter, and to edit the building’s newsletter, and to chip in on budgeting duties.

That’s just in her first three months on the job.

“I’m basically the gateway to the building,” Kramer says. “I get residents, vet guests, manage deliveries and contractors coming in, organize packages and laundry—and I like to find little ways to do the job better.”

Not only is the concierge job a rewarding one for many, but it is also a time-honored way to start the climb to a corner office. “People don’t realize how much that’s a part of the management structure,” says SHA Dean Christopher Muller. “Especially at luxury hotels, the concierge job is a path to management. Some think of the concierge as sort of a servant in the lobby, and that’s not really the case. They’re the front line for guest services.”

“There’s so much opportunity for growth in this career if you’re skilled,” agrees Kramer, whose bosses have noted her many skills. In addition to her job at the Ritz-Carlton, Kramer works on campus in the new role of SHA concierge. That means manning the front desk, giving directions, and presenting a public face. “A visitor’s favorite is greeting prospective students who wander in off the street whom we might have missed otherwise,” says Kramer, who is also active in student government and campus chapters of hospitality professional associations. “Choosing a college was stressful for me, and it was meeting with people here that sold me on SHA. So I feel very committed to helping other people make that decision.”
**Alumni News + Notes**

**Dana Lancaster (’88)** recently celebrated 20 years with Anthony’s Restaurants. She is general manager of Anthony’s HomePort and Anthony’s Oyster Bar & Grill in Des Moines, Wash., a picturesque waterfront community five miles south of Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

**Ana (90) and Graham (91) Ruggles of Ashland, Mass., sent** their oldest daughter, Analicia, to college this fall. They write, “Can it really be 20 years since we gradu- ate?” They encourage classmates to connect with them on LinkedIn.

In August, **Jeffrey C. Selden (’91)** began a new role as managing partner of Marcia Selden Catering & Event Planning in Fairfield County, Conn. “This exciting opportu- nity will undoubtedly prove to be tremendously rewarding on both a professional and personal level, as I will be working with my mother and sister, catering the coziest of dinner parties to the most opulent galas and weddings,” he writes. Jeffrey was previously executive director of catering at The New York Palace hotel.

**Meredith Meade-Norris (’90) of Bucks County, Pa., has worked for 10 years with Exceptional Children in Ashland, Mass., married Andrea Thomas (’90), and is now the mother of two children, Hayley and Jake. She writes: “Building a strong network of family, friends and colleagues has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my career. Family and friends are of utmost importance to me.”**

**Amy (Thomas) Greene (’90) of Red Bank, N.J., is enjoying married life following her September 2010 wedding. After five years working in health care, Amy has returned to the hospitality industry and is now rooms division manager at the Molly Pitcher Inn and Oyster Point Hotel in Red Bank. She recently earned an MBA from Baruch College, with a dual emphasis in finance and entrepreneurship.**

**Jae Cho (94) of Stoneham, Mass., married Andrea Swayne on June 25, 2011. The couple honeymooned in the Bahamas.**


**Heather McGuire (’00)** has accepted a job with Marriott International’s Atlanta office and is currently transitioning to a new role as senior account executive for Marriott’s small hotel division. She and her family are now living in Newport Beach, Calif. “This move has been tremendously rewarding and satisfying and challenging,” she writes.

**Punit Shah (’02)** is president and chief operating officer of Tampa, Florida-based Liberty Group, which specializes in real estate investments, asset manage- ment, and commercial property development. He recently won Tampa’s 30 Under 30 Award and has been appointed to the boards of the InterContinental Hotels Owner’s Association and the CEO Council of Tampa. Punit married Carla Portos (’05) in 2009 in Sarasota, Fla., at a two-day wedding that celebrated both Carla’s family’s Catholic traditions and Punit’s Indian heritage. Carla now works in Tampa at the Home Shopping Network.

**James Gregg (’03)** of Walnut Creek, Calif., married Lindsay Laughlin on July 16, 2011. James is associated with InterContinental Hotels of San Francisco, representing the InterContinental San Francisco and the InterContinental Mark Hopkins.

Shang-Byrne Tea (‘04) “permanently renounced singlehood” on March 14, 2011, marrying his girlfriend of five years, Millicent Yap. They are expecting their first child in March 2012.

**Leanne Lone (’06)** is a food and beverage manager at the Sheraton New York Hotel & Towers, overseeing room service, a club lounge, a three-meal restaurant, a Starbucks, and a bar for the 1,776-room hotel.

**James Fynes (’07)** is a group sales manager at the Hyatt Regency Cleveland at the Convention Center, overseeing sales and marketing for the Hyatt Regency Cleveland at the Convention Center.

Julie Sutula (’10) graduated in May from a six-month intensive pastry program at the French Culinary Institute in Manhattan. “I loved it and learned so much!” she writes. She is now a hotel pastry cook in Midland, Mich.

**Melissa Lee (’11)** is working at the front office of the Renaissance Vinoy Resort and Golf Club in her home state of Florida. She writes: “Built in 1925, the Vinoy is rich in history and is even rumored to be haunted! There is always something new and exciting going on both in the hotel and in the area!”

Send us your news at alumnews@bu.edu.
The Class of 2011 made history this spring when **more than 2,400** of its members gave to the BU Class Gift Campaign, prompting Dean of Students Kenn Elmore to jump into the Charles River.

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Give today at bu.edu/give (or 800-447-2849).