

**THEN: FROM A PROGRAM WITH 20 STUDENTS TO ONE OF THE NATION'S LEADING HOSPITALITY SCHOOLS**

# check

Boston University School of Hospitality Administration  
*Fall 2021*



**NOW: HOW THE SHA COMMUNITY GOT INNOVATIVE DURING THE PANDEMIC**

**NEXT: THE FUTURE OF SHA AND THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**



## From the Dean



### Dear SHA Family,

I am excited to introduce this special edition of *Check In*. I tend to think of SHA as a newer school within BU, but the reality is we are celebrating SHA's 40th anniversary. We are a well-established college that is ever-evolving to meet the needs of our industry.

We have come a long way in the last 40 years, from a local hospitality program housed within Metropolitan College to a school with an international reputation. Many of you have been through this journey with us. And if you haven't, you will read about our history in the following pages. You'll appreciate how the decisions we've made and the actions we've taken over the decades have shaped the school and what it stands for today.

SHA is a cutting-edge professional school. We focus on educating the next generation of leaders, who will redefine hospitality. For many years, students associated hospitality with hotels or restaurant companies. Now, we have students going into a wide array of professional areas: real estate, human resources, marketing and advertising, and revenue and data management, among others. Creating unique human experiences comes as naturally to our students as concepts like RevPAR, EBITDA, and net income. We also pride ourselves on our students' concern for global matters, including sustainability; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and the economic wealth gap.

I am proud to be the leader of such a dynamic organization with a world-class faculty, staff, and student body. One of my greatest joys is meeting alumni and hearing about their interesting life journeys. You always impress me with your amazing accomplishments.

I look forward to celebrating our 40th anniversary with everyone who has made SHA a top-tier hospitality school. Here's to the next 40 years. Our doors are always open and we invite you to pay us a visit and share our vision for the future.

Sincerely,

Arun Upneja

*Check In* is published by Boston University School of Hospitality Administration for alumni and friends.

**Dean**  
Arun Upneja

**Editor**  
Mara Sassoon

**Contributing Writers**  
Marc Chalufour  
Andrew Thurston

**Art Director**  
Raquel Schott

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### **Pictured on the cover (from top to bottom):**

1. Former dean Jim Stamas (1995)
2. First SHA convocation (1993)
3. Professor Emeritus Harold Lane (1991)
4. Jacques Pépin gives a cooking demonstration (1998)
5. Julia Child at a Festival of Fare event at BU (1992)

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# years of SHA

How a program that began with 20 students became one of the nation's leading hospitality schools

BY ANDREW THURSTON

# FOR MUCH OF ITS EARLY LIFE, BU'S HOSPITALITY PROGRAM DIDN'T HAVE AN ESPECIALLY HOSPITABLE HOME.

**The Hotel and Food Administration Program, the forerunner to the BU School of Hospitality Administration, spent years squeezed into borrowed rooms in a converted Cadillac showroom at 808 Comm Ave. A dust-covered jalopy was still parked on the fifth floor.**



**Top:** Jim Stamas, former dean of SHA, in 1995. During his tenure, the school doubled its student body and devolved from MET. **Bottom:** Denise Dupré teaches a class in 1992. Dupré advised the University when it was first considering a hospitality program. She ended up teaching as an associate professor and later directing the program.

Founded in 1981 in Metropolitan College—BU's school focused on part-time adult learners—the program's inaugural class of 20 full-time undergraduates didn't even get their own graduation ceremony. By its 25th anniversary, SHA was a fully independent school with around 450 students and its own custom-renovated building. Today, it has more than 3,000 alums around the globe. After 40 years, SHA is now established among the best hospitality management programs in the country, with a reputation for blending industry training—underpinned by close trade connections—with a liberal arts education. As it celebrates its anniversary, it's also preparing students for an uncertain future: hotels, restaurants, and other visitor-driven businesses have been devastated by the coronavirus pandemic, and SHA is revamping its programs to give its students the skills they'll need to help the industry bounce back.

### BUILDING FOUNDATIONS

Back in the 1970s, when BU began toying with the idea of a new hospitality program, administrators expected to launch a few courses targeting existing professionals looking to add to their skills or shift careers. Local hospitality executives like Jim Stamas and Denise Dupré encouraged them to think bigger. They told the University to consider an undergraduate program that balanced hospitality training with a liberal arts foundation.

That combination would become a trademark of SHA—and one that remains today, with all undergrads required to take general education courses and given the option to pursue a minor or dual degree at any other BU college.

"The people I saw in the industry that succeeded not only had industry-specific skills," says Stamas, "they also understood other things, people, the world around them. That's important." Then a senior executive at Omni Hotels, Stamas would later chair SHA's advisory board and, eventually, serve as dean for 16 years.

Among the graduates of SHA's first cohort, the Class of 1984, was David Waronker (CGS'82, SHA'84), now president of CBD Real Estate Investment. In a special *Check In* issue marking the 25th anniversary of his class' graduation, Waronker said his well-rounded education had proven critical to his success: "SHA provided me a general, yet varied education that gave me an opportunity to start out in my field of education—hotel administration—and parlay that education into my own real estate development business."

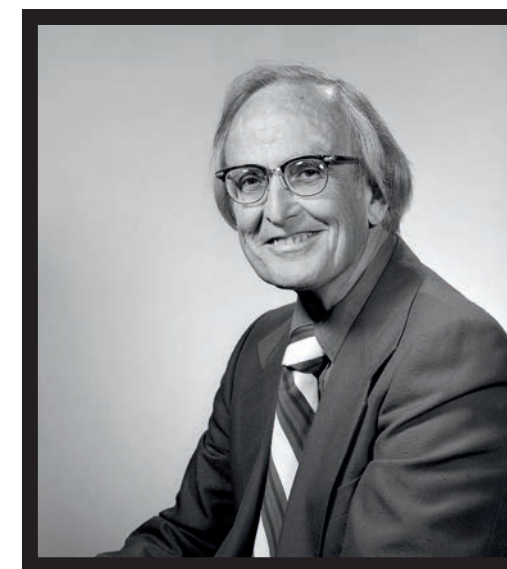
Dupré, a longtime consultant who—like Stamas—would also eventually lead the school, helped the new program build strong ties to the hospitality industry, another long-standing feature of SHA. Since

its earliest days, SHA has had an extensive and experienced industry advisory board, founded by one of its first leaders, the late Professor Emeritus Harold E. Lane (CAS'36, GRS'40). The current 18-member board has representatives from the C-suites of companies like Aramark, Planet Hollywood International, the Boston Beer Company, and Xenia Hotels & Resorts.

"The advisory board, even early on, was filled with incredibly talented worldwide experts," says Dupré, managing partner of Champagne Hospitality, a hotel design and development company she founded in 2012. "One of the hallmarks of the program that you can trace through from those early days and that still remains is that connection with industry."

For Ed Fuller, a longtime board member and former chair, the industry-academy connection has been mutually beneficial.

"Boston provided the best laboratory for our students because they could work at the Westin, the Marriott, the Hilton, any number of properties and get experience that they could bring back to the classroom," says Fuller (Questrom'68), president of Laguna Strategic



The late Professor Emeritus Harold E. Lane, one of the program's first leaders, in a 1981 photograph.

Advisors and former president of Marriott International. He helped the school secure millions of dollars in funding from Marriott: SHA's career center is named for the hospitality company. Fuller says Marriott's recruiters also ranked SHA students among the best in the country, frequently hiring them after graduation because they made "very strong, well-educated managers who were still humble enough to work their way up."

### INDEPENDENCE AND A NEW HOME

As the program grew, it also drew professionals into the classroom, including Dupré. In the early 1980s, BU asked her to share her expertise with students—she ended up staying for a decade, teaching as an associate professor and later directing the program.

During her time leading SHA, Dupré was instrumental in helping turn the program into the school many recognize today. She launched its career services center, developed

a strategic plan, and expanded the curriculum. She also hosted its first independent graduation in the early 1990s—although that almost didn't happen. Without any BU-allocated funds for the inaugural celebration, Dupré called on the local hotel community for help, landing a ballroom at a nearby Hyatt, with food and drink thrown in. She also began pushing for the program to be spun off from MET.

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"I saw a tremendous amount of natural potential with all the right ingredients to do something magnificent," says Dupré, who recently returned to SHA as a member of its advisory board. "There was incredible access to the industry, which a lot of programs didn't have. It was situated in Boston, had very much an international view by virtue of its faculty and students, and had the underpinning of a liberal arts business school."

Under Dupré's leadership, BU turned the program into a school in 1992, granting SHA its current name—though it would remain part of MET until 2004. Three years after its name change, SHA also got its first dean, with BU tapping Stamas from the school's advisory board for the role.

"I said I wanted to grow the school and become an independent school within the University," says Stamas of his goals as dean. "And we needed a new facility. We were in a ridiculous facility for what we were trying to do—it was such a competitive disadvantage."

He admits that, fresh from industry, he expected to achieve all three goals in three years. Academia slowed those plans a little, but didn't derail them. During Stamas' tenure, the school doubled its student body, devolved from MET, and, in September 2006, formally opened its own dedicated, 28,000-square-foot building at 928 Comm Ave, renovated with support from a multimillion-dollar fundraising effort.

"Jim really orchestrated the evolution of the school," says Fuller. "He laid the foundation."



SHA hosted its first independent convocation in 1993.

Under Christopher Muller, who followed Stamas into the deanship in 2010, SHA continued to upgrade its home with new digital capabilities, adding wireless access, interactive textbooks, and real-time student polling.

#### REDEFINING HOSPITALITY

In 2013, the school's current dean, Arun Upneja, a former hotel manager and associate dean at Penn State, joined BU, promising a curriculum that would "forecast what trends are taking place in the industry." Since then, the school has fostered faculty research on topics like the sharing economy and workplace psychology, formed an alumni mentorship program, signed a study abroad deal with ESSEC Business School in Paris, France, expanded diversity and inclusion initiatives, and launched its first graduate degree, an accelerated Master of Management in Hospitality.

Now, 40 years after its founding, SHA faces its sternest test. The hospitality industry has been ravaged by the global coronavirus pandemic. In response, the school has revamped almost every course to adapt to industry changes, adding new focuses on human psychology, innovation, and digital business in anticipation of changing attitudes to entertainment and travel. It has also introduced new concentrations, covering topics such as marketing, revenue management, innovation and entrepreneurship, and senior living.

"We are in the process of redefining what hospitality means: hospitality is wherever there is scope for a lot of human interactions in providing the services you have," says Upneja, who founded the Deans and Directors Consortium, which brings together hospitality school leaders from across the country to discuss the pandemic's impact on business and education.

Fuller predicts the hospitality industry will rebound strongly as the pandemic continues to ease off—"it has the potential to grow dramatically for just an unbelievable number of years ahead"—and that SHA and its graduates will be well placed to lead it into a brighter future.

"My hopes are that it continues to grow both the graduate and the undergraduate divisions, that it continues to have very strong, well-educated students who leave the program and move into the industry," says Fuller. "And it has to be on the cutting edge of innovation and ideas." ■



**Top: Instructor Bill Heck (right)** teaches a course on hotel and restaurant management in 1982. **Bottom: Legendary chef Jacques Pépin (Hon.'11)** (left) teaches a cooking class for SHA students in 1998.

# REMEMBER WHEN...

## Alumni share their favorite SHA memories

**The early years of SHA were challenging, with just small classes held at MET and only on Mondays.** But the spirit and inspiration of the hospitality industry was led by one man—Harold Lane.

Professor Lane was an advocate for honesty and integrity in an industry desperate for quality leadership. And he led by example, explaining that success was not just As and Bs in the classroom, but honesty, integrity, and hard work in the workplace. He also said, "Always remember where you came from, and as you climb the ladder of any industry, always remember to give back." I never forgot Professor Lane's words to remember to give back. We have established the Ruth and David Waronker Scholarship Fund, dedicated to providing students tuition assistance to attend BU. A true leader will rarely be remembered by the buildings they've built or developments they've created, but they will always be remembered by those who have been helped by their generosity.

**DAVID WARONKER (CGS'82, SHA'84), PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER, CBD REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT**

**One of my favorite memories of SHA—or HoFo as it was called in my day—was living in the Hospitality Management brownstone at 186 Bay State Road.** Many majors had special floors, but few had brownstones. In the '80s, the brownstones were where everyone wanted to live. My freshman year was the first year for the SHA dorm and it was mostly freshmen and transfers. We had great times studying together, hanging out in the halls eating pizza, watching TV in the common room, and cooking. Yes, we had a kitchen, which was unusual unless you had an apartment. Another great memory was helping out Julia Child (Hon.'76) at a cooking demo that she was doing in our classroom kitchens. We all received signed copies of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking, Vol. 2* and had our pictures taken with her.

**LESLIE KARREN ('90), PROPERTY MANAGER, THE KARREN COMPANY**

**There are many memories from my time at SHA: cochairing the hospitality job fair in senior year; working with famous chefs like Julia Child (Hon.'76), Jacques Pépin (Hon.'11), and Gordon Hamersley (CGS'71, Wheelock'74)** in the extracurricular culinary program; organizing the executive speaker series with Harold Lane; going to New York City for the hotel show; helping [the late Associate Professor] Noel Cullen (Wheelock'93) to gain his master chef; volunteering at the Spinazzola Gala...

**GIL FORER ('91, QUESTROM'94), LEAD PARTNER, DIGITAL AND BUSINESS DISRUPTION, EY**



**Top: Julia Child (Hon.'76)** also taught cooking classes through SHA in the late '80s and early '90s. Here, she is pictured at a 1992 event at 808 Comm Ave, where she gave a cooking demonstration and signed copies of her cookbooks. **Bottom:** The late professor **Michael Oshins** teaches a class in 2006.

**I had the opportunity from 1989 to 1992 to work in the SHA office at 808 Comm Ave—the old Fuller auto dealership building.**

At the time, Jacques Pépin was a guest chef in a certificate program held in the building, and his daughter Claudine (CGS'88, CAS'90) assisted in the office. She and I got to be friends. It's a pleasure to watch their various TV episodes and remember the "I knew you when" stuff!

**WENDY SALZER SUTOWSKI ('93), EVENT SUPPORT MANAGER, THE INCEPTION COMPANY**

**The study abroad program was a highlight.** It was my junior year, and the program was in Brussels. It included a trip to the Burgundy wine region in France together with the Maastricht Hotel Management School—it was a great program and I made great friendships.

**JAVIER ROSENBERG ('94), PRESIDENT, NORTHWOOD HOSPITALITY**

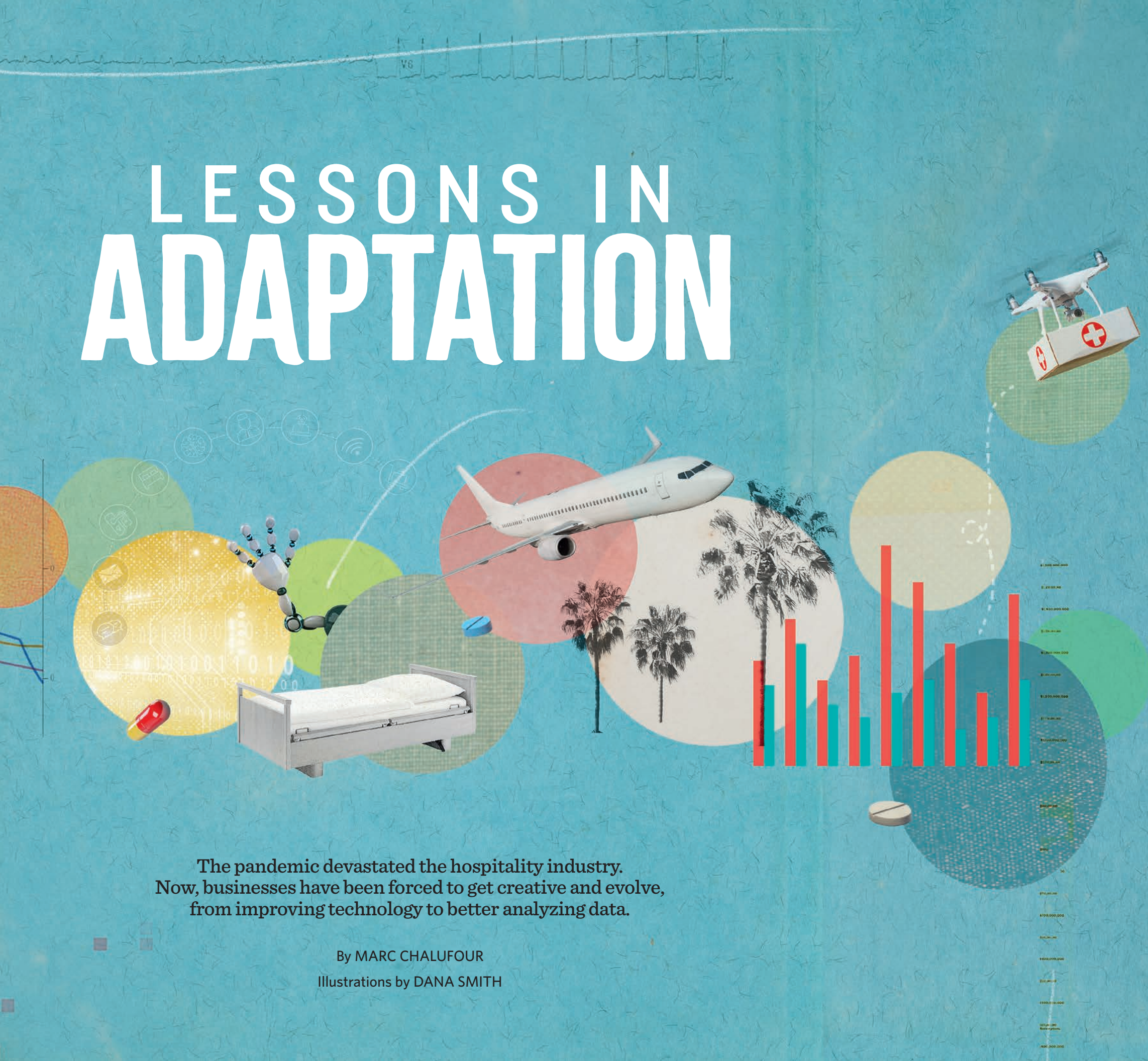
**I remember [Assistant Professor of Hospitality Administration] Nick Washienko (LAW'87) casually practicing his golf swing** while challenging our class to dissect dilemmas in hospitality law and ethics, and how it taught me to think critically, but not to take things too seriously. His presentations class gave me the skills to communicate compellingly and with confidence.

**JESSICA PEÑA-CASTILLO ('04), REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT OF PREVENTIVE CARE, CATAPULT HEALTH**

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# LESSONS IN ADAPTATION



The pandemic devastated the hospitality industry. Now, businesses have been forced to get creative and evolve, from improving technology to better analyzing data.

By MARC CHALUFOUR  
Illustrations by DANA SMITH

In late February 2020, Biogen hosted its annual leadership meeting at the Marriott Long Wharf in Boston. A group of 175 executives from the local biotech company met for two days. It was the sort of event—requiring conference rooms, beds, and food—that hotels relied on for regular revenues.

When the meeting adjourned, attendees dispersed to at least six states and three countries. More than half of them had contracted COVID-19 and their travel would spread it to 300,000 people, according to the *New York Times*.

Soon, virtually all travel halted, and predictable sources of business and leisure spending vanished. Almost a year after the fateful conference, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics' December 2020 jobs report showed the leisure and hospitality industry's unemployment rate at 16.7 percent, 11 percent higher than December 2019.

But in the midst of such upheaval, there have been glimmers of hope.

"We're going to look back and see 2020 as an inflection point for a lot of changes," says Mark Legg, an assistant professor of hospitality analytics.

Forced to find new ways of doing business, companies innovated. They embraced technology and data to become smarter and more efficient. And, as mass vaccinations fuel a return to travel and dining out, the industry is ready to welcome people back.

### A PLACE FOR TECHNOLOGY

"Hospitality has always been an experiential service industry," Legg says. That typically means personal interactions. But it was companies already streamlined to minimize interactions that thrived in 2020. Legg cites Domino's, a business built around online ordering and food delivery. "You don't have to talk to anyone," he says. "It's the opposite of what hospitality has been." A local dine-in pizzeria wasn't prepared to compete.

"Historically, our industry tends to lag behind when it comes to technology," says Javier Rosenberg, president of Northwood Hospitality and chair of the dean's advisory board at SHA. Many businesses had to play catch-up, introducing mobile restaurant ordering or app-based hotel check-ins, he says. But he hopes that will help them evolve.

While technology was used to eliminate personal interactions during the pandemic, Rosenberg ('94) sees it ultimately facilitating and improving them. "It's a people industry," he says. "Technology needs to be there to eliminate some of the transactional elements and allow people to focus on the human interaction."

Take the hotel lobby. "The front desk is a big piece of furniture that actually creates a barrier between the customer and the team member," Rosenberg says. "In today's world, you can do check-in

and checkout on an iPad. I envision having a host or ambassador who can greet you as you arrive, look you in the eyes, and meaningfully connect with you.”

**KNOW YOUR MARKET**

For Legg, the pandemic highlighted the need for businesses to get smarter, developing ways to understand rapidly accelerating demographic shifts in their customer base—and to replace once steady sources of revenue like business travel.

“For a long time, the largest segment for most hospitality sectors was baby boomers—but they tend to be 60-plus years old,” he says. “They’ve been the most impacted by the pandemic.”



Javier Rosenberg, president of Northwood Hospitality, which operates a range of hotels in five states plus Washington, D.C., says some of his company’s properties within driving distance of major cities did even better during the pandemic than in past years.

That means businesses are scrambling sooner than they expected to embrace millennials and Generation Z as their core customers. “There are a lot of studies that agree that they are less loyal,” Legg says. “This is forcing companies to no longer offer a one-size-fits-all approach, but to offer more personalized services, a wider range of services, and more convenience.” Those adjustments require data about who your customers are, why they’re behaving as they do, and how to meet their needs.

Rosenberg has already witnessed some unexpected new spending patterns during the pandemic. “We’ve discovered that there’s a group

of people out there who can now take a week, or a long weekend, to work and travel at the same time,” he says. Northwood Hospitality operates a range of hotels in five states plus Washington, D.C., and he says some of their properties within driving distance of major cities did even better during the pandemic than in past years.

“You work from your hotel for a day or two but also enjoy being in the destination,” he says. “I think there’s exaggerated demand for that right now, but that’s hopefully something we’ll see continuing.”

**SENIOR LIVING**

For Serena Lipton, there was no drop-off in work during the pandemic. Lipton (CGS’16, SHA’18,’23), an analyst in the senior housing division at JLL, a global commercial real estate services company, works at the busy intersection of hospitality and healthcare, where the customer is a resident who can’t simply cancel a reservation.

Lipton says that a hospitality and wellness approach to senior living has been a trend for at least the past decade. It’s most

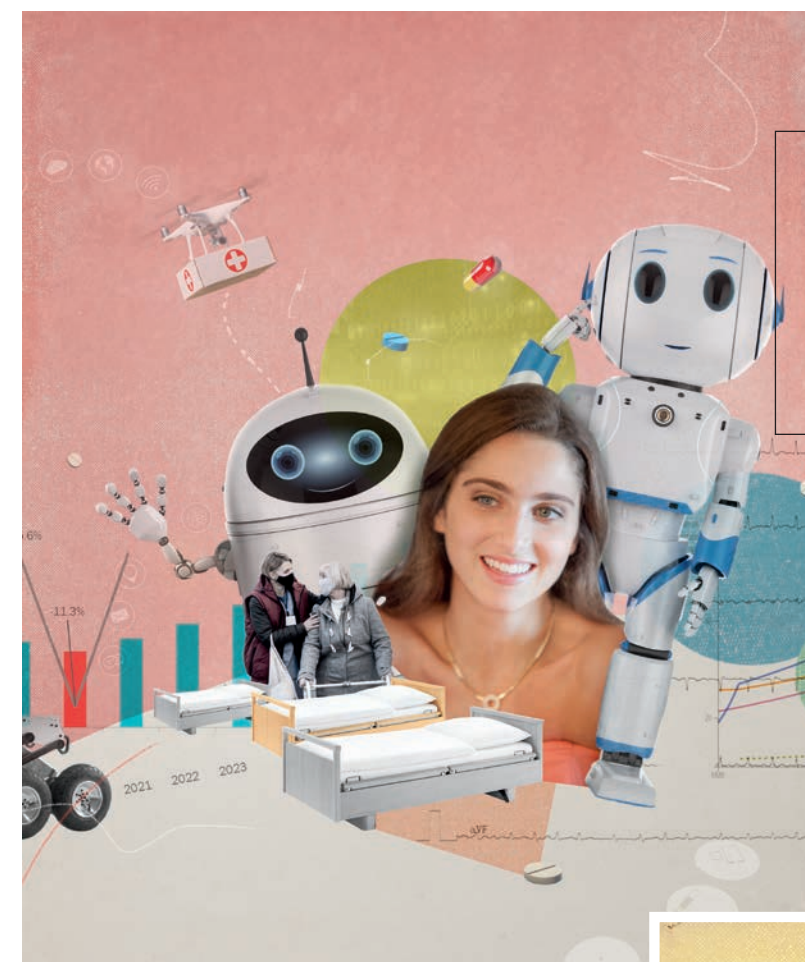
**“THERE’S A GROUP OF PEOPLE OUT THERE WHO CAN NOW TAKE A WEEK, OR A LONG WEEKEND, TO WORK AND TRAVEL AT THE SAME TIME. YOU WORK FROM YOUR HOTEL FOR A DAY OR TWO BUT ALSO ENJOY BEING IN THE DESTINATION.” JAVIER ROSENBERG (’94)**

evident in the growth of active adult and independent living communities designed for retirees, and she expects demand for a hospitality-driven approach to increase following the pandemic. “There’s a whole new standard for care,” she says. That includes the need for more social distance, which could lower occupancies.

Though Lipton’s primary focus is analyzing properties, she also tried to help her clients adapt during the pandemic. “I was asked to research robotics companies that have worked in hospitals, hotels, and restaurants,” she says. “We wanted to start educating senior living operators about their use and how they could help them weather the current storm.” Robots can sanitize rooms, deliver food and medication to quarantined residents, and even help them FaceTime with family. “The pandemic has further accelerated the technology movement within the senior living space, which was already gaining momentum in the years prior.”

Lipton has also been consulting with SHA faculty as they designed a senior living concentration within the school’s Master of Management in Hospitality program. While most senior living programs focus on gerontology, SHA will provide a hospitality spin with courses like The Business of Seniors Housing and Monitoring the Resident Journey Experience. “We are going to be one of the only hospitality schools in the country to offer this as a concentration,” says Lipton, who will be a member of the program’s first cohort.

“This is such a sensitive area of hospitality,” she says. “You can’t just work to make their day brighter—you have to have a genuine understanding of everything residents are going through.”



Serena Lipton is an analyst in the senior housing division at JLL, a global commercial real estate services company. She has looked into how robots—for sanitization, medication delivery, and more—can help senior living facilities.

**“YOU’RE GOING TO BE SEEING ALL THESE RAPID CHANGES COME ABOUT. YOU’RE GOING TO BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THAT.” ASSISTANT PROFESSOR MARK LEGG, TO RECENT GRADS**

**NOW HIRING**

Those Bureau of Labor Statistics job report numbers may look grim, but Legg and Rosenberg have encouraging words for recent grads.

“There was a mass exodus of talented individuals this past year,” Legg says. So when the hiring pace picks back up, younger candidates could be in line for those positions. “You’re going to be seeing all these rapid changes come about. You’re going to be at the forefront of that.”

Rosenberg also has a positive outlook. “I think the industry will be eager to find people who are excited, committed, creative, and flexible, and who embrace today’s changing environment,” he says. His reason for optimism is simple: The pandemic wasn’t a recession, where demand vanished. It was a cessation, with the virus preventing business from happening. When vaccines remove that block, he says, “demand is going to come back.”



Mark Legg, an assistant professor of hospitality analytics, says businesses are now scrambling—sooner than they expected, because of the pandemic—to embrace millennials and Generation Z as their core customers.

**“THE PANDEMIC HAS FURTHER ACCELERATED THE TECHNOLOGY MOVEMENT WITHIN THE SENIOR LIVING SPACE, WHICH WAS ALREADY GAINING MOMENTUM IN THE YEARS PRIOR.” SERENA LIPTON (CGS’16, SHA’18,’23)**

In the meantime, Rosenberg says his company has become more employee-focused. They began providing health and wellness resources to their teams and created leadership development programs for staff members who have spent much of the last year performing tasks well outside of their job descriptions. “It was a way to keep them engaged and thinking about the future,” he says.

And that future looks bright, says Legg. “We just have to get through the tough times. Leisure is not going away.” ■



“WE’RE GOING TO SEE  
A LOT MORE  
INNOVATION”

Three SHA experts on the future of hospitality and how the school is evolving to help its students succeed in the industry

By MARA SASSOON

Photos by JANICE CHECCHIO

**AS** COVID-19 cases spiked in spring 2020, the number of people traveling through US airports fell to its lowest rate in almost 40 years. On April 21, 2020, the TSA recorded just 98,968 travelers through its checkpoints, compared to 2,254,209 on the same day the year before. US airlines clocked in revenue losses around \$35 billion last year.

The entire hospitality industry was hit hard by the pandemic, but new numbers suggest it might be turning a corner. On July 19, 2021, as the vaccine rollout ramped up, the TSA recorded 2,141,429 travelers—close to prepandemic numbers. Despite new variants adding to the pandemic’s uncertainty, those TSA checkpoint numbers have continued to approach prepandemic levels. Hotel occupancy rates are rising as leisure and business travel slowly ticks up. And restaurant sales have been climbing in 2021, with many new establishments opening even in the midst of the pandemic.

So where does the hospitality industry go from here? *Check In* spoke with three experts—Arun Upneja, dean of SHA, Makarand Mody, an associate professor of hospitality marketing, and Taylor Peyton, an assistant professor of leadership and workplace psychology—about the future of the industry and of SHA, including what COVID-related changes are here to stay, what innovations will be needed, and how the school is helping its graduates stay on top in an ever-changing field.

**Check In: What will it take for the hospitality industry to build back?**

**Arun Upneja:** As we have seen, COVID cases were decreasing for a while, then they were increasing again due to new variants and other factors, which has been leading many states to impose new restrictions. So, I think a higher rate of vaccination is just so critical for everyone in our society, but particularly for our industry.

The other thing that we discovered is that, during the pandemic, a lot of people who were not able to work in the industry found jobs outside of the industry. Now, the hospitality industry is lacking a skilled workforce. The industry needs to step up and increase compensation levels where needed. At the same time, it’s very easy to say, “Well, why don’t they just pay more?” But on the other side, customers have this expectation that prices of things should not rise. If companies are going to better compensate their employees, prices are likely going to have to go up in addition to the inflation already happening.

**Makarand Mody:** I think it’s going to be a three-pronged approach to building hospitality back to pre-COVID levels. Yes, there’s a good amount of pent-up demand from consumers for hospitality and travel more broadly, just because we’ve all been cooped up for so long. As the vaccine distribution has become more widespread, some of that has already materialized. It’s a natural sort of supply-and-demand issue that’s going to work itself out.

There is also going to be an important role government plays, in terms of stimulus money provided to individuals, some of which goes toward discretionary spending. The United States has given out some stimulus money, but I think the country will require long-term stimulus payments to people on a periodic basis to recharge the industry.

The third element is going to be a supply-side issue. For the last 11 or 12 years since we got out of the economic recession in 2010, hospitality and travel have enjoyed 10 years of growth. Because the economy was strong, global travel was at unprecedented levels. I think a lot of these brands and companies in general perhaps grew too quickly, too soon.

**“I THINK A HIGHER RATE OF VACCINATION IS JUST SO CRITICAL FOR EVERYONE IN OUR SOCIETY, BUT PARTICULARLY FOR OUR INDUSTRY.”—ARUN UPNEJA**



What COVID has done is forced a lot of brands and companies to really focus on tightening operations quite extensively, cutting down costs, and really trying to target customers in a manner that’s a little bit more efficient.

We’re going to see a lot more innovation from companies, not just innovation that provides customers with a better product, but also that helps run operations a little bit tighter. It’s going to require these three

different elements to make the hospitality industry get back to some semblance of what it was prepandemic.

**Taylor Peyton:** Hospitality leaders know that they need to be able to innovate the way they’re doing business. To streamline operations and decrease physical contact between employees and guests postpandemic, industry leaders should consider partnering

**“COMPANIES WILL HAVE A BETTER CHANCE AT RETAINING EMPLOYEES FOR THE LONG RUN WHEN EMPLOYEES FEEL THAT THEIR COMPANY HAS THEIR BACK.”**

—TAYLOR PEYTON



with tech-minded engineers and other companies that will provide machine-based solutions. You see Honeywell’s UV cleaning system being used by airlines to help them sanitize their planes quickly and efficiently—that’s one example of how technology can be smartly integrated into a company’s operations to increase the safety of its guests. I also think there’s an emerging market opportunity with millennial customers. If companies hire

people who can relate to millennials and identify what they want, that could generate fresh ideas and strategic directions for hospitality and tourism groups post-COVID.

Another consideration for hiring is the shift toward remote work, which I think is a trend here to stay. Now, more than ever before, there is a great opportunity to hire expertise from all around the globe. Hospitality companies that diversify their workforce to bring in talent from around the world may have a competitive edge going forward.

When it comes to employee retention, it’s important to make sure that a company’s leadership and management take a humanistic approach. Be empathetic to employees’ needs—maybe allow for more flexible work schedules, accommodate whatever home or personal life needs they might have. Companies will have a better chance at retaining employees for the long run when employees feel that their company has their back. That includes paying people well so their jobs can financially sustain them. It’s bad for the industry and for our economy if people prefer to rely on unemployment benefits instead of returning to work.

**How is SHA helping now?**

*AU:* In the immediate wake of the pandemic, we did a lot of industry workshops where we invited professionals and our students to talk about ideas and thoughts for moving forward. We also started a program in which we invited deans and directors of research-intensive hospitality programs around the country to come together to bounce around ideas.

We are also retooling pretty much every course we offer and we added many new concentrations to our Master of Management in Hospitality program, all designed to best prepare our students for the future of the industry. We added four concentrations in fall 2020—real estate development and finance, digital marketing, revenue management and analytics, and innovation and entrepreneurship. This fall, we added concentrations in senior living and restaurant management and experiences.

*MM:* Pretty much every class we’re teaching at SHA has introduced an element of what COVID means for the hospitality industry. I teach this from a marketing perspective. A project that students worked on for my intro to hospitality class last spring involved working with someone who used to be a restaurant consultant but now has his own platform that allows restaurants to market their experiences differently in a post-COVID world. We codesigned an assignment where students worked with specific restaurants across Boston, helping them think about alternative revenue streams that they want. Some of the changes brought on by COVID are going to be temporary, but there are other things that will never go back to the way they were. In our classes, we are looking at the industry through those two different lenses—what will be temporary, and what won’t go back to the way it was. SHA’s biggest contribution has really been preparing our students for working in the post-COVID world.

**What changes do you think will be permanent, and what will be temporary?**

*MM:* A lot of what is being done in the industry in terms of sanitation and hygiene will be permanent features, I think. Customers are going to look for evidence that brands are doing things to keep them hygienically safe from here on out.

It’s difficult to give concrete examples right now. But I think the balance of power has shifted a little bit more toward the consumer, thanks to COVID. Hospitality brands have enjoyed 10 years of some real solid pricing power and really being able to get away with offering customers a lot less for a lot more money. I think that’s definitely something that’s going to change for the next five years or so, but maybe even beyond that.

The airlines are a great example, with all the extra fees they added on over the years. Airlines went from having one economy fare to having an economy and then a basic economy where you can’t even take a carry-on bag. Those are the kinds of ridiculous things I think airlines are going to have to rethink.

And one of the things that’s going to perhaps become a bigger part of hospitality more broadly is the idea of wellness. COVID has made a lot of people realize the extent to which hospitality and travel play a big role in our well-being in general. Not being able to go out to restaurants or to be able to take our annual vacations had such a big impact on our mental health. I think this idea of well-being programming in our industry has emerged strongly during this time, and it’s probably something that will remain indefinitely.

**What comes next? What does the future of hospitality look like?**

**What skills will SHA graduates need?**

*MM:* The most important thing for the industry as a whole now is what the future of work in the hospitality industry is going to look like. COVID has stimulated a lot of hospitality companies to incorporate more and more technology into streamlining their operations and trying to work with fewer people than perhaps they ever have. There’s some danger to that. Some restaurants, for instance, might get into the mindset of, “Customers are now used to ordering all their food on their phones the moment they enter the restaurant using a QR code, and I can operate my restaurant with just 5 servers as opposed to having to operate with 15 in the past. Do I ever need to go back to having those 10 extra servers?”

The hospitality industry employs one in every 10 people in the United States. This is a watershed moment, where technology has become something that businesses want to use and also customers are getting comfortable with. Hospitality is a people business. It’s that human interaction that makes up so much of what hospitality is. There’s a danger to replacing too much of the human component with technology. It’s going to be really important to see how that plays out into the future.

*AU:* I think the hospitality industry’s future is great. But recent and soon-to-be graduates need particular skills to navigate these new waters, where people’s expectations are changing. They’re going to need to understand new financial and business models. In the “before times,” when you would go to restaurants and bars, people were obviously sitting very close to each other. It’s not easy to say that won’t happen anymore because restaurants are operating with fixed expenditures and their financial models are such that they have to pack tables together and have a lot of table turn, because there are a lot of expenses: food, labor, rent, taxes, and so forth. Now it is a question of how do you create restaurants where people are seated at least six feet apart without making it so prohibitively expensive? We need new financial models to meet these needs, and new ways of thinking.

**Let’s talk about the next 5 or 10 years. What will SHA be teaching?**

*MM:* We’ve been really good at teaching core hospitality—lodging operations, food and beverage management, marketing, finance. I think five years from now, and we’ve already started on that path, we’ll really be focusing a lot more on innovation—design thinking, technology entrepreneurship, and how that impacts hospitality experience design. I’d say we’re going more higher order analytical in terms of our curriculum, because anyone who is graduating with a degree in hospitality and, really, working in any business—whether you get hired by Marriott or you get hired by a start-up in Boston—I think that’s going to be the name of the game. You’ll have to come with a strong understanding of fundamentals like finance and operations, but you’ll need to be able to extrapolate that a lot more into design thinking, innovation, and creativity.

**How should the industry improve its diversity efforts?**

*TP:* It’s important to be hiring people who are educated about, and sensitive to, diversity challenges right out of the gate. Gone are the days where companies can spend a lot of time training people for the first time ever on these issues. Companies need to hire people who are skilled at managing diverse teams and who recognize all the different kinds of diversity out there.

It’s also important to hire the kinds of leaders who have a deep understanding of the challenges of intersectionality in identity and diversity. And, where deep understanding is lacking, leading with compassion, open-mindedness, and a learning orientation is key. That’s where we’re going, and I think that’s where we need to keep going. Because every organization exists within a system of communities around it, it is also important for organizations to continue to invest in social advocacy to advance the issues we have about diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice at a community level.

**“HOSPITALITY IS A PEOPLE BUSINESS. IT’S THAT HUMAN INTERACTION THAT MAKES UP SO MUCH OF WHAT HOSPITALITY IS.”**

—MAKARAND MODY



Regarding hiring people from underrepresented groups, companies often struggle with not having strong enough recruiting pools to bring in top talent. How can hospitality companies start to nurture those pipelines early? It does exist, but sometimes we are just not looking in the right places. And, too often, underrepresented minority group employees don’t have role models who are taking the time to nurture and guide them.

Companies need to do better at promoting mentorship opportunities for underrepresented minority employees, especially those in early career phases. I want to see mentorship happening across racial/ethnic groups, ages, and genders, matching people of different backgrounds to support each other because then learning happens on all sides. For example, I’m tired of seeing the one CEO-suite African American woman at a company exhausted from being overloaded by mentoring numerous underrepresented minority group employees herself. Let’s instead have everyone share the responsibility to nurture our early-career employees across the racial/socioeconomic divide. And hats off to the nonminority group mentors who already do great work in that area. We need much more of it. ■





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