Reflections from the President
By Stuart Schnabolk

This was an interesting year for Beta Alpha Psi. As the global economic crisis unfolded and changed the business landscape, we were fortunate to still be able to bring a number of great speakers to Lehigh. These speakers helped educate BAP members and other students on current accounting and business topics.

One topic of particular interest to our students was IFRS. We brought in two speakers, one from Ernst & Young, and the other from PricewaterhouseCoopers, to speak on this important issue. They cautioned us that IFRS was coming, and we should prepare for it as it will change the accounting profession in the United States.

We continued the past trend of having a forum to help sophomore and junior students understand what an internship entails. We moved this event to the fall as the public accounting firms began recruiting earlier for interns.

We were also able to assist the Business 001 (Introduction to Business) students with the financial sections of their business plan projects. We ran this two-evening event in both the fall and the spring as the course was offered both semesters this year.

At our BAP initiation in March, Sarat Sethi spoke of his experiences when entering the workforce and his graduate education. He said as students we can never know what the future will hold for us, and told us not to get discouraged with the less than optimal job market. Students in the auditing classes enjoyed a presentation on auditing in the current financial crisis by Tom Serluco of KPMG. He let us know what issues we might face as auditors. We also repeated an annual event on fraud by Bennett Shuldman of Deloitte & Touche.

Overall this was an excellent year for Beta Alpha Psi. We were able to meet all of the goals as well as increase our service to the student body. I would like to thank the other board members and Karen Collins, our excellent faculty advisor, for making this a successful year.
My Experience at the Beta Alpha Psi Atlantic Coast Regional Meeting
By Ricky Motschwiller

As the Vice President of the Lehigh Chapter of Beta Alpha Psi, I was given the opportunity to attend the BAP Atlantic Coast Regional Meeting in Boston this past March. The two-day conference brought together over 300 BAP members from all over the Northeast, and the experience I had at the conference was beneficial, relevant, but most importantly, I had fun.

Upon my arrival at the conference, I was directed to my room at the Waterfront Marriott in Boston. Fortunately I had a gorgeous view overlooking Boston Harbor, so my weekend started off in the right direction. After registering and receiving all my materials for the weekend, the group was welcomed by Dr. Patricia Poli, the Atlantic Coast Director at Large, and Michael Steenberg, the Chapter President of the SUNY Buffalo chapter.

Shortly after the greeting, we broke up into teams for a Team Dynamics Session. Our goal for the session was to build a protection device that can protect an egg from an 8-foot drop. Armed with pipe cleaners, cotton balls, tape, and construction paper, my team went to work. I normally like to poke fun at engineers at Lehigh and remind them that accounting is the best major at the school, but at this moment, it would have been nice to have one of them around. Somehow, we were able to create a strange circular device to drop our egg from. We then had to present our product in front of all the hundreds of people in attendance, and test our product. I was extremely nervous that our egg would break upon impact, but to my amazement, the egg remained unscathed!

Throughout the conference, members in attendance could attend various sessions geared towards improving chapter operations. There were many sessions involving topics such as Alumni Relations, Building Professional Relationships, and Recruiting and Community Involvement. Each session was hosted by current members of BAP, so we were able to learn from our peers. These sessions were geared to helping all of the BAP chapters around the country thrive, and the ideas and tips that I learned from the sessions were extremely beneficial.

Events the next morning started bright and early at 7:30 A.M. What made this early start even better was the fact that it was a Saturday. Thankfully there was a bounty of free coffee and "pick me ups" available at breakfast that kick-started the day. Next, various schools presented in the "Best Practices Competition," sponsored by Deloitte and Touche. This competition consisted of several more information sessions about the different aspects of running a BAP chapter.

The Keynote Address of the conference was given by Lynda Schwartz, a partner at Ernst & Young in the FIDS Group. She spoke mostly on the topic of fraud and the various lessons to be learned from the corporate crisis. Luckily, I had recently been introduced to the topic of fraud in Accounting Information Systems (Acct 311), so the terms and references put things into perspective for me.

Overall, the conference gave me a greater sense of what BAP consists of. Before the conference, I had experienced only what the Lehigh Chapter has to offer. After going to Boston for the Atlantic Coast Regional Meeting, I saw all the resources, as well as professionals and members of the fraternity that are all willing to help. Sure, a weekend in Boston at the Waterfront Marriott is a lot of fun, but it is the members I befriended and the lessons I learned from the speakers that I will always remember.

The 2009-2010 Beta Alpha Psi officers from left to right: Ricky Motschwiller, Nicholas Tessitore, Nicole Chin, Katherine Pouliolo, Amy Birkenstock, and Timothy Devany
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Reflections on my Audit Internship Overseas
By Andrew Katz

When I take the time to look back on my experiences during the summer between my junior and senior year, I am not surprised to find that my work experience was positive or that my time away from the U.S. was enjoyable. These were expectations I had going into my trip from day one. What I am amazed at is that my time away provided me with more insight and understanding about my home country and its exterior perception in the world than I have ever acquired while living within its borders. Living in another country forces one to ask questions that he or she may have never felt the need to ask before. But the differences encountered away from home quickly forces one to take a good look in the mirror and perhaps adjust their thinking and understanding about their own country. The conversations and experiences I had have changed my thoughts on how I not only view my country but also how I view myself.

I must also admit that my experiences left me jealous of my English counterparts. So many seemed so connected to and aware of the other countries of the world to an extent that most people who live in the U.S. do not. I was impressed to learn that all college students in the UK are not only required to study a foreign language but need to live in and study in another country. It becomes rather frustrating and causes one to feel somewhat inferior, when your English coworkers have a conversation with the German staff members in their native language and you cannot understand a word. As this world becomes ever more global, Americans need to perhaps consider and be more willing to promote a greater understanding of other languages, by incorporating them into our educational system. Rather than arguing that everyone within our borders should learn English if they want to live in the United States, perhaps it is time we embrace those other cultures and languages into our own just as the British have.

Just as valuable as any cultural experiences I might have had because I was living in a different country were the work experiences themselves. The structure of my internship allowed me to work in auditing in both New York and London. The differences I noticed between working in the two countries were as beneficial and informative as any work experiences I had during my time as an intern.

In the London office, I was impressed to see that only half of the staff members on my engagements were actually British. I worked with people on rotation from South Korea, Japan, Germany, Russia, and India, just to name a few. Each group exposed me to numerous cultural differences. On the other hand, my work assignment in New York never involved anyone from outside of the Tri-State area.

This I found to be somewhat disappointing because those from varied walks of life and educational backgrounds who worked in the UK office brought very different, but relevant, perspectives on the issues and problems we were addressing.

The presence of a diverse workplace also contributed to the quality of non-work-related events. Lunch conversations and after-hour socializing with coworkers generated conversations that went beyond last night’s sporting events or office gossip. Instead, I walked away from these lunches with a better understanding of cultures different from my own. I never thought I would go to London and receive a lesson on Japanese dining etiquette, but sure enough I managed to gain such an understanding during my time abroad.

Once I returned from my time in the UK and continued to work in the NY office, I found I really missed the added element of diversity which I was exposed to in Europe. Before my travels, I admit I thought that the emphasis of a diverse workplace was more about political correctness than higher performance. Now I am quick to admit that I was mistaken. The contribution of a diverse work environment adds something immensely positive to the workplace.

From the working environment to the cultural differences I was exposed to, my international internship has changed my perspective about the workplace and has helped me broaden my horizons and grow as an individual. Additionally, my experiences have provided me with a network of international colleagues, something which people in my position and at my age living in the United States simply do not have.

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More importantly, living in another country has brought about noticeable changes in my behavior and logic. All of these are changes I feel are for the better. I see things and situations from a duality of perspectives and I also feel much different about the “American way of life.” The United States is a great country, but that does not mean we have it all figured out. Those of us from the U.S. should appreciate the fact that not only do we have faults, but we are a part of a very large world which is greater than us. Those from the U.S. often claim that we serve as the example to the world, but in order to begin to live up to that hype and truly lead by example; we need to show we are big enough to admit faults. It would be beneficial if everyone from the U.S. were given a chance to live elsewhere and witness the wonderful people and great societies of the world that exist outside our borders. The world is a big place that we share with so many people. These are people who can and have learned from us. Now it is time we all make the effort to learn from them. The experience I have had with my international internship has certainly opened my eyes to that and I have no doubt that my internship experience will guide me in the future.

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