

# bergfocus

fall 2014 | volume VI | issue I

## campus dining re•de•fined

the food | the people | the programs | the partnerships



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# MEET CHEF ian beard

When the fall 2014 semester kicks off at Muhlenberg College, it will do so with a new Executive Chef in the Wood Dining Commons. And let's just say, the new chef is excited to be here.

"Everything about this opportunity is exciting to me," exclaimed Chef Ian Beard. "The moment I walked into the Wood Dining Commons, I knew I wanted to be part of this impressive, unique and superior restaurant and team. The purpose and mission of Muhlenberg Dining, the wonderful people that work and dine here, the amazing facility, the passion for farm-fresh, nutritional ingredients – what is there not to be excited about?"

A seasoned veteran of the kitchen, Chef Beard brings 15 years of culinary expertise to the Wood Dining Commons. Prior to his arrival at Muhlenberg, Chef Beard was refining his palate at several renowned local restaurants; most recently at Edge (Bethlehem, PA) and as Executive Chef at Shula's Steak House (Center Valley, PA) and Bella's Ristorante (Hellertown, PA).

A graduate of the Philadelphia Restaurant School, Chef Beard discovered his passion for cooking at an early age.

"I started cooking with my grandmother at a young age and enjoyed it immensely, so it became a part of me and very important to me as a child," reminisced Chef Beard. "Looking back on my childhood and at life, food is something that can really bring people together – sitting at the dinner table with family and friends, having a party, or snacks for the big game – food is usually a part of it and in some way or another brings up some of my best memories."

After graduating high school, Chef Beard began his career in the culinary field at the bottom and worked his way up. While working full time, he attended culinary school where he was able to travel to France and truly grasp the hospitality and culture emphasized in his classes.

"Classic French is where my training began, however with more than 15 years in the industry, I've learned a lot of style, combinations and pairings," shared Chef Beard. "I'd describe my cooking style as familiar, approachable, fresh, fun and passionate."

When he's not in the kitchen Chef Beard is spending time with his wife, Karen, and six year-old daughter, Shayla. Beyond spending time with his family, the self-described simple man enjoys exercising, swimming, hiking and rooting for Philadelphia sports teams. But, his love for cooking is his true passion.

"I know it sounds crazy, but I really love cooking and being in the kitchen. I love to smile and spread joy through my food, interactions and relationships. I'm going to bring my best to Muhlenberg every day and bring out the best in everyone around me. This is a chef's dream... or at least it's mine."





# a partnership for success

Each spring semester, Muhlenberg College partners with Dining Services to host the annual Partnership Summit. The annual meeting assembles a select group of faculty, staff, administrators and students along with key representatives from Sodexo to discuss current and future dining initiatives. The goal is to capture the key results that are important to Muhlenberg College on six specific table topics: Student Insight, Health and Wellness, Culinary Innovation, Customer Service, Dining Strategy and Environmental Focus.

Dedicated "topic experts" lead conversation and capture key points. The areas of emphasis are then compiled into an action plan that serves as Muhlenberg Dining's strategy for the upcoming academic year. Here are the key results of the Partnership Summit held on March 12, 2014.

<b>STUDENT INSIGHT</b>	<p>The Life Sports Center Café is a good option during sporting events and before and after working out but is not a destination otherwise</p> <hr/> <p>We need to be aware of the time constraints our customers have and realize the importance of speed of service</p>	<b>DINING STRATEGY</b>	<p>The progression of healthier options in the Wood Dining Commons was acknowledged, students would like to see the same progression in GQ</p> <hr/> <p>Our goal should be to incorporate food trends and introduce an educational component</p>	<b>CUSTOMER SERVICE</b>	<p>"When I was looking at and comparing schools, Muhlenberg was a much more interactive dining experience" — Matthew Dacher</p> <hr/> <p>The Summer BBQ Series is very popular. The suggestion was made to expand this to the academic year</p>
<b>CULINARY INNOVATION</b>	<p>The Wood Dining Commons was referred to as a "perpetual Bar-Mitzvah"; the great food, all the action and excitement throughout makes them feel as if they are at a party every day</p> <hr/> <p>Request for additional authentic ethnic foods, using cuisine as a vehicle toward diversity</p>	<b>HEALTH &amp; WELLNESS</b>	<p>We have come a long way from where we were: <i>All fresh ingredients</i> <i>From-scratch recipes</i> <i>Ingredients listed</i> <i>Online nutritionals</i></p> <hr/> <p>Our culinary &amp; nutrition intern has become a great asset; they are a great liaison between dining and students</p>	<b>ENVIRONMENTAL FOCUS</b>	<p>Request to improve composting practices on campus. However, a better approach to composting may be to reduce the food and material waste that is used to produce it</p> <hr/> <p>Suggestion was made to increase the frequency of the Weigh the Waste program as well as its visibility</p>







**B**efore attending Muhlenberg as a student, never did Kim Nguyen imagine that she would have the opportunity to interact and collaborate with the dining services team on a regular basis. When she returned to campus six years later as an Assistant Director of Admission, she was stunned at the transformation in dining since graduating in 2007.

A media and communication major and environmental studies minor, Kim was the quintessential college student. A Dean's List student, tour guide and resident advisor, Kim was also engaged with numerous clubs and organizations. But, it was her involvement with Student Council (now Student Government Association) that sparked a new relationship with Muhlenberg Dining.

"As a member of Student Council, I initiated a program called Council Catering," she shared. "Once a month, members of the organization would work alongside Muhlenberg Dining staff in the Garden Room to serve dinner to the student body. It made our organization visible to the students we were representing while connecting us to an important component of campus life – dining."

The relationship she initiated soon expanded to another organization Kim was involved with.

"When I was a member of EnAct, (Environmental Action Team) we again joined forces with Muhlenberg Dining for "green" dinners featuring locally sourced food. I found working with the dining team to be easy, fun and rewarding. Food is essential to any college student but at Muhlenberg, it is an experience."

Despite the great programming and partnerships, there were legitimate

challenges in terms of dining at Muhlenberg. Lines were long and venues were overcrowded, specifically during the lunch hour. Students were frustrated - often waiting in line for up to an hour and settling for food they did not want.

As a student-elected representative to the Board of Trustees, Kim stepped up and took action. At the time, YouTube was barely a blip on the social radar, but nonetheless, Kim produced a short video that encapsulated the daily dilemma being faced by the student body. The documentary featured the long lines, interviews from students and Muhlenberg Dining management.

Muhlenberg Dining General Manager John Pasquarello recounted, "Kim was one of the most proactive students on campus in 2007. She would interact with dining services regularly and was passionate about promoting good relationships with current students and dining services. Kim helped us develop a plan for meeting the needs of students and reducing the frustration customers had with our then undersized restaurants."

"Three times per year, I had the opportunity to speak in front of the board," recalled Kim. "Instead of just saying, 'thank you for your on-going support,' I took this as a chance to find something on campus that could use improvement and brought it to their attention."

After hearing the story and seeing her video, the Board responded positively and an additional dining option in the Red Door Café opened within two months. The new venue drastically relieved the pressure at GQ and the Garden Room.

"No matter your age, background or experience, you actually can make a

difference in your community," advises Kim. "It's about promoting positive change by connecting and working with others. At Muhlenberg, we're all on the same page. We're a community of thoughtful, intelligent and extremely savvy people. With our powers combined, the possibilities are endless!"

Glenn Gerchman, P'14, P'17, Director of Seegers Union and Campus Events agrees with Kim's sentiments.

"Working with Kim and others from her class really was the beginning of Seegers Union Student Advisory Board (SUSAB). This group not only worked with the administration to identify concerns for the student body, but worked collaboratively to find reasonable solutions short-term, with an eye on improving the overall student experience moving forward. The design development process for the Seegers Union expansion and renovation, which opened in fall of 2010, was the first project for which SUSAB was assembled. Today, SUSAB is truly a collaboration between a broadly diverse group of students and administrators through Team Seegers. We continue to keep things fresh and interesting and work collaboratively to improve the overall experience."

On the heels of graduation in 2007, Kim moved to Boston to begin her career as an event producer where she organized, designed and coordinated private, social and corporate events. Seeking a change and personal fulfillment, Kim travelled overseas, spending time in Vietnam teaching English as a second language to high school, elementary and preschool students.

"It was an incredibly rewarding and life-changing adventure that I never would have had the courage to do if it were not for all of the skills I gained through my time at Muhlenberg," she reflected.

Following three years in Vietnam, Kim returned to Muhlenberg where a new opportunity awaited. In 2013, she accepted a position as an Assistant Director of Admission where she now works with prospective students and families to guide them through the entire admissions process.

Among the highlights in her return to campus, besides friends and other familiar faces, was a fully renovated dining program.

"When I saw the Wood Dining Commons and Mule Express, I was stunned. What a transformation from dining six years ago! Muhlenberg's food is an impressive focal point for prospective students and their families; something that I am always excited to talk about."

Coming back to Muhlenberg has been especially rewarding for Kim as she works to pass along the Muhlenberg values that were instilled in her as a student.

She elaborates, "I have truly come full circle through my return to Muhlenberg. While I am hopeful I've left my mark on Muhlenberg, I am certain Muhlenberg has left a mark on me. I am exceptionally grateful to have numerous people throughout campus whom I consider mentors and life-long friends. I hope that in my position I can now guide students toward discovering their potential by supporting their ideas and passions."







## *diversity through cultural cuisine*

In the spring 2014 semester, students at Muhlenberg College enjoyed the opportunity to taste authentic Indian cuisine when Global Chef Navin Khadilkar visited the College February 13 – 14. Travelling from Mumbai City, Maharashtra, India, Chef Navin visited the Lehigh Valley during his tour of the mid-Atlantic region.

Chef Khadilkar, a member of Sodexo's Global Chef program, worked directly with Muhlenberg's culinary team to prepare authentic Indian breakfast, lunch and dinner menus in the Wood Dining Commons.

Students, faculty and staff as well as members of the local community enjoyed traditional menu items including Chicken Tikka Masala, Tava fried fish and a variety of Curries.



"Muhlenberg tries to create a home for students," shared Robin Riley-Casey, Muhlenberg's Director of Multicultural Life. "Home is often associated with family, friends and familiar home-cooked meals. The arrival of Chef Navin brought home to our students who are studying abroad at Muhlenberg. The Chef prepared delectable dishes that, for Americans, may be considered specialty foods. However, for our international students these specialty dishes are often their meal mainstays. So while we all enjoyed great food from around the world, prepared by Chef Navin, our international students savored a taste of home."

During his more than 23 years of culinary experience, Chef Navin catered to 250 Indian delegates at the 2010 Tour de France and was honored to be the Chef-in-Charge for the 50th birthday party for Mr. Mukesh Ambani, Chairman of Reliance Industries Limited, India's second most valuable company.

Chef Navin's visit proved to be extremely popular amongst students and the local community despite taking place during one of the winter's worst snow storms. And while the event was a cultural learning opportunity for guests, it was important for the culinary staff to learn as well.

"I work as an Indian Cuisine Chef and I enjoy sharing my knowledge and skills with others," said Chef Khadilkar. "It is my passion towards the culinary trade by training and grooming budding chefs to achieve excellence in their chosen professions. It was a pleasure to do the same with the team in the US."

Through the success of the Global Chef



program, Director of Culinary Operations Jon Middleton developed a relationship with students involved with the Multi-Cultural Center. The Muhlenberg Multicultural Cuisine student organization is committed to preserving the heritage and tradition of foods and ingredients of all nations of the world. The foods prepared and the indigenous ingredients used are an integral part of that which provides a native culture its unique "identity".

"Our team has worked hard to adapt our menu to include more authentic ethnic options including Pozole, Empanadas, Banh Xeo Pancakes, Gumbo and Tikka Masala," noted Middleton. "Muhlenberg Multi Cultural Cuisine supports the use of authentic, original and native varieties and breeds of ingredients."

With one semester under its belt, the group is excited for what's to come and to share its story with the Muhlenberg community.

"We believe that each meal and everything we eat is a small celebration of life and health to be appreciated and shared," reads the organization's Mission Statement. "We respect the foods we eat, enjoy food for its flavor, never waste food and try new foods whenever we can."



# DITCHING THE DIRT

by Katie Bradley '14

Muhlenberg students love the scratch-made pesto in the Wood Dining Commons. Good news! Now, there's even more basil coming! With the support of Student Government Association, Seegers Union and S.U.S.A.B, Muhlenberg College will debut its innovative Hydroponic Herb Garden in Fall 2014. Hydroponics is the cultivation of plants using water and nutrient solutions without soil. This new agricultural growing technique is more sustainable for a number of reasons; it's water efficient, it eliminates soil erosion problems and there is no need for herbicides or soil fertilizers that traditional soil methods require.

The concept originated from Chef Jon Middleton, Director of Culinary Operations for Muhlenberg Dining, shortly after the Wood Dining Commons opened in 2010.

"As soon as I found out that the window [behind Croutons] had a southern exposure, I thought of the idea," recounted Middleton. "My goal was/is to partner with the biology department to start the herbs in the green house, transplant and grow them to maturity in Croutons and finally harvest and serve on and in salads," shared Middleton.

Soon after, he shared the idea with Dr. Rich Niesenbaum, director of Muhlenberg's sustainability studies program. Dr. Niesenbaum immediately took to the project and incorporated it into his sustainable solutions course in the fall of 2013.

"It was a class project where students had to design and implement a sustainable solution," explained Niesenbaum. "The students did exactly that. They researched hydroponics as a way to grow food sustainably, proposed the idea, designed the system and built it. This is a major part of our hands-on, problem solving curriculum in sustainable studies at Muhlenberg."



Surprisingly, hydroponically grown herbs will be nothing new to Muhlenberg. For the past few years, Muhlenberg Dining has purchased hydroponically grown herbs and produce from Butter Valley Harvest in Bally, PA. BVH farmer/owner Ryan Ehst has been an integral part of the design process and has even donated parts and equipment to build the garden at Muhlenberg.

"I began a relationship with Chef Middleton at Muhlenberg about three or four years ago and he has really helped expand my business through Sodexo and other accounts," shared Ehst. "I do my best to nurture my business relationships in any way I can. I know that the students and staff at Muhlenberg will be introduced to my product and may continue to be customers after they leave. I love the idea that I can contribute to something more permanent in the dining facility at Muhlenberg."



## intern spotlight: paul

Joining the Muhlenberg Dining team as its sustainability intern in Fall 2014, is junior Paul Corgan. The enthusiastic sociology major from West Hartford, CT is excited to make an impact on campus.

"I'm really excited to become involved with Muhlenberg Dining because it will enable me to help enact change on campus," shared Paul. "As a sociology major, we talk about how real change only happens on an institutional level and this internship will allow me to promote positive changes that will make a difference at 'Berg and beyond."

In his role as sustainability intern, Paul will be a liaison for Muhlenberg Dining and work to brainstorm and assist in the development of new sustainably sound initiatives. He will also be charged with developing partnerships with students, organizations and academic departments in an effort to raise awareness about Muhlenberg Dining's green practices.

When asked what he hopes to learn from the internship, Paul replied, "At the end of the day, I'd really like to take away the knowledge of how to get things done. This internship offers a range of opportunities yet an equal set of challenges so I hope to learn how to overcome those challenges and make a difference."

In addition to his internship, Paul is also president of Muhlenberg Activities Council, vice president of Muhlenberg Outdoors Club a brother of Alpha Phi Omega and a contributing photographer for Humans of Muhlenberg and Muhlenberg Fashion Society. When he has spare time, Paul enjoys teaching piano and hiking.

For more information about Muhlenberg Dining's sustainability efforts, please visit:  
[dining.muhlenberg.edu/sustainability](http://dining.muhlenberg.edu/sustainability)







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