Bidding farewell to the Class, and the year, of 2007
As we begin a new year, I look back at the seven years of The Emirates Academy’s history with a real sense of accomplishment. November 2007 marked the graduation of a third cohort, bringing the number of our graduates to over 75. While we cannot yet compete in numbers with our 100-year old partner Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne, we are very proud of each and every one of our alumni. Almost all of the recent graduating class have found employment in the hospitality industry, and are already starting to make their mark. Emirates Academy graduates are represented in many of the international hotel chains, including Four Seasons, Kempinski, Le Meridien, Radisson SAS, Jumeirah, and others, as well as in companies like Deloitte & Touche. Some of our 2005 graduates are now moving on to second jobs at higher levels. Four of our current fourth-year students are being considered for Jumeirah’s competitive Aspiro talent management programme which would begin upon their graduation later this year. All of these developments provide confirmation that Emirates Academy degrees are opening doors to rich and exciting careers.

The recently launched Emirates Academy Alumni Association has elected its first officials, and over their two-year term, they will work with us to develop a strong network of our graduates around the world. These fine young professionals are our ambassadors and their presence in hotels, restaurants and related hospitality services around the world will, more than anything, alert people to the value of an Emirates Academy degree.

2008 looks like it will be a very good year inside the Academy as well. We have made structural changes to our timetable that allow us more flexibility to bring in top academics from around the world to teach certain courses. Our student exchange programme is a big success and we look forward to welcoming a new group of students every semester from now on. With the addition of Mike Newnham to our staff complement as Director of Consulting, we can anticipate exciting new developments in the Professional Training & Development department. And of course the biggest event of the year will be our hosting of the EuroCHRIE conference in October.

I hope you enjoy reading about these and other news in this issue of The Academy, and I wish you a peaceful and prosperous New Year!

Ron Hilvert
Class of 2007: a sampling of success stories

Elisabeth Torp (BSc), Catering Manager, DO&CO Museum Catering Ltd, London, UK
Sanaz Ghahremani (ASc), Marketing Coordinator, Kempinski Hotel Mall of the Emirates, Dubai
Anita Næring (BSc), Economy & Logistics Consultant, 62nd Nord Cruises AS, Oslo, Norway
Elias Abi Gerges (BSc), Business Analyst, Deloitte & Touche, Dubai
Smita Adnani (BSc), Management Trainee in Accounting, Four Seasons Hotel, Washington, DC
Marit Aune (BSc), Human Resources Analyst, Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai

Katarina Lukovic and Torunn Tronsvang, co-winners of the “Best Graduating Student” award for 2007. Torunn was also class valedictorian.
Meet the Student Council

The Student Council of The Emirates Academy was established to be a focal point for non-academic student activity, as well as to provide a voice for students. This year, the Student Council has six members elected from all four years, including two elected officials: a President and a Secretary.

The Council is well known among students and faculty alike for the popular social events it organises: sports days, quiz and movie nights and barbeques, all designed to bring people together in a more relaxed setting than the school day norm. It plays a more serious role, too, as one of the channels for communication between students and the Academy. But this year’s President, Rehnaz Karanjia (Class of 2008), has a broader vision for the Council. “I'd like to get to a point where students really want to be on the Council,” she says, “where they feel they can have an impact.” One way the Student Council could be improved, according to Rehnaz, would be to give it a more official framework. One of her goals for the year is to oversee compilation of a handbook with rules and regulations for elections, activities and all areas within the Council’s mandate.

Dr. Stuart Jauncey, our Dean, supports development of the Student Council’s role. He plans to make Student Council participation a credit-bearing activity. “Student councilors would have to record their activities and identify what they had learnt during their period of office and we could then assess and give academic credit for such learning.” He is already investigating how this could be implemented, so the Student Council becomes an even more active, vital part of The Emirates Academy community.

The Lausanne experience

After two semesters at Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL), five intrepid students have returned to complete their BSc degrees at The Emirates Academy.

The option to spend the third year of the BSc programme in Lausanne is one of the factors that appeals to many students who choose the Academy for their hospitality management studies. When asked why they decided to avail themselves of the study abroad opportunity, each of the recently returned students had a different motive. For Kristian Kollsrud, it was the challenge of a new academic and social environment that appealed; for Natasha Harradine, a Swiss national who has spent her entire life in Dubai, it was a chance to discover her roots; for Jennifer Hochaime, it was an opportunity to see the hospitality industry from a European perspective.

The curricula of the two colleges are synchronized so the transition from one place to the other is seamless. That is not to say that no adaptation is required! Unlike the Academy, EHL is a large, bustling college with all the challenges and advantages that provides. For Kristian this made for a stimulating intellectual environment, with something always happening: panels, guest speakers, lunchtime seminars, and many other ways to extend the learning experience outside the classroom. Jennifer notes that the academic environment at each college is quite different, with classes at EHL twice the size of those at the Academy and an expectation that students will take more control of their own learning. Some of the “enormous” assignments were daunting at first, confesses Jennifer. Sara Hakimi summed up the difference between the two universities this way “Shocking but in a good way!”

It was not all work however. The students enjoyed social events like the Roaring 20s graduation party; they all participated in the Sports Days, and contributed to the Middle East stand of the “Fête universal”; they relaxed on the class trip to Zurich to see examples of design styles. Whenever he could, Kristian went running in the mountains, and all of the students took advantage of Lausanne’s central location to travel around Switzerland and farther afield.

While the students were in Lausanne, The Emirates Academy’s Managing Director Ron Hilvert and Dean, Dr. Stuart Jauncey visited them to monitor their progress and ensure they were not too homesick! According to Anne-Christin Runewitz, having a group of friends from the Academy was a great support in both bad times and good. The group forged some enduring friendships with EHL classmates too. The EHL students were fascinated with Dubai, and there is considerable interest in reciprocal exchange visits.

Would the fearless five do it again? All respond with a definitive ‘yes!’
The Emirates Academy Alumni Association

The Emirates Academy is proud to introduce The Emirates Academy Alumni Association, which was launched in November 2007. The Alumni Association was formed as a means for graduates to get together, to network and to continue being part of The Emirates Academy’s growth and success.

During its inaugural year, the Board of the Association will be managed by a team of four key members. The President, Nirvana Govender (class of 2006) and the Vice-President, Pieter Bruener (2005) will be responsible for developing an annual business plan for the Association, monitoring its implementation and organizing events. The Marketing and Communications Officer, Raziena Cajee (2006) will be in charge of designing and maintaining the Association’s website as a basis for communication among the alumni. Finally, a member of The Emirates Academy staff will represent the Academy on the Board.

Board members will serve for two years and will be elected at the alumni event during the graduation week. The Alumni Board will be responsible for implementation of many activities to keep the momentum going, including:

- Quarterly HTML updates to promote activities and circulate news for the Alumni Association members
- Team building activities and social gatherings
- A yearly newsletter

The Alumni Association’s first year will be an exciting one and we encourage all Academy graduates to be involved. If you would like to know more, contact the Alumni Association Board on alumni@emiratesacademy.edu

Where are they now?

Pieter Bruener, class of 2005, Consultant, Deloitte & Touche

Pieter had almost selected Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne for his undergraduate studies, when, on the EHL website, he saw a link for The Emirates Academy. After a meeting with the Academy’s Managing Director, Ron Hilvert, and a holiday visit to the UAE, he decided that the Academy’s Dubai location and affiliation with Jumeirah were irresistible. Now Vice-President of The Emirates Academy Alumni Association, he is proud to have been part of the Academy’s first cohort.

Pieter didn’t forgo EHL entirely: he was among the first (another first) Emirates Academy students to spend a year studying in Lausanne. After completing his BSc degree at The Emirates Academy, Pieter began his career as a member of the pre-opening team of the Kempinski Hotel at Mall of the Emirates. “Working on a pre-opening is amazing”, he says, “Nothing ever goes well for more than an hour!” He found that, as supervisor and group coordinator for the front office team, he was given a high level of responsibility and a diverse set of tasks. “It was a great first job!”

After the hotel opened, Pieter was approached by an acquaintance at Deloitte asking if he would like to apply for a post with its Dubai office. Although he had had no plans to change jobs, it was an opportunity he couldn't refuse. He is now a Consultant with the company, conducting feasibility studies and drafting business plans for new hotel properties in the region. He hopes to continue with hotel development work, and to find time for a master’s degree sometime in the future.

Would he do it all again? “The hospitality industry is not an easy career choice, but for those who love it—who thrive on challenge and change and the exciting Dubai environment—all the work is worth it!”
Bringing a world of hospitality and tourism expertise to the Academy

There is a risk in a small university that students may be exposed to only a limited pool of ideas and expertise in their field of study. But a simple mechanism has allowed The Emirates Academy to enrich our students’ experience with exposure to a wide range of academics from around the globe.

Using a unique two-part semester, with a six-week period at the end blocked off for short, intensive courses, the Academy is able to attract some of the most respected hospitality and tourism scholars in the field for short teaching engagements. This exposes our students to the very latest developments in industry and business. We believe this combination of visiting lecturers and our world-class full-time team of faculty members gives our students an unbeatable undergraduate experience.

At the end of the autumn 2007/2008 semester for example, we welcomed visiting lecturers from the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Germany and New Zealand to teach six courses. Among them is John Downes, an independent tourism law consultant who for many years was the Head of the Law Faculty at the University of Abertay in Dundee, Scotland. His extensive consulting experience includes drafting tourism laws for numerous countries, and he has even hosted a radio show on tourism and travel law for BBC.

Another external lecturer this semester is Maria Murphy. At her home institution, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, she is a tourism lecturer and also manages the West of Ireland Centre for Hospitality & Tourism Research, which she co-founded. In addition she is a business consultant for an international firm.

Crispin Farbrother and Lynn Randall, from Bournemouth University in the UK, are team-teaching a third year facilities management course. Crispin is Programme Leader for undergraduate hospitality programmes, and is active on UK government committees for higher education in hospitality and related fields. Lynn is a Senior Lecturer whose specialty is service quality in hospitality. She has presented conference papers around the world and has many publications. Both their academic careers were preceded by years of experience in the industry.

The challenge of an intensive short course is to cover all the necessary material and keep the students’ attention during longer-than-usual classes. Visiting lecturers tend to favour very active teaching styles as a result. In his course, John challenges the students to think by encouraging lively discussions on sometimes controversial issues from a wide variety of countries. For her first year students, Maria combines lectures with case study analysis, DVD viewing and frequent class presentations. “They teach themselves through their presentations, and I learn from them too,” she explains.

As well as classroom-based lectures and discussions, students in Crispin’s and Lynn’s class undertake a series of visits to the usually invisible plants where hotels’ electricity, water and air-conditioning are controlled. Class time includes discussions on the visits, daily student presentations and much “story-telling,” as Crispin describes his anecdotes about facilities management gone wrong. The team teaching approach stimulates critical thinking, as Crispin and Lynn sometimes have differing viewpoints!

The benefits to the Academy of having visiting lecturers are obvious but why do the lecturers choose to visit? Although John is now a full time consultant, he welcomes the opportunity to do something else he loves—teach. Both Crispin and Lynn thrive on variety—they enjoy teaching different types of courses for different audiences. Maria wanted international teaching experience and, after several professional and personal visits, she just likes to come to Dubai!

The response from students is very positive. They like the variety and also appreciate the greater number of elective classes we can offer with this system. All the stakeholders agree this is a win-win situation.
In line with demand from employers, The Emirates Academy aims to produce work-ready graduates. Courses such as the Consultancy Project in the last semester of the Bachelor degree programme give students practical experience dealing with authentic hospitality industry problems and issues.

Students work individually or in pairs with a real client from a hospitality or tourism company, to investigate a specific problem, or to complete a short project that is relevant to the company. This often involves analyzing the issues, developing findings and producing a final report with feasible recommendations and solutions: exactly what a professional consultant would do.

The range of problems investigated to date has been diverse. One student project involved producing a training plan for graduate management trainees in a hotel; another was an analysis of a hotel chain’s intranet system; and a third was a market research survey on visitor patterns to Souk Madinat Jumeirah. The Academy itself has been a client, “commissioning” a Dubai guide for new students from one pair of student consultants.

The consultancy project provides benefits for both the client, who gains problem resolution and project completion, and for the student, who acquires new skills through the application of the knowledge, tools and techniques acquired in their studies. According to Academy alumnus Pieter Bruener, who completed his consultancy project in 2005, the experience gained through this course was excellent preparation for his current position as a Consultant for Deloitte & Touche: “The work required for the consultancy project was very similar to what I’m doing now”, he says.

We take great pleasure in introducing the Academy’s latest staff member: Mr Mike Newnham, who has assumed the post of Director of Consulting within our Professional Training & Development department. Mike comes to us after eight years as Chief Human Resources Officer for Jumeirah, bringing with him a wealth of experience and some exciting plans for expanding the Academy’s consulting and training services.

During his years with Jumeirah, Mike guided the development of the human resource function that has supported the phenomenal growth of the company. His international hospitality career began with Hyatt International hotels in the Asia Pacific region, followed by a stint as director of a training and human resources consultancy company in Singapore and as director of training and development for the Bass Hotels & Resorts (now InterContinental Hotels Group) in Hong Kong.

A switch to academia may be an atypical career move for someone with Mike’s experience, but it reflects a deep interest on his part in the academic side of the industry. He is working on a doctorate in social sciences (with a focus on human resource development) from Leicester University. As well as teaching a management course at the Academy, he serves as Associate Tutor in Dubai for Leicester University’s Master’s programme in Human Resources Management.

Mike’s senior industry experience and academic accomplishments are a winning combination for the Academy. Although it is early days yet, he already has a strong vision of what the PT&D department’s future could hold. As well as expansion of the short courses on offer now, one of Mike’s ideas is development of a team of HR specialists who would act as consultants for companies in the region, helping them with a wide range of challenges including training, localisation plans, psychometric testing, and executive team-building workshops.

Also part of the plan are stronger ties with the academic side of the Academy, and further collaboration with our parent company, Dubai Holding. Mike’s philosophy can be summed up in the Pareto Principle: 80% of the benefit comes from 20% of the effort and investment. The challenge for the PT&D department is to help companies and individuals find the 20%!
The first ever Emirates Academy blood drive was held in late November. A total of 49 students, faculty and Jumeirah colleagues donated up to 450 ml each of the precious life-giving fluid in the Ministry of Health mobile clinic parked outside the Academy.

The successful event was organised by Svetlana Dvorjaninova and Andreas Beisser.

In January, The Emirates Academy had the pleasure of welcoming Pascal Tingaud, Executive Chef for both Moët & Chandon, and the three-star Michelin Château de Saran in France. He is a veteran of top hotels and restaurants in Europe, and the third generation in a line of family chefs. Chef Pascal met with some of our hospitality students for an informal chat. He talked about how his approach to food had changed over the course of his career, in particular because of his international travel for Moët & Chandon, through which he was exposed to a wide range of national and ethnic ingredients, styles and techniques.

Emirates Academy students continue to excel even after they graduate. Two of our graduates won awards for outstanding contributions to Jumeirah at the company’s Management Trainees End of Year Function: Ben Attokaran, a 2006 graduate and now management trainee with Jumeirah Restaurants, won the Teamwork award. The Continuous Growth award was presented to Euan Davidson, class of 2007, and now management trainee for sports and leisure at Madinat Jumeirah. A third Academy alumnus, Marcin Lis, was nominated for the Integrity award.

January was a busy month for outreach activities. Between them, the Academy’s Managing Director, Ron Hilvert, and Director of Marketing, Lars Eltvik, visited eight cities in four European countries.

The purpose of these visits, which go on all year round, is to attract new full-time and exchange students, conduct interviews with students who have already applied, and visit potential partner institutions.