

SECSA CHRIE SPRING/SUMMER 2025 H.E.A.T. NEWSLETTER



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**Scholarship
Expertise
Curiosity
Smart
Advancement**

Thank you from the SECSA President

Dr. James Arthur Williams (AKA Dr. Limitless)



Dr. James Arthur Williams

Faculty Director of Haslam
Scholars
Associate Professor
Dept. of Retail, Hospitality, and
Tourism Management
University of Tennessee

Serving as SECSA President has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I had the distinct pleasure of working alongside an incredibly collaborative, talented, and energetic group of board members who brought both excellence and joy to every initiative we pursued.

Together, we boldly advanced the vision for our federation, including the introduction of a wine and tea experience and deeper participant engagement at our 2025 Annual Conference—celebrating 10 years of SECSA impact and innovation.

I am profoundly grateful for each board member and for the entire SECSA community. Thank you for your dedication, creativity, and spirit. It has truly been an honor to serve with you. With deep appreciation,

Dr. Limitless
SECSA President

2025 SECSA CHRIE Conference Wrap-up

The 10th Annual SECSA-CHRIE Conference, hosted by Auburn University under the theme Innovation, Tradition, and Southern Hospitality, was a remarkable success. Over three days, from Thursday, February 27 through Saturday, March 1, 2025, we gathered to share research, teaching strategies, and industry insights that continue to shape the future of hospitality and tourism education.

In addition to scholarly sessions, the conference provided numerous opportunities to network and build professional relationships, fostering collaborations that extend well beyond the event. Participants also enjoyed Auburn's warm hospitality and vibrant campus atmosphere, which beautifully highlighted the theme of blending innovation with tradition.

We extend our sincere thanks to Auburn University and the SECSA Federation Board for their outstanding efforts in organizing this year's conference. We look forward to building on this momentum and seeing everyone again next year in Tampa.

10th Annual SECSA-CHRIE Conference

hosted by

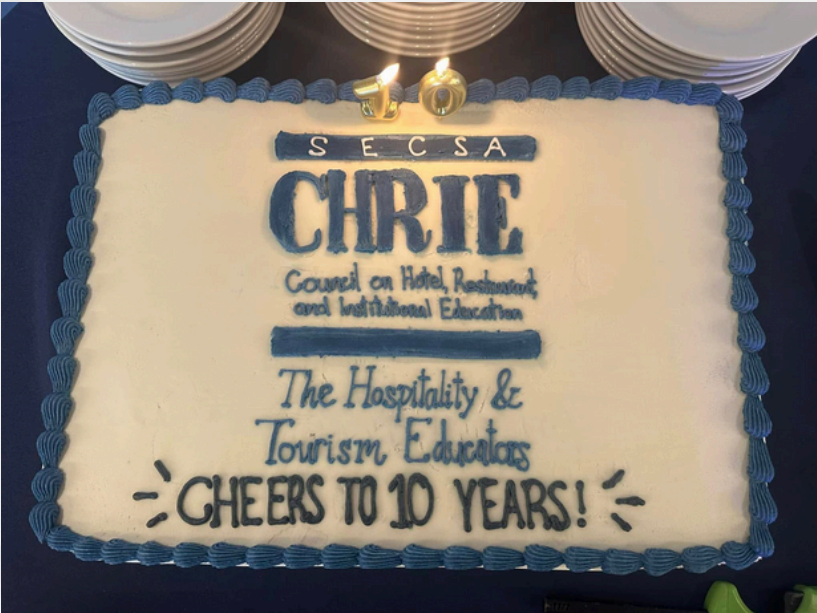
AUBURN UNIVERSITY

HORST SCHULZE SCHOOL OF HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

Feb 27th - Mar 1st, 2025



*CELEBRATING A DECADE OF
SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY*





BEVERAGE EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM

Hosted by BevEd SIG

*Sip, Learn, and
Connect*

Morning Brew

Crafting Beverage Research

Sips of Knowledge

Saturday, March 1, 2025
Registration Fee: \$30
(plus SECSA conference registration)
<https://www.secsachrie.org/conferences>

NEXT YEAR'S SECSA-CHRIE CONFERENCE

We are excited to share that the
11th Annual SECSA-CHRIE Conference
will be hosted by



UNIVERSITY of
SOUTH FLORIDA

Muma College of Business

School of Hospitality and
Tourism Management



Stay tuned to our website (www.secsachrie.org),
Facebook and LinkedIn pages for details.



UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

2025 ICHRIE Eta Sigma Delta (ESD) HΣΔ Undergraduate Research Symposium
20 - 21 February 2025
Tampa, Florida, USA

That's a wrap!



UNIVERSITY of
SOUTH FLORIDA
Muma College of Business
School of Hospitality and
Tourism Management

Event Sponsor

Busch Gardens Tampa
(\$2000US)

Coral Gables Sponsorship
(\$750US)

Riverwalk Sponsorship
(\$500US)

Sunshine
Skyway Bridge
(\$200US)



Boston University School of Hospitality Administration



INSIGHTS AND ADVICE



Wei Wei, Ph.D.
University of Central Florida

Dr. Wei Wei at Rosen College of University of Central Florida, Director of Research at SECSA-CHRIE, recently served as a panelist at the prestigious Global Hospitality and Tourism Research Summit, jointly hosted by Rosen College and Kyushu Sangyo University in Fukuoka, Japan. The summit's international impact earned national recognition with a feature on Japan's National TV Channel. Dr. Wei's participation in a distinguished panel brought together global researchers, industry leaders, and alumni, highlighting Rosen College's worldwide influence and commitment to advancing hospitality and tourism research on a global stage.

PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Congratulations to Dr. Fang Shu on the well-deserved promotion to Associate Teaching Professor at Florida International University.



Fang Shu, Ph.D.
Florida International University

EDUCATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS



Dr. Jessica Wiitala

**Assistant Professor of Event Management
High Point University**

Accepted for Publication: Leadership Barriers
and Their Impact on Women's Turnover
Intention in the Event Industry

Dr. Jessica Wiitala, Assistant Professor of Event Management at High Point University, is pleased to share that her article, "Leadership Barriers and Their Impact on Women's Turnover Intention in the Event Industry: Examining Psychological Well-Being and Job Stress," has been accepted for publication in an upcoming special issue of Event Management.

Co-authored by Dr. Brianna S. Clark and Dr. Trishna G. Mistry, the article examines the relationship between perceived leadership barriers and job stress, psychological well-being, and women's intention to remain in the event industry. The research draws on survey data from women professionals across the events sector, highlighting a need for more inclusive leadership pathways and greater attention to mental health in event workplaces.

As hospitality and event management programs prepare students for careers in fast-paced, global industries, this research emphasizes the importance of addressing not just structural inequities, but also the psychological effects these barriers can have on professionals' long-term career trajectories. The findings offer evidence-based insights for faculty, administrators, and industry leaders working to cultivate more supportive, equitable work environments and leadership development opportunities within event-focused organizations.

Citation:

Wiitala, J., Clark, B. S., & Mistry, T. G. (2025). Leadership barriers and their impact on women's turnover intention in the event industry: A study of psychological well-being and job stress. Event Management. (Accepted, Awaiting Publication)

Global Experiential Learning in Action: High Point University's Maymester in Austria, Slovakia, and Germany

In May 2025, Dr. Jessica Wiitala led a transformative 17-day Maymester program for 20 students from High Point University's Event Management program. Designed as an immersive academic and cultural experience, the program took students across Austria, Slovakia, and Germany, culminating at IMEX Frankfurt, the world's largest global trade show for the business events industry.

Students enrolled in EMG-2010: Meetings, Conferences, & Special Events, a course centered on corporate meetings and special events, engaged in a blend of traditional classroom instruction and high-impact experiential learning. In partnership with an external travel provider, Dr. Wiitala helped shape an itinerary that aligned directly with the course objectives, emphasizing site inspections, destination management, and operational strategy for private sector events.

The academic itinerary featured visits to premier venues and organizations, including the Austria Center Vienna, Schönbrunn Events, and Palais Ferstel in Vienna, where students observed venue operations and met with on-site event sales and operations professionals. They also engaged with key destination marketing organizations such as the Vienna Convention Bureau and destination management companies, including EMERGE in Bratislava, Slovakia. In Salzburg, students visited Brandboxx, a hybrid wholesale and event venue specializing in the fashion sector, before heading to Munich for a masterclass at the Faculty of Tourism of the Munich University of Applied Sciences, with Prof. Dr. Lukas Schönberger. They later visited the Vok Dams Agency for a presentation on boutique agency operations, and concluded their academic site visits at Kloster Eberbach, a historic wine estate and event venue in Germany's Rheingau region.



At IMEX Frankfurt, students participated in the IMEX + MPI Future Leaders Forum, networked with global industry professionals, and had the opportunity to attend education sessions on leadership, sustainability, marketing, and experiential event design.

The itinerary also included a series of cultural and leisure experiences that enhanced the program's immersive approach. Highlights included guided visits to Schönbrunn Palace and Melk Abbey in Austria, a scenic day in Hallstatt with a tour of the Dachstein Giant Ice Caves, and historical excursions to Olympiapark München and Neuschwanstein Castle in Germany.

For faculty, IMEX Frankfurt offered robust professional development through sessions aligned with teaching and research priorities. Dr. Wiitala focused on attending sessions in experience design, leadership, and emotional engagement at events, insights she plans to integrate into future course content and classroom discussions.

This Maymester program builds on the success of High Point University's 2023 offering, which focused on festival events in Amsterdam, Brussels, and London, led by Dr. Brianna S. Clark. It reflects High Point University's continued commitment to experiential education and global learning, which serve as foundational pillars of event management education.



2025 ICHRIE GLOBAL CONFERENCE



ICHRIE
2025
INDY

2025 ICHRIE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

Friday, 20 June 2025

Open to all

JW Marriott Indianapolis • Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Introducing...

2025-26

ICHRIE LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2025-26 ICHRIE LEADERSHIP

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



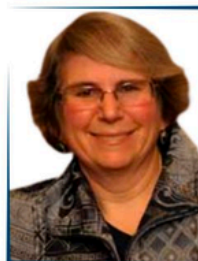
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2025 ICHRIE GLOBAL CONFERENCE

SECSA FEDERATION MEETING

It's been a fantastic week reconnecting with SECSA CHRIE members at the ICHRIE Global Conference in Indianapolis.

We held a SECSA Federation meeting where we expressed our deep appreciation to our outgoing board members for their dedicated service and officially welcomed our new board.

Thank you to all SECSA CHRIE members for your continued support and commitment to advancing hospitality and tourism education. We're excited about what's ahead and look forward to a year filled with collaboration, innovation, and growth!



SECSA CHRIE BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2024-2025

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Congratulations to

NEWLY ELECTED BOARD MEMBERS



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Trishna Mistry, Ph.D.



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Fang Shu, Ph.D., CHE, CHIA



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Jessica Wiitala, Ph.D., MBA, CMM, CHIA



Director of Industry Services
Seden Dogan Ph.D., CHIA, PMP



Director of Marketing
Haemi Kim, Ph.D.



Vice President
Trishna Mistry, Ph.D.

Hey everyone! I'm thrilled to share a bit about myself beyond the classroom. I grew up in India before moving to the US as a teen. My journey's been a bit of a Florida road trip – starting in the small town of Lake City at a community college, then hitting Gainesville for my bachelor's at UF, Orlando for my master's at UCF, and later my PhD. Between the two programs at UCF, I worked in lodging and timeshare, including Wyndham's corporate office. During the final year of my PhD, I got married and spent a year in Scottsdale, AZ, where my husband was based at the time. He left his job to join me when I landed my role at USF, moving from Scottsdale to Sarasota and then to Tampa. We've been here ever since, now raising our 3-year-old son. We also built our dream house here three years ago – because nothing says “new parents” like juggling a newborn and a construction site, right?

Life in Tampa has been a blast, though I miss Orlando's Disney and Universal parks - those were my happy places! We still make time for occasional visits, reliving the magic with our little one. Recently, I've rediscovered my teenage love for reading, diving into novels just for fun, no annotations required. Traveling's another passion, though it's been on pause since our son was born. Now, we're easing back into it, exploring local gems around Florida. Whether it's a quick park trip or a cozy night with a book, I'm all about finding joy in the moment. I'm excited to connect with you all - maybe swap book recs or hear about your favorite holiday spots!

I was born and raised in Seoul, South Korea. After earning my Business bachelor's degree, I did an internship at W Hotel in Seoul, South Korea. The internship experience sparked a passion for the hospitality industry, leading me to pursue further education and a career in the industry. Since then, I have been engaging in the industry as a learner, researcher, and educator. While appreciating the simple joys, I also embraced challenges for the next adventure in my life. I came to the United States to continue my academic journey at Oklahoma State University, where I completed my Ph.D. in Hospitality Administration. I joined the University of Alabama as an Assistant Professor in 2019 and have enjoyed living in Tuscaloosa. I have been married to my husband for 12 years and am a mom to two beloved children. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with my family and watching sports to cheer on the Crimson Tide.



Director of Marketing
Haemi Kim, Ph.D.



Directory of Industry Services
Seden Dogan Ph.D., CHIA, PMP

I've been working at USF since January 2023. I served as a visiting professor from January 2023 to August 2024. Since August 2024, I have been a permanent faculty member who holds "assistant professor of instruction" and graduate program internship coordinator" roles.

I am from Turkiye, which is famous for its hospitality, rich cuisine, and Turkish coffee. A unique thing about me is that I can read one's future (and past) from the remains in the coffee cup after they've drunk it. I am pretty good at doing it!

I am divorced and do not have children of my own, but I am the "super aunt" to my two adorable nieces. My mom lives in Turkiye and my brother lives in the Netherlands.

I know it's going to sound super clichéd, but I enjoy watching movies and swimming. I am a huge fan of Star Wars, The Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter, Marvel, and DC Comics. I am still debating which one is the best: Superman or Iron Man.

Research is another passion for me. I enjoy conducting research on the implications of innovative and emerging technologies in the hospitality and tourism industry. Human-robot interaction, 3D food printing, and Holographic AI performances are a couple of topics that I have been researching.

I'm from China. While earning my bachelor's degree in accounting, I had the chance to intern in the hospitality industry, which sparked my interest in pursuing further education in this field. I went on to complete my master's degree at FIU, where I was then hired as the coordinator of the China Programs and later promoted to manager.

In 2018, I started teaching accounting and finance at FIU as an Assistant Teaching Professor. Wanting to keep growing, I pursued my Ph.D. through Iowa State University's excellent distance program. This fall, I'll be an Associate Teaching Professor, and I hope to continue making a meaningful impact on my students.

I'm not married yet. Outside of work, I'm passionate about philanthropy. I spend a lot of time teaching a philanthropy course and getting involved in community service. In my spare time, I enjoy playing music and staying active through regular exercise.



Treasurer
Fang Shu, Ph.D., CHE, CHIA



Secretary
Jessica Wiitala, Ph.D., MBA, CMM, CHIA

Where are you from?

I was born and raised in central Massachusetts and have lived coast to coast, from Southern California to Central Florida, and now in North Carolina.

How did you get to where you are now?

I've always had a passion for teaching, but I knew I wanted to enter academia with industry experience and applied knowledge. I began working in the hospitality industry immediately after high school and continued through a variety of management roles in boutique, resort, and full-service hotels with experience in lodging and corporate group sales (in events) while pursuing my education. I completed my Ph.D. from UCF's Rosen College of Hospitality Management and hold an MBA in Marketing. These experiences allow me to bring real-world insight into my courses on event finance, marketing and sponsorship, risk, and experience design.

Married?

Yes! My husband and I went to high school together. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps, and we got married while he was enlisted. We celebrated our 14th anniversary this April.

Kids?

We have a son, Daxton, who turns four this July. He's a dinosaur-loving, Halloween-obsessed little guy—I now know more about dinosaurs than I ever imagined! We're currently planning a spooky-themed "Four and Frightful" birthday party to celebrate in Massachusetts with his grandparents and other extended family. We also recently welcomed a Cane Corso, also known as an Italian Mastiff, puppy named Turner (after Pirates of the Caribbean's Will Turner), who shares my birthday. He was truly the best birthday gift!

Passions?

I love traveling and have taken three cross-country road trips with my husband. I also love mixology, baking, music, themed entertainment, attractions, and pop culture through film. One of my greatest passions in my work is supporting immersive and experiential learning, as well as traveling with students (bonus if these happen together). I recently led student trips to Las Vegas for a large-scale trade show in April and to Europe for a 17-day study abroad course through Austria, Slovakia, and Germany, culminating at IMEX Frankfurt in May. Whether I'm hiking or at the beach with my family, planning our next Disney adventure (Mickey's Not-So-Scary Halloween Party, here we come!), or helping students learn about designing transformative event experiences, I'm driven by a passion for creating meaningful moments.

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