

James Reuss  
Class of 2005



The 2011 Etiquette Dinner took place November 8 in the MSU Billings Student Union Building. Students turned out in business apparel to meet with representatives from each of **Career Services' 2011-12 Employer Partners: Connoisseur Media, EideBailly, Billings Clinic, Yellowstone Boys & Girls Ranch, and KPMG.** This annual event was not only an opportunity for “students to learn about proper business dining etiquette, but to have the opportunity to talk with a professional in their field of study,” in the words of **KPMG** representative Wayne Scharnhorst, who is also a Class of 2009 grad.

After a few words from Career Services director Patricia Reuss, Sodexo’s Martin Bustamante took over as emcee. Boasting a well-tailored gray suit and an encyclopedic knowledge of formal dinner etiquette, Martin quizzed the crowd about the in’s and out’s of eating fancy meals and explained the finer points, covering details of dining etiquette over the course of the night. The information was thought-provoking and invaluable to any student hoping to make a good impression at formal meals sponsored by prospective employers.

The dinner was also an ideal way for students to get some “face time” with employers in their field. Not only did it feature scrumptious, exotic dishes, but the etiquette presentation during the meal served to put all guests on equal footing. Everyone was a student, in a way—whether that person was a college junior or a twenty-year veteran of their company—and all expressed the same mix of excitement and trepidation when taking care to grip their utensils in exactly the way Martin demonstrated.

As the meal progressed, employers got to know the students at their tables. Mark Jaskot from **Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch** said, “(We) talked about what we do, our different programs, positions, internships...talked about students’ interests and what they want to do after college.” At the **Billings Clinic** table, students talked with Lori Noyes “in depth about the hiring process, future growth, interviewing, and what we look for on résumés/applications.”

The entrée was seared duck breast and by this time, the talk at the tables ran toward networking: students asked their corporate hosts the best times to apply for jobs, what would benefit them most when applying, and what to expect during the hiring process. When done, guests placed their silverware on their plates as Martin had diagrammed—knife and fork laid together, running from (in Martin’s own words) “ten to four” across the plate. This was the cue for the wait staff to remove the dinner plates.

Last, the dessert course was delivered after another segment of Martin’s etiquette presentation. Dessert was a port-wine-poached pear with port reduction, bleu cheese, and candied pecans. Besides being the dish most stiff with alliteration, it was an interesting way to end the meal, and before long everyone began to leave. Final words were exchanged, and as Beth Stephenson of **Connoisseur Media** said, “If there’s anything I can do for any of you, just let me know.” That’s music to a hopeful young student’s ears, and that’s why the dinner is so successful each year—where else could students eat a gourmet meal, network with employers, and learn the intricacies of formal dining all in one sitting. Kayleen Masters from **EideBailly** (and MSUB alumna) said, “It is a great way to meet the students and a great opportunity to give back and help them through the recruiting process.”

For information about next year’s dinner and the Employer Partnership Program, visit the Career Services office today!