TA’ing for Welch

By Sarah Foote

Rupa Bahri, MBA ’06, SM ’07, considers herself a lucky person. Although her MBA classmates are now off in the working world, the dual degree student (MIT Sloan and Harvard-MIT Division of Health Sciences and Technology) is happy that she is on campus for another year, because it has provided her with the opportunity to become the first Teaching Assistant (TA) for Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric. “I guess everything happens for a reason,” she says with a smile.

Rupa was one of over 100 MIT Sloan students who applied for Welch’s inaugural class, of which just 30 were admitted. After Rupa was accepted into the class last spring, she received an e-mail while sailing in the British Virgin Islands with her classmates, saying she had been selected to become the TA for the class. “It was an honor to be selected as the TA. I was extremely grateful for the opportunity to work with Jack and of course to learn from him. Given the opportunity, I would do it again, without a doubt,” she says of the experience.

With her dual master’s degrees in management and health sciences technology, Rupa hopes to become the CEO of her own medical technology company or possibly run someone else’s company in the future. With her background in biomedical engineering, research and development, coupled with her internships as an investment banker and consultant in the health technology fields, Rupa is well on her way.

After completing her undergraduate degree in biomedical engineering at Johns Hopkins University, the top-ranked program in the field, Rupa moved to Minnesota to work for Medtronic, Inc., as a systems engineer. She enjoyed the work in research and product development, where she focused
Continued from page 1

... on design of cardiac pacemakers and defibrillators but often found she had more to give to the job than what was required from 8:00-5:00. Rupa became involved with the peer mentoring program at the company and later became a Chairperson of the Chapter for New Employees. Eager to learn more and advance in the company, Rupa took the International Board of Heart Rhythm Examiners test and passed. She became one of the youngest people at the company to take and pass the test, which requires six or more months of study and preparation, and is usually only taken by people with 10 or more years of experience in the field.

Rupa found the research and development on pacemakers interesting work, but still felt limited in how she could contribute more to the company. She knew the way to move her career forward would be to return to school for an advanced degree and began to look into master’s degree programs. When Rupa found the dual degree Biomedical Enterprise Program at MIT Sloan, she knew it was the perfect fit for her. The opportunity to earn an MBA and an MS, and to tailor a program with select medical classes and clinical exposure through Harvard Medical School, was an easy choice for her. Rupa then took a leave of absence from the company, having also been selected as a prestigious Medtronic Scholar.

While at MIT Sloan, Rupa had the opportunity to intern for Credit Suisse in their healthcare investment banking division. Later she interned for Deloitte to gain a perspective on management consulting. Rupa recently accepted a full-time consulting offer from McKinsey & Co. to work in their healthcare division. “It was a hard decision,” says Rupa of selecting her next job. “But the opportunity to work in a role which provides breadth across the industry, with projects in hospital management, operations, on the insurance side, in global health, medical devices, and biotechnology, was too great to pass up.”

The first TA

Rupa had re-read all of Jack Welch’s books prior to their first one-on-one meeting at his Beacon Hill home last summer. Welch was impressed with how organized Rupa was — offering to put together a syllabus for him and building the SloanSpace community for the class. Rupa wanted to make sure Welch had a great experience teaching at MIT Sloan. (Welch will teach “Conversations with Jack Welch” again this fall. Look for an e-mail with details on how to apply to the class later this spring.)

Rupa went out of her way to make sure everything ran smoothly for the class, even going as far as collecting student biocards and other pertinent information and organizing them in a binder for Welch. Rupa says that Welch studied the student backgrounds diligently, often citing information about students from their biocards or resume when he cold-called on them in class. She also arrived early, making sure that everything was in order before the arrival of the students and Welch. Each week Rupa met Welch at his car, sharing updates and feedback during the walk to class. “I planned ahead as much as possible. I didn’t want there to be any glitches. I really wanted to make sure he enjoyed teaching here,” says Rupa.

Rupa also encountered a few situations that most teaching assistants never encounter. On several occasions students tried to sneak into the class—one claiming he was an MIT alum, who had permission from the Alumni Association to take the class. Other students would e-mail her questions with the hopes that she would pass them along to Welch. One student even tried giving her a copy of his business plan to pass along to the former GE CEO. Often after class there would be a group of students waiting to meet Welch, some seeking autographs, others wanting a photo with the legendary leader. "Rupa was a remarkable TA. She set the bar high..."
Continued from page 2

in terms of her commitment to Jack Welch and the students in the class. In addition, she created a set of expectations that will be very important for the next student lucky enough to be chosen as TA, to match or exceed in the fall. I hope that Rupa will remain a close advisor to the selection process,” says Tara Walor, Director of Sloan Educational Services, who had a hand in selecting Rupa as TA.

Rupa took all of this in stride, even fielding occasional questions from the media who had learned of her involvement with the class. Rupa took notes in class, did all of the homework assignments, and reviewed chapters of Welch’s book *Winning*, each week. Welch even called on Rupa when discussing mergers and acquisitions. Always prepared, Rupa shared her M&A experience with the class. She enjoyed watching Welch in action, and found his teaching methods extremely effective. “To drive home key leadership concepts, Jack often used role-playing and simulations, as well as related many interesting anecdotes from his career. His wealth of experience and proven leadership provided for stimulating class discussions – so much so, that we asked if he would extend the class meeting time by an extra half hour each week! It was great to see how he answered students’ questions with such an emphasis on candor. I know I can take many of these lessons learned from him and apply them to my career,” says Rupa.

Each week she would provide Welch with feedback from the students or suggest ideas for the following class. Welch told the class that when they returned to the working world, they should celebrate accomplishments often, as it is a great team building experience. Rupa organized a mid-semester celebration at the Black Sheep Café in Kendall Square,

*Rupa Bahri and Jack Welch.*
with Welch quickly agreeing, and students thrilled to have an informal opportunity to get to
to know him better. At the end of the semester Welch treated the entire class to dinner at Stella’s
in the South End, even hiring a chartered bus to pick them up and drop them off. At the dinner,
Rupa presented Welch, his wife Suzy, and his assistant with MIT Sloan mementos as thanks
for teaching at the School.

Rupa says the amount of time she devoted to the class varied from week to week, but adds
that it was all worthwhile. She looks forward to staying in touch with Welch as she progresses
through her career—on her way to becoming a CEO.

**MIT Sloan Professors Honored**

Simon Johnson has been appointed Economic Counselor
and Director of the Research Department at the
International Monetary Fund. This is a very significant
policy making position. Johnson will be taking a leave
from the School.

Eric von Hippel will receive, on March 16, an honorary
degree from the Copenhagen Business School.

Eleanor Westney will receive an honorary doctorate from
the Stockholm School of Economics on June 1.

**Professional Standards Survey Results**

*By Kurt Campbell ’07 And Shannon Damen ’07*

In December of 2006, the Professional Standards Committee and MIT/Sloan Student
Senate sent out a survey to all MBAs and Sloan Fellows as a first attempt to understand the
community’s thoughts on professional standards. The survey was worded carefully in an
attempt to identify what actions you felt were unprofessional, rather than just simply violating
Professional Standards. Questions in the survey were aimed exclusively at personal conduct,
and not at academic honesty. There were a total of 285 respondents representing about forty
percent (40%) of MBAs and Sloan Fellows. The results of the survey were quite surprising.
Ninety-one percent (91%) of respondents felt that professional standards were either
sometimes or frequently a concern for the community. Here is a snapshot of the details:

Forty percent (40%) respondents witness unprofessional behaviors daily, while an additional
thirty-one percent (31%) see these behaviors weekly.

Eight-four percent (84%) witnessed these unprofessional behaviors in the classroom, another
forty percent (40%) during club speaker events, and thirty-four (34%) during recruiting events.
(Students could choose all that apply for this question, hence greater than one hundred percent
response).
To the question, “Which kinds of behaviors do you consider to be a problem?” The responses were the following: Seventy-nine percent (79%) of respondents consider lateness to be a problem, sixty-one percent (61%) use of technology, fifty-three percent (53%) leaving early, forty percent (40%) side bar conversations.

The majority of students (74%) feel that the faculty only sometimes adequately enforces classroom expectations, and over half (53%) wanted to see faculty enforce expectations more.

Almost exactly half of students said they would feel comfortable speaking to other students about an unprofessional behavior.

In the survey, we asked for some recommendations on how to improve Professional Standards. Among some of the suggested themes of improvements that could be made to Professional Standards were: having consequences to Professional Standards violations, making tardiness a grading issue, and monitoring of Professional Standards by TAs. The survey results were shared with MIT Sloan faculty in a presentation by the Professional Standards Committee at the February 5 Spring Faculty/Staff meeting.

Next steps in the data gathering process include a survey to the faculty from the Professional Standards Committee to gain their thoughts (on both personal conduct and academic honesty-related issues). The Committee hopes to use this data to move forward with some action items this spring.

The conversation around Professional Standards continues to be an open-community discussion, and one in which the Senate and Professional Standards Committee welcome your thoughts and feedback. We have created a forum on SloanSpace under the “Student – Sloan Senate” community to create an opportunity for your feedback to be heard. We are also looking for ’08 students who would like to join the Professional Standards Committee and take a more active role in the evolution of Professional Standards at MIT Sloan. The committee is a group of students, administrators, and faculty that meet approximately once a month throughout the year. The group’s objectives include improving Professional Standards and communicating them to the community. If you are interested in giving more feedback or getting involved, please participate in the forum or contact senate@sloan.mit.edu.
Reminder - Important Course Registration Deadline Friday, March 9!

Friday, March 9 is the LAST DAY to:
- Add or Drop an H1 course
- Add a full term course
- Change from credit to listener status in H1 classes

Thursday, April 26 is the LAST DAY to:
- Drop a full term course

Add/Drop forms are available in Sloan Educational Services, E52-101. To add or change status in a class, you must obtain the instructor’s signature. You do not need the instructor’s signature to Drop a class.

* Don’t forget to check your registration on WebSIS, http://student.mit.edu, to make sure you have dropped the classes you are not attending.

MBA NEWS

Attention MBAs ’08:

Are you interested in MIT Sloan Professional Standards? Would you like to be a part of the process addressing and improving upon these issues and community norms?

Learn more at http://sloanspace.mit.edu/dotlrn/clubs/professionalstandards/file-storage/view/public/PSC_Info_Session.ppt about opportunities for participation on the Professional Standards Committee & Review Board. Seats are now available for MBAs ’08.

If you are interested in gaining a seat on either the Committee or Review Board, a 300-500 word essay is due by 5 p.m. on Monday, March 5 to dberech@mit.edu. Essay topic: “Why you want to be involved and what you hope to contribute”.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Debbie Berechman
Co-Chair, Professional Standards Committee
Executive Director, MBA Program
dberech@mit.edu
Nominations open for MIT Sloan MBA Achievement Awards

It is time again for the community to acknowledge the accomplishments of the graduating MBA Class. Each year, MIT Sloan recognizes outstanding graduating MBA students who have had a significant impact on their classmates and the School during their two years here with the MIT Sloan MBA Achievement Awards. These awards range from $1K to $10K.

We invite all members of the community to submit nominations in support of individuals who have made a difference in 2006 and 2007.

Contributions may include, but are not limited to:

- Exhibiting outstanding leadership in the MIT Sloan community
- Giving notable service to the student body through coordination of community building events or mentoring
- Serving as a role model for their peers in areas such as leadership, professionalism, and commitment
- Implementing an initiative that positively impacted student life at MIT Sloan
- Achieving a standard of excellence in academic endeavors (demonstrable through GPA and/or contribution to the educational experience of the class as a whole).

The MBA Student Affairs Office will accept nominations from the MIT Sloan community through **Monday, April 9**. Nominations can be submitted online or on nomination forms available in the MBA Student Affairs Office (E52-101).

Orientation Leadership Program – Pilots for the Class of 2009

It’s hard to believe that Orientation and the Core are just around the corner for the Class of 2009, but the MBA Student Affairs Office and the Pilot Transition Team are already preparing to welcome the new class. The Orientation Leadership Program is key to successfully welcoming and integrating the new class. If you are interested, or would like to nominate a member of the Class of 2008 to be a Pilot, please **complete the nomination survey before Sunday, March 11**.

Through training and practical experience, Pilots have the opportunity to hone leadership skills in the areas of facilitation, mentoring, teambuilding, and creating community. It is also a great opportunity to form early relationships with members of the new class as well as with fellow Pilots.

We encourage you to nominate your friends, peers, or yourself for this incredible opportunity. Nominees will be notified the week of March 12 and invited for brief interviews during SIP week with the Pilot Transition Team.
The Boston Herald Publisher Patrick Purcell said the newspaper industry was not caught by surprise when the Internet hindered newsprint. But, he admitted that newspaper executives did not anticipate the enormous success of web sites like Google and craigslist. The Entertainment, Media and Sports (EMS) Club invited Purcell to speak at a lunchtime session last Wednesday.

Back in the late 1990s, newspapers were flush with cash during the Internet boom. “We thought we could weather the storm,” Purcell said. But online sites were a serious threat to advertising. Today, on average, traditional newspapers lose between 1 percent and 3 percent circulation each year. At this rate, “We’ll be around a fairly long time,” said Purcell, who’s been in the newspaper business for nearly 40 years.

Purcell started his newspaper career as an office boy at the New York Daily News. At the time, the Daily News was the largest-selling newspaper in the United States. It was all black and white, with no preprinted inserts. “It was a completely different business,” he remembered. At that time, the Daily News was number one in airline, tobacco, department store, and home improvement advertising sales. Today, there’s almost no travel or tobacco advertising. Small home improvement and electronics stores have been consolidated into big box retailers, and supermarket flyers are now sent out via direct mail.

In 1980 he left the Daily News and took a job at the Village Voice, a small, alternative paper. That gave him a foot in the door to Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation, and a year-and-a-half later, he went to the New York Post. While there, he was recruited by Macy’s to take over their ad sales. He mulled it over, and asked Murdoch for advice. Murdoch told him, “We are going to be the biggest media company in the world, and you’re going to be a big part of it, and you are thinking about giving it up to sell women’s underwear?”

Murdoch offered him a role as head of the marketing department in satellite dish sales. Unfortunately, satellite dish sales could not compete with the more affordable cable television industry, and sales were shut down after five months.

As cable TV flourished, Murdoch launched FOX. More television channels meant more advertising competition, with expanded local stations and the advent of 24-hour news channels such as CNN. In the late 1980s, one of Purcell’s Internet-savvy News Corp. colleagues warned that newspapers would soon collapse. They took notice, but didn’t take the threat too seriously.

In 1994, Purcell purchased the Boston Herald from News Corp. and established it as an
independent newspaper. While circulation may be down and advertising revenues are now very dispersed, the Herald is in a unique position, according to Purcell. It’s a tabloid in one of the few two-newspaper towns that are still left. “We try to be different. It’s a big product distinction,” he said, comparing it to the Boston Globe. “If we were both broadsheets, the Herald would not survive.” He notes the Metro hasn’t had a whole lot of impact yet.

The Herald launched a web site in 1998. In 2002 Purcell implemented a fee to read columnists online, but uproar ensued. No one wanted to pay for online content. Purcell held fast to his decision, but after about two years of not making a lot of money off of it, he eliminated the fee.

Purcell then acquired the Community Newspaper Company in 2001, which he sold in 2006. He then re-invested in the Herald, which is now debt-free.

The Herald will march on, offering a different political perspective than the Globe and more human interest stories, but there is the chance of cover price increases. But, there will have to be some convergence with online entities such as Google or Yahoo, he warns. In the meantime, there are over 3 million unique site visits to the web site each month.

The Herald is small relative to other metro dailies, with an editorial budget of about $13 to $14 million. The print version has to stay alive until the Herald can fund the online component, he said.

People ask him, “Are you out of your mind.” But Purcell said it’s something he loves and it’s all he knows. “I’ve been a pretty good competitor, and I’ll keep giving it a shot,” he said.

Communication Technology, Media and Power
Speaker: Manuel Castells (Science, Technology, and Society, Media Arts and Sciences, Urban Studies and Planning, MIT, Visiting)

Power has always been decided in the realm of communication. In our societies, politics is largely media politics. Communication evolves according to the evolution of communication technology. Under these conditions social movements and insurgent politics enhance their capability to intervene in the new communication space. On the other hand, corporate media are also increasing their presence in the horizontal networks of communication. As a result, mass media and horizontal networks of communication are converging. This analysis is based on a number of case studies, data analysis, and literature review, some of which are included in Castells’ book “Mobile Communication and Society,” MIT Press 2006.

This free talk (open to the public) will take place in E15-Bartos Theatre, from 4–6 p.m., March 12. The talk is free and is open to the general public. For more information, contact Debbie Meinbresse, 617-452-2390, meinbres@mit.edu.

Edward Wilson understands the value of secrecy discretion and commitment to honor have been embedded in him since childhood. As an eager, optimistic student at Yale, he is recruited to join the secret society Skull and Bones, a brotherhood and breeding ground for future world leaders. Wilson’s acute mind, spotless reputation, and sincere belief in American values render him a prime candidate for a career in intelligence, and he is soon recruited to work for the OSS (the precursor to the CIA) during WWII. As one of the covert founders of the CIA, working in the heart of an organization where duplicity is required and nothing is taken at face value, Edward’s idealism is steadily eroded by a growing suspicious nature, reflective of a world settling into the long paranoia of the Cold War. As his methods are adopted as standard operating procedure, Wilson develops into one of the Agency’s veteran operatives, all the while combating his KGB counterpart. However, his steely dedication to his country comes at an ever-increasing price. Not even his wife Clover or his beloved son can divert Wilson from a path that will force him to sacrifice everything in pursuit of this job. Starring Matt Damon and Angelina Jolie; directed by Robert De Niro.

Playing on March 9 at 6:30 and 10 p.m. in 26-100 and again on March 11 at 6:30 p.m. in 26-100.

*From the Lecture Series Committee web site. All movies are just $3.*

**INTERNATIONAL FOOD FESTIVAL**

Join Boston’s international community for an evening of wine and food from France, Britain, Germany, and Italy while enjoying the evening views from the Prudential Tower.

This event will take place Thursday, March 8, 2007, from 6 to 8:30 p.m. at Arnold Worldwide, 101 Huntington Avenue, Boston. For more information or tickets, call 617-520-2121 or visit www.faccne.org/agenda.shtml. Price: $40 Member; $50 non-member.

*From the Calendar section of the *Boston Globe.*