Delivering catering excellence

By Matthew White, chair of the University Caterers Organisation (TUCO) and director of catering, hotel and conferencing at the University of Reading

At a time when the industry is facing some of its biggest financial challenges, we as in-house caterers should remain agile, adept and most importantly better than any contractor delivering products and services that exceed our customers' expectations. Our objective is to be creative with less resource and at the cutting edge of foodservice trends.

Our role is no longer simply that of a caterer. We look to inspire and deliver quality dining experiences. As demonstrated in our Global Food and Beverage Trends report 2018, proactively responding to trends can have a positive impact on bottom line. It also found conscientious consuming and the plant-based diet revolution provide opportunities for university caterers.

By being a part of the TUCO family, institutions have opportunities to access the best business and learning tools to influence catering excellence, great dining experiences and reduce financial costs. And ultimately, as reported in our recent Hospitable Campus research, define the inherent link between student hospitality and academic success and student satisfaction.

Many caterers work in isolation and are reserved about the excellent work they have achieved, so it is imperative for us to show appreciation towards our TUCO family. As an organisation wholly dependent on our members, this is an important factor in illustrating our support and building good business relationships. And our annual chairman’s dinner is one of our many ways in doing this.

This year I had the privilege of hosting the delightful event which was held at Whitworth Hall at the University of Manchester. An iconic venue boasting gothic architecture, an amazing organ and—best of all—the wonderfully talented hospitality team spearheaded by Alison Shedlock.

During the evening, I was surrounded by industry professionals who influence our Buy, Grow, Learn and Share banners. By working closely with our supply chain, partners and colleagues have delivered fresh thinking to our customers and with their support we can continue to go from strength to strength.

While attending TUUCO regional meetings, we take note of many inspirational ideas. We are happy to share that this year we are launching some stunning projects. We urge institutions to keep close and stay involved. And assure you, the more engagement caterers have with us, the more opportunities they have to deliver catering excellence.

For more information visit www.tuco.ac.uk