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Notable Alumni | Samuel Chamberlain Is ‘Fanatic’ about Fresh Burgers and Fries

October 16, 2019

Categories: Alumni

Tags: alumni, economics alumni, economics news, notable alumni, Sam Chamberlain



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
Notable
ALUMNI AWARD

Editor’s Note: The [College of Arts & Sciences Notable Alumni Awards](#) honor alumni for broad career accomplishments, commitment to community service, and valuable contributions to Ohio University and the College of Arts & Sciences.

Samuel H. Chamberlain ’92 Economics

[Samuel Chamberlain](#) is Chief Operating Officer at [Five Guys](#)—where the hamburgers are still formed by hand and the fries are so fresh that bags of potatoes are often stacked beside the tables in the restaurants—1,600 of them worldwide.

Chamberlain is the Chief Operating Officer of Five Guys, the leader of the fast casual burger segment, which has over 1600 restaurants worldwide.

Chamberlain earned his [bachelor’s degree in Economics](#) from the College of Arts & Sciences at Ohio University. He returns to Athens often to meet with students, including as [a speaker on Oct. 17](#).

- [Connect with Chamberlain on LinkedIn](#).



Sam Chamberlain, COO of Five Guys

Chamberlain, who has been with Five Guys for 14 years, is a legend in the restaurant industry—but not because he’s looking for the next new fad.

“Sam Chamberlain, chief operating officer of Five Guys Burgers, meanwhile, eschews traditional advertising altogether, preferring instead to invest its marketing budget back into its employees,” reports CSP Daily News in an article headlined “[Burger King Taste & Five Guys Execution: Two restaurant brands choosing substance over style.](#)”

Five Guys ... is less interested in what’s new and more focused on maintaining quality.

“We’re fanatic about hamburgers and French fries, and we want to deliver perfect product every time,” said Chamberlain.

Five Guys used its five original owned and operated sites as its incubator for 18 years before branching out into franchising. The focus today remains on the original limited menu—no salads, no chicken sandwiches, no onion rings.

“It comes back to discipline,” Chamberlain said. “, we’re trained to give the customer what they want, but we’re willing to push back a little.”

Goldberg questioned whether that limited focus might harm Five Guys going forward. Chamberlain doesn’t think so.

“To remain successful, we need two things to happen: 1.) Consumers need to continue to like hamburgers. And history suggests that won’t be an issue. 2.) We need to continue to execute our brand as best we can,” he said.

In 10 years, how many new products might be on the menu? “Zero.”



Sam Chamberlain

Over Chamberlain’s tenure at Five Guys, the company has grown from less than 30 restaurants in the United States to more than 1,600 restaurants in 20 countries. Domestically, Chamberlain oversees the Operations, Marketing, Supply Chain, Real Estate, Construction and Training departments. He is a driving force ensuring that the founders’ vision and standards are executed in both corporate and franchise owned locations.

Chamberlain has overseen rapid international expansion for the brand, which reached \$2 billion in revenue in 2018. In addition to the numerous local and industry awards over the years, Five Guys was voted Harris Poll’s Burger Restaurant Brand of the Year for 2017 and 2018.

Prior to joining Five Guys in 2005, Chamberlain was Vice President of a franchise development company based in Alexandria, Va., and a founding partner of Chamberlain Williams Tison & Associates, an executive search firm, from 1998-2002. He established KMS Holdings, LLC in 2003, a Five Guys franchisee group with 11 stores that was purchased by Five Guys in 2010. He began his career in 1992 with Lanier Worldwide.



Sam Chamberlain on the track team.



Sam Chamberlain, student-athlete

OHIO Memories

“My favorite class...by far...was The History of European Economics with Dr. Vedder,” Chamberlain says.



Sam Chamberlain at graduation

“Outside of class, my favorite memories are from making lifelong friends while living in James Hall, The College Inn for two years (now Bromley I believe) and my senior year on Mill Street. Other great times were had running the back roads

of Athens County with my teammates on the Cross Country and Track teams.”

