Queen of the Hill
Top of the Heap

Alumna of the Year Cynthia Kiser Murphey Tackles Top Job at New York-New York
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DEAN’S ASSOCIATES
I’m often asked, “Where are the Dean’s Associates donations spent?” These are contributions that are made annually for those who want to maintain their membership in the UNLV Harrah Hotel College Dean’s Associates. Individual contributions have ranged from $1,000 to more than $15,000. These contributions are accumulated in an account, and we draw from the account when needs arise. Any money left at the end of a year is allowed to roll over into the next year.

The primary use for these dollars is student and faculty professional development. Students’ may request assistance for attending national conventions in association with their membership in the corresponding student organization. For example, we help send students each year to the national meetings of the Club Managers Association of America, the Professional Convention Management Association of America, the National Restaurant Show, the International Hotel and Restaurant Show, the National Society of Minorities in Hospitality, among others.

There are many times when a student is faced with a particular financial situation where a “standard” scholarship isn’t available. We are able to use Dean’s Associates funds to help out in such situations. Many of you have heard our students talk about the impact that this support has had on their lives and abilities to achieve life’s goals. Watching the tears on their faces and on ours in the audience is all most of us need to reach into our pockets and become Dean’s Associates members.

Sometimes we use the funds to help support the cost of a professional position. As you undoubtedly know, the money that we receive from the state of Nevada for state-funded positions is inadequate to meet all of our needs. We have created an outstanding advancement team made up of the people who work with development, alumni, career services, public relations, and marketing. The only state money support that we have for this team is a partially supported position for our director of external relations. While we try to find sources outside of Dean’s Associates money to support these positions, it nevertheless is the case, when we run short, that we must use these dollars.

With respect to faculty professional development, again there is very limited state support for travel and research. Faculty grants and contracts support some travel and research, but most of the support for this comes from our summer programs and Dean’s Associates money. Each year, we provide faculty with “seed grants” from the Dean’s Associates to begin research projects, with the promise that they might lead to funding from outside sources.

I think the uses of Dean’s Associates contributions can be seen as expenditures that promote and enhance the reputation of the UNLV Harrah Hotel College. As such, we urge your continued support and invite you to become a Dean’s Associate member. It is easy to make such a gift to the hotel college. Simply e-mail Judy Nagai at Judy.Nagai@UNLV.edu, and she will be in touch with you immediately with instructions.

THE HOSPITALITY CAMPUS AND INNOVATION UNLV
On a totally different subject, the hospitality campus and the INNovation UNLV project have moved forward since Harrah’s Entertainment committed $25 million toward our building project and an additional $5 million toward research, recruiting and training, much of it focused on INNovation UNLV. Several months ago, UNLV issued a request for qualifications (RFQ) to developers/contractors in order to gauge their interest in building and financing the hospitality campus. After receipt of responses to the RFQ, two developers were selected to receive requests for proposals (RFP). We anticipate that the RFP will be issued by early April with proposals to be received by UNLV 60 to 90 days following.

The proposals that we anticipate receiving will detail the design and construction of a conference center and hotel and related infrastructure, as well as the design for a new academic building for the Harrah Hotel College. We have been discussing this development as a two phase project with the first phase being the construction of the hotel and conference center and the second phase the construction of the academic building. However, the potential bidders have had creative financing ideas that may allow all of the construction to take place in a single phase project. We will have to await the details of the proposals and the negotiations that will follow with UNLV and perhaps the state legislature before we truly know how the hospitality campus will unfold.
I was in a hotel a couple of months ago where I was told when I checked in that I had a choice of a smoking or a nonsmoking room. I know, I know: why this option still exists continues to mystify.

I tell the front desk I would like a nonsmoking room.

This is no rates-by-the-hour motel. This is a decent high-rise hotel overlooking spectacular scenery — a gorgeous site patronized by people who can afford the extra bucks to stay there.

Once I’m in my room, I spot this table tent atop the TV. What the table tent is, is the hotel’s version of that lecture you got years ago (remember?) when you were dragged kicking and screaming into the principal’s office for chewing gum in class. It’s what I’m going to start calling the Or Else syndrome of hospitality management. Or Else is when a hotel (or restaurant or any other service constituent) challenges guests with absolute policies they perceive as threats.

“"We ask you NOT to smoke in this room,” screams the table tent. “If smoking takes place, $200 will be charged to defray our costs for scrubbing walls and furnishings, shampooing the carpet, and dry cleaning drapes and bedspreads.”

I’m a pretty calm guy under normal circumstances, but this, I realize, is no idle threat. This hotel means business. I check the room for cigarette smoke sensors, for mini-cams that will record every move I make. I look for traps: a book of matches, perhaps an ashtray. Maybe the hotel wants me to smoke. What if the party that occupied my room that just checked out indulged in a smoking orgy? I shudder at the thought. I’m concerned that I may be charged for the “damages.” I rush down to the lobby, intent on switching to a smoking room. The lobby lounge is packed with guests, many of whom are smoking. Employees there are shampooing carpets, scrubbing walls, cleaning drapes. It is a veritable agitation of cleaning.

“I’d like to switch to a smoking room.” Very well, says the manager, but there will be an added charge of $200 to defray blah, blah, blah …

Now, don’t get me wrong: hotels and restaurants are within their rights to protect their properties and bottom lines. It’s the way they go about it that disturbs me.

Here’s one more Or Else stipulation, relatively harmless: it’s a waiver I’m asked to sign as I check into this resort hotel in Orlando where rack rates are rather excessive: “I have requested weekday delivery of USA Today. If refused, a credit of 50 cents will be applied to my room account.”

Come again? What the heck; I sign. I also take the time to remind the front desk that I have with me my own soap, shampoo, conditioner, bubble bath, mouthwash, shoehorn, Kleenex, shower cap, and bathrobe, and would management be so kind as to remove those amenities from my bathroom and credit my account?

Notice that in neither of those demands are the words “please” or “thank you,” as in “Please do not smoke in this room” or “Thank you for not smoking.”

Other Or Else demands border on the absurd; most misfire, triggering confusion, anxiety, and apprehension that often lead to confrontation. Here are a few:

- No shirt, No Shoes, No Service.
- Desserts May Not Be Shared.
- Two Drink Minimum.
- Valet Parking Only.
- Tie and Jacket Required: No Exceptions.
- We Reserve the Right to Refuse Service to Anyone.
- A 20 Percent Service Charge Will Be Added to Parties of Six or More.
- Cash Only; No Credit Cards.
- Bread and Butter Charge: $3.
- No Split Orders.

I’m not about to quarrel with a hotel’s commandments. I will, however, quarrel with the way I’m told about them. Most are communicated absolutely, implying not only no room for argument but some sort of punishment if I violate any of them.

My wife and I are at a hotel restaurant where I order a piece of pie. She asks for a teeny bite. I point to The Commandment on the menu: Desserts May Not Be Shared: No Split Orders. “Oh, come on,” she says, “nobody’s watching.” I give her a teeny bite. The waiter shoots her.

“Industry Insights” is a featured column in Premier. A member of the college’s National Advisory Board, Michaelides is a freelance writer, speaker, and food service consultant.
“UNLV was constantly recommended by several of my mother’s hotelier friends as one of the finest hotel schools in the world. I explored the UNLV website to source for international student application details and, to my delight, saw a link that read, ‘UNLV’s first international campus in Singapore.’”

Samantha Gwee, a native of Singapore, has always enjoyed meeting new people and exposing herself to different cultures. “These are exhilarating experiences to me,” she says. Such a preoccupation instinctively drew her to the world of hospitality, where her desire for interaction with others could be satisfied.

However, few universities that offer hospitality programs exist in Singapore. “The best way to pursue a hospitality degree for me was to explore overseas educational institutions,” says Gwee. “UNLV was constantly recommended by several of my mother’s hotelier friends as one of the finest hotel schools in the world. I explored the UNLV website to source for international student application details and, to my delight, saw a link that read, ‘UNLV’s first international campus in Singapore.’”

She believes her education with UNLV offered in Singapore will allow her to graduate one year earlier — perfect timing to ride the thriving tourism tide. “It’s been one year since I’ve enrolled in UNLV Singapore; the novelty, however, has hardly worn thin. In fact, it just gets more exciting.”

She already has a head start on her hospitality career, having worked as a waitress for a local restaurant chain and an assistant trainee at Raffles Hotel. She has also served as a banquet waitress at the Shangri-La Hotel. She hopes to begin her post-educational career working for a luxurious hotel chain and one day open her own successful restaurant chain.

Gwee relates a story of a classmate aptly exclaiming, “The world is our oyster!” in an enthused conversation about future careers. “All of us here at UNLV Singapore have much to look forward to when we graduate. Indeed, the plethora of opportunities that await us is almost unimaginable.”
“The college continues to evolve as a world-class international hospitality program, and so has the level of support provided by alumni and friends. These years of interacting with alumni and donors has made clear that there is a strong network of caring, enthusiastic, loyal friends who believe in the strategic goals and growth of the college.”

“There is nothing permanent except change” was once said by the ancient philosopher Heraclitus of Greece. As important friends to the college, I want you to know about some great changes taking place in the college’s alumni relations program.

In 2002, I joined the UNLV College of Hotel Administration as the first full-time alumni director to develop programs and communications to better serve you, our alumni and friends. Our vision was to create a model alumni program which would provide opportunities for industry networking, volunteering, professional development, communication, and social interaction among alumni. Today, as I complete my sixth year in the alumni relations position, it is gratifying to know that thousands of alumni have become further connected to the college through the alumni relations program.

The college continues to evolve as a world-class international hospitality program, and so has the level of support provided by alumni and friends. These years of interacting with alumni and donors has made clear that there is a strong network of caring, enthusiastic, loyal friends who believe in the strategic goals and growth of the college. Thanks to you’re your investment in UNLV, we are confident that this world-class hospitality program will shape the future of the hospitality industry as we know it.

I was recently selected as the college’s new director of external relations, which allows me to further build community partnerships and support for the college. Responsible for fundraising and development efforts, I am focused on identifying financial and in-kind gift support which provides the margin of excellence necessary to afford our outstanding students with the best hospitality education possible.

To fill the alumni relations position, we set out to find the absolute best candidate possible. I am thrilled to announce that alumna Robyn Hadden, ’05 M.S., has been appointed to serve as the new director of alumni and college relations. She has extensive hospitality experience in event and entertainment management and catering sales. Robyn previously served as the events manager for the UNLV Foundation and she looks forward to the opportunity to meet all of our wonderful alumni and friends!

I appreciate all of you who help to strengthen the reputation of UNLV throughout the world by representing the college well. I look forward to working with you in my new role. Feel free to contact me at Judy.Nagai@UNLV.edu or 702-895-2934 or Robyn at Robyn.Hadden@unlv.edu, 702-895-3148.

Best wishes,

Judy Nagai

Judy Nagai
Director of External Relations
Since he was a child, Professor Ken Teeters has had a serious passion for environmentalism. “Not just the hippie stuff,” he explains, “but I really want to utilize what nature has given us before we waste more.” He continues, “Sometimes, in certain company, I feel like the lone voice when I talk about the environment.”

An emerging trend for American society — as well as for the hospitality industry — is the concept of adopting sustainable practices in how we live our personal lives and conduct business. The reality of waste and an overconsuming use of the earth’s resources are not areas where America has provided global leadership, at least not yet. Teeters asks, “Can we change? Change always comes with the acknowledgment that our common interests are best served when we contemplate the future results of our current actions.”

Teeters believes that higher-education institutions are “anchor institutions” that must lead the way in the construction of experiential learning. “Sustainability is about the responsible usage of all natural resources,” he says. “Practicing the three E’s of Environment, Economics, and Equity is known to be an essential priority for any process to be sustainable. As faculty members, do we provide leadership in sustainable thinking and action?”

Idealism, a wonderful human attribute, is often associated with academia, but don’t tell Teeters that we only dream such thoughts and that they are not to be taken seriously. Conceptual thinking and business strategies were well-honed skills that he learned from his dual careers of engineering (research and design in America’s aerospace industry), which was subsequently followed by an additional 25 years of managing, constructing, and refurbishing hospitality buildings.

Ten years ago, Teeters decided to design and build a new residence at an Alpine elevation of 8,000 feet located on Mount Charleston, just outside Las Vegas. He and his wife, Nancy, had purchased the land in 1973 and wanted to get their plans “just right” before undertaking such a large commitment. A key element of importance for the ambitious undertaking was to address the challenge of quality of life and sustainable long-term usefulness. To accomplish these tasks, he decided to both design and build his residence, thus fulfilling the triple roles of architect/engineer, general contractor/construction manager, and entrepreneur.
The construction industry shares the distinction with academia of being highly specialized in its areas of competency,” notes Teeters. He says that sustainable building practice requires systems thinking during the design phase, the best use of available technology/cost-effectiveness, learning from nature and using natural principles, interconnections between nature and human needs, and accepting personal responsibility and empowerment for the need to think holistically between the present and the future.

“The initial phase of our house required two years of study and planning prior to the beginning of the construction phase,” says Teeters. “Construction began during 1999’s spring break. Fifteen additional months of construction were required to complete the residence and receive the necessary building department’s certificate of occupancy.”

The highly upgraded custom residence, located 200 feet from the edge of Toiyabe National Forest, was made affordable and sustainable by engaging in “outside the box” conceptualization, planning, and a lot of hard but rewarding physical labor. As the saying goes, “Success is its own reward.” The high-tech sustainable-living residence was completed at a lower cost per square foot than a typical tract home and uses one-third of the energy per square foot of a conventionally built home.

“All technologies included in the home are of the most advanced types and range from high-efficiency heating equipment, passive solar design, natural lighting, and water-efficient plumbing fixtures.

“The residence was designed for longevity of 100-plus years and will produce energy savings for its occupants that will be far in excess of the initial cost of the residence,” says Teeters. “We chose a building lot that had an excellent south/southeast solar exposure so we could design an efficient passive solar ‘building envelope’ that would lead to long-term energy savings.” In addition, he also wanted the house to “fit” into the natural setting of the mountain topography.

Teeters purchased used building materials from a local demolition contractor and was able to purchase those materials for 10 cents on the dollar. “By applying the concepts of reducing, reusing, and recycling, this house utilizes a number of products that were salvaged from hotels on the Las Vegas Strip. We reused some leaded glass accent panels that are from the previous Claudine’s restaurant at Harrah’s and a beautiful wooden oven hood from another Las Vegas-area restaurant.”

The house has no air conditioner (a rarity in the Las Vegas area) and uses ceiling fans as well as a passive cooling system (thermo-siphoning) that lets the natural current flow through the home. Inside the living room, there is a heat-recovery mechanism that allows duct systems on either side of the floor-to-ceiling fireplace to recirculate heat throughout the house. The 16-inch-thick earth-bermed basement walls are insulated inside and out, providing maximum energy efficiency.

“We built this house in the same manner you’d build a house that is suitable for a climate such as Alaska,” Teeters explains. “By using commercial-grade materials, all aspects of the structure were designed and constructed to exceed building requirements for heavy snow-loaded buildings and maximum energy efficiency.”

Beginning in the year 2010, Teeters plans to perform an additional sustainability conversion that will use photo-voltaic panels to provide renewable energy. The goal of applying photo-voltaic panels will be to supply 100 percent of the energy needed to operate the residence and also produce the electricity to provide a fuel source for the new plug-in hybrid electric vehicle he plans to purchase. The Teeters’ new paradigm is to obtain and maintain a “carbon-neutral” lifestyle that includes both quality of life and sustainability.

As for the mass home-building industry, green building is finally catching on in Las Vegas and other areas of the country. While the trend has been popular in the custom-home market, more builders are becoming comfortable with green building techniques and materials. Currently, the Southern Nevada Green Building Partnership is seeing the first midpriced certified green homes being constructed in select new housing developments.

What does “green” mean when applied to mass-produced homes? The requirements include things that Teeters has been doing for years, utilizing a detailed waste management plan to reduce the amount of raw materials used and discarded during the construction process: The homes must be at least 15 percent more energy-efficient than the current international conservation code or local energy code, whichever is more stringent; the builder must use recycled construction materials; front- and backyards must be desert-friendly; and the homes must use materials that minimize indoor pollutants and include ventilation systems to manage air pollutants.

In many states, green-built residences have become part of the new trend toward sustainable communities and include a total-community approach. However, in Southern Nevada’s Green Building Partnership, the energy-efficiency certification is based on a house-by-house evaluation, whereas sustainably planned communities include the entire planned neighborhood development.

Many construction companies are just beginning to instill green building practices and dwellings designed for sustainable lifestyles. As an early adopter, Teeters has demonstrated his commitment to green principles and the importance of resource preservation by “walking the talk” as he pursued his dream of a world yet to be.
Seeing Green at the Hotel Developers Conference

Industry leaders make the Business Case for Combining Sustainability and Hospitality

Gian Galassi, ’97  Photo by Marsh Starks

Hotel developers and operators know they can’t effectively discuss the costs, benefits, or challenges of any product or service before first understanding the consumer demand for it. That’s why Michelle Millar, a doctoral student in the hotel management program at UNLV, has set out to better understand and measure the demand for “green” amenities in the hospitality industry – a growing movement among consumers that many believe is already shaping the way that hotels operate.

Millar was one of more than 350 participants to attend the two-day “Green” Hotel Developers Conference in March, co-sponsored by UNLV and the Global Hospitality Group of the L.A.-based law firm of Jeffers, Mangels, Butler and Marmoro (JMBM). Millar used the conference as an opportunity to gather critical information for her dissertation, which focuses on the kinds of products that hotel guests want in a green hotel room.

“It seems that a lot of people in the industry are so focused on the cost and development of these properties, that nobody is taking the time to understand the basic demand for green hotels,” says Millar, who distributed a survey she developed about the demand for green amenities to conference participants. “I learned that we still need to educate people from all aspects of the hospitality industry that this green movement can work without sacrificing service, quality, or even without spending a lot of money.”

There were plenty of other participants on hand who could one day benefit from Millar’s research, including industry experts from some of the top hospitality brands in the world, including Marriott International, Hilton Hotels, Fairmont Hotels and Resorts, and MGM Mirage, whose 76-acre multi-use development “City Center” is on-track to become one of the largest LEED certified (Leadership in Energy and Environment Design) properties in the world.

Hospitality conferences have typically only offered cursory coverage of sustainability issues, but the UNLV/JMBM conference went well beyond that, with panel discussions ranging from topics like financing and valuation to government regulation and public incentives. Harrah Hotel College advisory board members John Sweeney and Russ Dazzio, ’72, who also helped coordinate the conference, gave compelling presentations on the impact that green practices have on mixed use development and guest buying decisions.

Stuart Mann, dean of the College of Hotel Administration, and Jim Butler, chairman of JMBM’s Global Hospitality Group, recognized the need for such a conference and teamed up to offer the most far-reaching hospitality conference ever devoted solely to green hotel development, renovation and operations. “We worked closely with JMBM to establish a new platform for the conference that would not only spark discussions about sustainability, but that also would examine how best to implement cutting edge innovations and solutions in the hospitality industry,” says Mann. “UNLV was proud to be the signature sponsor of this conference.”

Dan Esty, director of the Center for Law and Environmental Policy at Yale University, and Tom Paladino, president of Paladino & Company and a recognized leader in the green building industry, each gave keynote speeches about how leading-edge companies have successfully incorporated sustainability into their core business strategies.

“Government regulations, compelling economics and practical realities are propelling the hotel industry into being green,” says Jim Butler. “It was time to move past the basics into advanced Gen-2 education so that the industry can implement green technologies into the building, renovation and operations of hotels.”

Millar could not agree more. She believes, along with her professors at UNLV, that understanding the greening of the industry will give herself and fellow UNLV students a competitive advantage when they enter the job market.

“Knowing that there are ways and means for a company to reduce its impact on the environment is knowledge that all students can take into their jobs, regardless of the industry they go into” Millar says. “We really are in a position to initiate change, or at the very least initiate new ideas for generations that follow.”
Q&A with Jung-Ho Suh

Judy Nagai
Photos Courtesy of Ambassador Hotel Group

Proud alumnus Jung-Ho Suh attended UNLV in the early 80s and completed his hotel administration bachelor’s degree in 1982. He then remained in Las Vegas to complete his MBA in 1983. He has had a very successful career in Korea and Premier wanted to learn more about him.

The Chairman of the Ambassador Hotel Group in Korea, he has worked in a variety of roles with the company since 1988. Ambassador hotels are located in the business corners of Seoul. In the North (Sofitel Ambassador Seoul), South (Novotel Ambassador Gangnam), West of the river (Novotel Ambassador Doksan), by COEX, the World Trade Center (Ibis Ambassador Seoul) and center of Seoul (Ibis Ambassador Myeong-dong).

An involved community member, Chairman Suh served as the Vice Chairman of the Korea Hotel Association, received the “Legion d’Honneur” from the French Government in 2000, and in 2004 received an honorary doctorate degree from the Graduate School of Business Administration at Sejong University in Korea.

How did you choose to attend UNLV for your hospitality degree?

It was an easy choice, really. It had both the academic reputation and the location. Its hospitality program is probably the world’s best. And Las Vegas, as one of the world’s biggest tourist cities, has such a concentration of hotels, casinos, and shows — just about everything the entertainment industry has to offer. As someone who comes from a family of hoteliers, it was important for me to get both academic learning and real experience. So it was an obvious choice for me, but also the perfect one.

What was it like to be an international student?

It was quite challenging, especially the first year. There was the obvious language barrier and cultural difference. And I was much older than other students, 24 or 25, because at that time in Korea, we had to finish military service before going abroad to study. As a foreign student, I had to study extra hard just to keep up, so I spent most of my weekdays in the library, which left little time for me to hang out with other students.

But all in all, it was an eye-opening experience. I could see that despite the liberal atmosphere, rules were kept, responsibilities were met, and there was always consideration for others. I could see how America came to be such a melting pot, by embracing differences, embracing others for what they are.

What is your favorite memory of being a student at UNLV?

When I was there, 1978–83, the UNLV Runnin’ Rebels were NCAA top 10. Some of their games were broadcast on one of the three network channels, and the whole campus would be in a frenzy. I often went to root for them too, which was a great way to relieve stress. I still remember poor Jerry Tarkanian nervously gnawing on his handkerchief. Let me just note my contribution here: in all the games I attended, we won!

And being in the middle of Las Vegas, there was always great food and great shows going on. Even on weekdays when we tired of studying, we would go to one of the buffets — at 1:00 in the morning! And we would always come back $20 shorter than we intended, because we just had to drop by the casino.

Tell us about your internship experience.

At that time, 800 hours of work experience was a requirement for graduation. I interned for the Circus Circus Las Vegas during my junior year in the front office department. I also manned the reception desk from time to time. But what was more valuable for me was my work experience during my stay in Las Vegas. I come from a family of hotel owners, and for any hotel at that time in Korea, the French restaurant was critical to its reputation. So I had this mission from my family to learn everything I could about running a French restaurant. I started out as a busboy, even worked at valet parking, but it was very hard to get a job inside the restaurant. Finally, this guy Andre, the chef-owner of the famous Andre’s Restaurant, was kind enough to give me a chance to work in his kitchen and hall.

I could see that the kitchen had a very strong discipline and hierarchy. Everyone
— everything — had an order. I must say it was truly an irreplaceable experience for me, learning about a French restaurant inside and out. Not just about how to run it and manage it, but also about the behavior and psychology of the employees. As a hotel manager, that really helps. I’ve been meaning to thank Andre for his kindness ever since. I hope I will get that chance soon.

**Was your internship and work experience useful?**

To be a leader, you must be an expert. You must be aware of everything that goes on on the ground, what discourages or motivates the employees. That is why the internship was very important for me. Not only was it a chance to learn about the fundamentals, but also to live and breathe together with other staff members from the entry level.

I believe there are five important benefits to be gained from an internship: (1) expertise in your chosen field; (2) problem-solving skills; (3) how to motivate the employees; (4) communication skills; and (5) teamwork.

Especially for hotel management, an internship is important because it lets you test what you learn in school, see if it works or doesn’t, and make necessary adjustments. For me, it was tremendously helpful later on as a manager in understanding the employees’ mindset and everything else that goes on.

**How has what you learned at UNLV furthered your career?**

I would say what I learned at UNLV are the general qualities of being a hotel manager. And that obviously helped me do my job better.

I probably had an advantage over other students in that I knew exactly what I wanted. Some may think of hotel work as a bridge to something else, but for me, I knew it was going to be a lifetime career. And I was ready for it. I knew what I needed to improve, and I sought to learn the things that I knew would help me improve.

More specifically, at UNLV, I acquired a structured set of knowledge about the different functions of hotel operations. And I also learned the importance of creativity, which is necessary for generating new products and services that keep you ahead of the group.

**What was your favorite class?**

A front office management class by Dean Jerry Vallen.

**What advice would you give to students or young employees who are interested in following a career path similar to yours?**

I would tell them, “Know what you want. Know your dream, your vision. Have a clear sense of purpose.” Find something that you can fully give of yourself. Because then you can find the work that you truly like, truly enjoy, and from such joy comes passion.

Try to picture yourself 10 years from now. What do you want to be, what are you aiming for? To reach your goal, I would say three things are important: experience, experience, experience. Experience whatever you can — people or work — everything that life has to offer.

Then you will know nothing is impossible. Because everything there
was done by people. It was done by others like you. The hard time you’re having today is the groundwork for a better tomorrow. There’s a Chinese saying, “Out of bitterness comes sweetness.” It’s worth remembering.

More specifically, in this global age, language skills are very important. For all aspiring hoteliers anywhere in the world, learning one or two foreign languages will open up entirely new opportunities.

And you must be an expert in a narrower field. “You want F&B? Go to so-and-so.” And that means you must never cease to update yourself — your information, your knowledge. Make learning your lifetime friend.

And, finally, learn finance. It is a must for any business leader, no ifs or buts. And you must learn to differentiate yourself. Give them a reason to pick you over the other guy.

What is your favorite position held in the industry during your career?

Hotel management is often compared to total art. A general manager is like the maestro of an orchestra, the director of total art. For me, the GM was a tremendously rewarding position because you get to coordinate the different sections while getting the most out of each. You have to find ways to improve overall productivity while not losing sight of the importance of each function and ultimately provide a complete package of services. When you find that right balance, hit that mark, it gives you such a sense of fulfillment. And, of course, if you generate profit for the hotel, all the better!

Where do you see the hospitality industry going in the next 10 or 20 years? What big changes do you think are in store? How can today’s students be prepared for those changes?

The hotel industry is going through fast changes, mostly thanks to technology. The future of any hotel would depend on how fast and how well they adapt to such change. I believe there is more competition to come in terms of finding the business model that can fulfill the different needs of customers. And as you can see, there are now alternative products, such as serviced residence, which means we have to redefine what exactly is a hotel, what are its services.

Geographically, I see the hotel industry moving east. We commonly call the hotel business a 21st-century industry. As income gets higher, more people want to travel. So, overall, the future bodes well for our industry. And one of the future markets is in Asia. China and India have a big potential for future development of the hotel industry, probably as much as America, if not more. It will be a great opportunity for hoteliers throughout the world. Even now, you see Las Vegas hotel chains moving into Macao, because Macao is already another world’s biggest casino city.

In terms of challenges, for any business, the challenge is to sustain growth. A typical hotel will see its revenue peak four to five years after opening. Because you are sitting on limited land, you can grow only so much up to a certain point. The challenge is to ensure growth thereafter. To do that, you have to find new growth drivers, create new business trends, and quickly shift to new business models whenever necessary.

And all this will require talented people, of course. We need to have the right people, with flexibility and adaptability, as well as expert knowledge and experience in the industry. For any hotel, it is important to find them, train them, and retain them. For students, this is good news because it means there will be more opportunities.

To be the talent coveted by the industry, you need to have a broad and deep understanding of different cultures and the ability to adapt as needed. And you need to have the passion, sense of challenge, and perseverance to pursue your dream, no matter what. Last, you need to have the passion for learning — to ceaselessly acquire new knowledge and skills and apply them appropriately.

When was the last time you visited Las Vegas? How has the city grown and changed over the years, and what do you think of all the changes since you lived in Las Vegas?

I graduated in 1983, went back in 1995, and then again in 2005. There is a saying in Korea: “Ten years change rivers and mountains.” It pretty much sums up my impression. It seemed as if a new city has sprung up!

Looking around the city after 10 and 20 years, I thought that this was possible only in America. This is the strength that drives America: The creativity backed by capital and high technology — this is what puts it beyond anybody’s reach.

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The Sweet Allure of Chocolate

Robyn Campbell-Ouchida, ‘00 MA

Chocolate can be associated with pure unadulterated pleasure. The good news is that with each delicious bite, there are proven health benefits to consuming this fine confection.

A Healthy Heart

It has been reported that a substance in cocoa helps the body process nitric oxide, a compound critical for healthy blood flow and blood pressure¹. Another study showed that flavonols in cocoa prevent fat-like substances in the bloodstream from oxidizing and clogging the arteries, and make blood platelets less likely to stick together and cause clots². Still, others are convinced that eating dark chocolate in moderation may help to lower high blood pressure³.

Trends in Chocolate

After the Olmec Indians of South America discovered chocolate 3,000 years ago, it was the Mayan culture who documented their use of it. Not until 1849 were the first chocolate bars sold at a fair in Birmingham, England, and the first chocolate bars were available in the United States around 1900.

Since then, the use of chocolate has become a culinary necessity. Gary Brandt, ’96, ’99 MS, a pastry chef, should know. As someone who has worked at Caesars Palace, the Excalibur, and the Frontier Hotel, he is up on trends when it comes to the world of chocolate. “It used to be when someone wanted something chocolate, they were looking for rich, heavy concoctions. Then it went into more of nouveau cuisine – little delicate pieces. People still want chocolate but they now want the lighter, types of desserts, like mousse,” he explains.

He also noted that consumers are looking for something different in the chocolate — unique tastes, combinations blended with liqueurs, flavors, colors. “I’ve been in Las Vegas since the mid-1980s and I think some of these trends are partially a result of top name restaurants and chefs coming into town,” says Brant. “A lot of the changes are based on diet — more sugar-free chocolates are coming into style, even though they are a little more expensive.”

In terms of trends, Brant believes “chocolatiering is becoming a lost art.” says Gary Brant. “Many people think that it takes too much time and effort to do it the right way, which is sad. Many commercial bakers have switched to using mainly coating chocolate and not having to learn the temperates.”

But chocolate is still chocolate. Consumers can’t seem to get enough of it with new brands and varieties popping up in retail stores and are featured on the most decadent of dessert menus. So, eat your heart out and treasure every delicious bite!

¹ www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2007/02.22/01-cocoa.html
² www.webmd.com/heart-disease/news/20060118/...?page=2
³ www.webmd.com/diet/news/20030827/dark-chocolate-is-healthy-chocolate
Close collaboration between educators and representatives of the resort industry has enabled the William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration to flourish over the years in the “living laboratory” of Las Vegas. In the mid-1960s, Nevada Southern’s Division of Business began offering a few classes in hotel administration. University officials hired a consultant, Howard Meek, retired dean of Cornell University’s hotel school, to develop a similar program, and he brought in Jerome J. Vallen, a Cornell graduate with extensive experience in hotel management.

Establishing the College
Initially funded by the Nevada Resort Association, the hotel program began with 16 students in 1967, with Vallen serving as director. A year later, 120 students were enrolled, and the program became a department. By 1969, the program’s growth led to the establishment of the College of Hotel Administration, offering a bachelor’s degree, and in 1975, Vallen became dean.

Over the years, Vallen was pivotal in developing the college’s national reputation, raising funds, and enhancing the curriculum.

Building Bridges to the Industry
In the late 1980s, the college created departments — food and beverage management, tourism and convention
administration, and hotel management — and added a master’s degree, a hospitality research and development center to build more bridges to the industry, and an office of external affairs for fundraising and outreach. At the end of the decade, the Holiday Corporation and William Harrah’s widow donated $5 million to the college, which was then renamed the William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration in honor of the legendary northern Nevada casino owner.

In 1989, after 22 years of service to the university, Vallen stepped down, remaining on the faculty to pursue teaching and research. Under his successor, David J. Christianson, the college soon added a doctoral program and created the International Gaming Institute, a source of information and training for the gaming industry. A donation of more than $6 million from Stan Fulton, chairman of Anchor Gaming, led to the construction of a building in his name, complete with conference rooms, food and beverage facilities, and a gaming laboratory.

Continued Growth
Arriving in 1998, the current dean, Stuart H. Mann, has overseen the college’s continued growth, with almost 2,500 students from 42 states and 39 countries enrolled in various undergraduate and graduate programs such as lodging, food and beverage, meetings and
events, recreation, professional golf, and gaming management.

The dual Master of Business Administration/ Master of Science in hotel administration program is designed for students who aspire to become business leaders in hotel administration. An executive online program enables industry professionals to pursue a Master of Hospitality Administration at their own pace. A doctorate in hotel administration is aimed at students who want to teach hospitality management at the university level. In 2006, the college began offering its bachelor’s degree program in hospitality management in Singapore, the university’s first international campus.

Generous Donors
The college has benefited greatly from generous donors over the years. Nine hotel college donors belong to UNLV’s Palladium Society for contributions of more than $1 million: the Ace Denken Company, which donated $2 million in 1992 to establish a doctoral program and create a research chair; Sam and Mary Boyd and their son, Bill, the builders of Boyd Gaming; Stan Fulton; Verna Harrah; Harrah’s Entertainment; International Game Technology; and Southern Wine & Spirits of Nevada.

Looking Ahead
Plans are now under way for INNovation UNLV — comprising an on-campus hotel; restaurant; and related retail, conference center, and academic building — which will allow students and faculty to design, direct, and participate in advanced industry research.

In the years ahead, the college will continue to pursue its mission: to ignite the passion of its faculty and students for learning, discovery, and change in an ethical and collaborative environment that results in quality research, educational innovation, and meaningful service to its constituents.

Deans
1967 — Jerome J. Vallen, director and dean (1975)
1989 — David J. Christianson
1998 — Stuart H. Mann

In 2005, Jerry and Flossie Vallen published The Right Place: UNLV College of Hotel Administration, An Anecdotal History. This book describes how the school grew from its infancy in the ’60s to the world-class and internationally renowned program it is today. For information on purchasing this book, please contact Gina Agrellas, 702-895-0570, or Giorgina.Agrellas@UNLV.edu.

Happy 40th

Memories from the Guys
Who Took a Chance on NSU (Now UNLV)

When Jerry Vallen came to Nevada Southern University (NSU), he knew that one challenge facing hospitality students who completed course work at other schools was that their credits didn’t easily transfer to other hospitality programs. To recruit talented hospitality students, NSU accepted their transfer credits. Given Vallen’s ties to the East Coast schools, NSU had an influx of New Yorkers as several of the first students to enroll during the 1967–68 academic year.

Roger P. Wagner, ’69

There was very little mention of casino operations in the infancy period of the new hotel school at NSU. Jerry Vallen came on to sophisticate the new college — and, of course, the rest is history. The UNLV Hotel College is now one of the “leading edge” schools of its type in the world.

Roger P. Wagner, ’69
“Our first students were prized; they were so few in number. But each brought industry experience and junior college credit, so we didn’t need to coddle them. They adapted quickly, found jobs, and contributed to the school’s reputation and growth. Growth, because they carried the experience back to their home schools, and others followed. In the early years, the college had a minuscule percentage of the student body and nearly 100 percent of the out-of-state attendees. This was the impetus for successfully suing the university to allow the out-of-state students to become residents for tuition purposes.”

Jerome Vallen, Founding Dean

Although I didn’t know much about hotels when I first arrived at NSU, I was hired as the graveyard front desk clerk for the new Dunes Hotel Tower expansion. I loved the work, the excitement of the industry. So when the hotel school opened up, I enrolled. I was in the top five or six in my class. Then again, there were only five or six people in my graduating class!

Roger P. Wagner, ’69

As a kid born in Montana, I never would have dreamed of having as much fun as I have had. Since my first job at the Dunes, the hotel industry is the only career I have known. I have worked for the old bosses of gaming in the ’60s like Sid Wyman and Carl Cohen. In the ’70s, I worked for the pioneer companies in gaming, which included Howard Hughes, Del Webb, and MGM Corporations. I moved to Atlantic City in 1983 and had an exciting experience working for Donald Trump as his “apprentice-executive.” And, most recently, I have had the best career experience of my life, working with Jack Binion.

Roger P. Wagner, ’69

I interviewed with Hilton Hotels, and the interview went well until the man said I could come on board but that I would probably be drafted [for the Vietnam War]. That is when I decided to continue my education and get a four-year degree. I’ve often said that war got a lot of people educated!

Bill Sanderson, ’69

It rained on the first day of class, and in minutes, the water was over our ankles. Everything we learned at State University of New York about making a profit was so different in Las Vegas due to the casinos, which gave guests free rooms and food in order to get people to gamble. I was president of the first UNLV Hotelman’s Association — meetings were held in my apartment. Jerry attended those meetings.

Paul Kelly, ’69

We (known as the “New York boys” — Bill Paulos, Bill Sanderson, Larry Griewisch, and John Porter) stood out on campus because we had “East Coast” accents and wore penny loafers with no socks (an East Coast college trend). At NSU, all the other students were wearing tennis shoes with white socks. Soon the other students began to wear penny loafers with no socks.

John E. Porter, ’69
As one of the few female hotel presidents on the iconic Las Vegas Strip, Cynthia Kiser Murphey has her finger on the pulse of Las Vegas hospitality. The Harrah Hotel College Alumna of the Year was recently named the president and chief operating officer of New York-New York Hotel & Casino. She credits the college for jump-starting her successful career.

“My studies at UNLV provided a great foundation of knowledge and prepared me for what to expect in the hospitality industry,” she says. “Working in Las
Vegas for some of the largest and best hotels in the world has been a very interesting and challenging experience, and UNLV knows this city best."

She especially enjoyed her relationship with Dean Jerry Vallen, one that continues today. "Dean Vallen was absolutely the best at getting exposure for his students in the industry."

Vallen remembers Kiser Murphey attending student get-togethers at his and wife Flossie's home. "Cindy was the first woman president of the Hotel Association and was very self-confident," he says. "Her leadership made the club a major force on campus in those years, and during her time in office, many special campus events were initiated. She was a capable and pleasant young woman and has obviously moved the same way in her career as she did when she was a student."

Having completed her internship at the Las Vegas Hilton, Kiser Murphey touts the college's extensive internship program, saying, "It provides hands-on, practical experience relevant to the hospitality industry and provides real-world insights, which is a major strength of UNLV."

She also believes that students need to take advantage of every opportunity to get practical, hands-on industry experience and exposure. "Get involved in any opening of a hotel, restaurant, club, or venue that you can," she says. "You will learn much faster when you are part of an opening team!"

Kiser Murphey believes that in order to be successful, you must focus on building relationships with integrity - a principle she extends not only to her job, but to all parts of her life. "Be the kind of person who others want to work with and follow," she says. "Pursue your career with enthusiasm, energy and a positive, open outlook and be open to change. Never forget your foundation of family and friends."

One such friend and former fellow student is Jim Rafferty '78. "It was an act of fate that I met Cindy," he says. "I had moved to Las Vegas in 1976 with a group of guys from New York, and Cindy and her friends just happened to live in the apartment above us. We all formed a close bond, and my admiration for her started growing."

In addition to serving with her in the Hotel Association, Rafferty and Kiser Murphey worked together in personnel at Summa Corporation after graduating. He went on to say, "I've always been astounded by her energy — she has the energy of five people! She is such a positive force, and she brings that to the environments she works in. She developed a lot of programs and events at UNLV that are still alive today.

"If anyone is deserving of this honor, it’s Cindy. She’s one of those people who always pushes others forward, and it’s time she was recognized herself."

Kiser Murphey joined MGM MIRAGE in 1989 and served on the human resources opening team for The Mirage before joining the MGM Grand Las Vegas opening team in 1992. Her leadership was instrumental in the creation of an in-house corporate university and an on-site child development center as well as the design of an extensive benefits program.

An active member of the Southern Nevada community, she is also involved in a number of charitable and professional organizations and was previously named "Executive of the Year" by Human Resources Executive magazine. She has served as co-chair of the Health Services Coalition of Southern Nevada, a trustee for the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union Health and Welfare Fund, and on the state of Nevada Governor's Commission on Medical Education, Research and Training.

"Each year, the hotel college’s Alumni Board of Directors is charged with selecting an alumna or alumnus of the year," says Alumni Board Chair Christine Kiely. "The board carefully considers nominees based on a number of factors, including leadership, achievement in their career and service to the industry, as well as support of the College of Hotel Administration, to name just a few.

"Cindy is a stellar representative of all alumni with her many career accomplishments in the field of human resources with MGM MIRAGE and now as the new president of New York-New York Hotel & Casino," continues Kiely. "Her success and support of UNLV serve as a model for our students, and we are proud to honor her as the college’s Alumna of the Year."
For UNLV’s executive chef John Gremo, ’02, family ties have been at the center of his success in the culinary arts. “In my hometown, there were a number of Italian families present,” Gremo recalls. “When I was young, my father and I cooked together a lot. I would roll meatballs and prepare homemade sausages.”

With a home life rooted in cooking and cuisine, it was no surprise that Gremo aspired to a career in culinary arts. Growing up in Worcester, Mass., his Italian family taught him the initial hard work that comes with running a catering business. In 1988, he graduated with a culinary arts degree from Newbury College in Boston and soon after looked to Las Vegas for continued education in the field.

“I came to UNLV because it has the best reputation in the world when it comes to management programs,” Gremo says. “We have the best programs in place so that you learn more about the industry.”

For Gremo, he got that confirmation early on when UNLV professors took him under their wings to see him learn and grow. “Dr. Bell and Chef Lambertz were great mentors for me,” he says.

While working on his degree in hotel administration, Gremo had several internships with the college and with restaurants around the Las Vegas area. But it was those connections he made at UNLV that drew him back to work on campus.

Through his closely established relationships with members of the Harrah Hotel College, Gremo secured the position as executive chef for the newly constructed Stan Fulton Building. His team, as well as his colleagues on campus, has become a second family.

After a recent event for the president of the university and his 30 or so guests, Gremo looked at his student apprentices with parental pride.

“Thank you, guys, for all your work today, and I’ll see you early tomorrow,” he bellowed in his signature Boston accent and demeanor.

According to Gremo, it is only with a great staff that you can keep the kitchen running smoothly. With his staff of students and a sous chef, Gremo feels at ease with his competent and dependable team. “You find the best workers here,” he says.

Not to say that Gremo hasn’t experienced his share of pandemonium.

“In the industry, we call it controlled chaos,” he says. “Here we may have two events back to back, and you must be able to multitask and prep your kitchen and staff. I start two days ahead!”

And when it comes to working with Chef Gremo, nothing but the best is expected — another characteristic telling of his East Coast upbringing and his West Coast hospitality training.

“We have a very casual atmosphere here, but there is nothing I would tell my staff to do that I haven’t done myself,” says Gremo. “I’ve worked it all. I’ve been a dishwasher, line
Pan Seared Sea Bass with Caper Truffle Beurre Blanc

8 oz. sea bass
1 oz. extra virgin olive oil
8 oz. butter
2 oz. all purpose flour
2 oz. vinegar
4 oz. white wine
1 oz. capers and juice
1 ea. lemon
½ oz. black or white truffles (diced)
1 shallot (minced)
1 clove garlic (minced)
4 oz. heavy cream
Salt and pepper (to taste)

In large sauté pan, add oil and 1 oz. butter; pan should be very hot. Add seasoning to sea bass and flour, then dredge bass in flour. Pan sear on both sides until golden; take out of pan and set aside.

For sauce: Add shallot and garlic to previously used sauté pan, keeping the heat on high. Shallot and garlic should brown. Deglaze with wine, then reduce heat and add vinegar; reduce to a syrup or until no liquid is left. Add lemon juice and whip butter in sauce gradually until smooth. Add cream, capers, lemon, and truffles. Finish sauce with chopped parsley.

To plate: Top with sauce, drizzle a little white truffle oil, and add crispy sweet potato chips for garnish.

Enjoy!

Are you a chef interested in being featured “In the Kitchen?” Send a message to Gian.Galassi@unlv.edu.

For Gremo, his experiences here at UNLV have made him a lifelong Rebel.

“I came to UNLV to pursue a college degree,” he says. “And who would’ve known that it would come out to be like a family. I have really made a family here.”

Gremo has no reservations regarding his future with the hotel college. “I would like to pursue a master’s degree in hotel administration, but right now I look forward to the school’s development of INNovation UNLV. Hopefully I can be part of that staff.”

Chef John Gremo can be reached via e-mail at john.gremo@unlv.edu.

cook, sous chef, and now an executive chef.”

Having climbed that ladder in the kitchen, Gremo admits that the experience has helped him build a signature style. “I love working with fresh produce, fresh meats, native fishes, and local products,” he says. “I take that personal touch with me to this kitchen.” Gremo shares one of his favorite recipes for this article.

As UNLV’s executive chef, Gremo and his staff see a variety of events at the Stan Fulton Building because it is open to the public as well as the university for use. “We’ve catered for the Board of Regents, the university president, weddings, themed parties, and anniversaries.”
A Rebel Becomes One

Professor Carola Raab’s Journey from East Berlin to Beam Hall

Robyn Campbell-Ouchida, ’00 MA
Photo by Geri Kodey, ’85
You may have taken a class from her or heard her stilted Germanic accent from down the hall, but few people know the real saga behind Carola Raab’s road to UNLV. Her story is colored with events that would fill the pages of a post-Cold War spy novel, but to her it is her life, her journey...definitely not an easy one, but one full of mystery, hardship, and ultimately, a lot of self-determination.

Growing up in East Germany during the height of Communism, Raab and her family were, like so many others, prevented by the regime from leaving the country. They were encircled by the infamous Berlin Wall, suspicious “comrads” and others who lived beneath the country’s iron grip. While both of her parents were highly educated (her mother had a Ph.D. in mathematics and father a Ph.D. in physics), she wasn’t interested in attending a university. “I guess that was my rebellious stage,” she recalls.

“So I decided to go to a hotel school in Berlin, which led to a job in East Germany’s version of the White House. I was a server at state banquets and even served the president on occasion. It was enjoyable but my goal was to get out of East Germany someday, hopefully sooner than later.”

Raab knew that beyond the Wall, another world existed with more opportunity. “I could watch West German television so I knew there was more out there. When I had a chance to escape by using someone else’s passport, I jumped on it,” she remembers. “My parents didn’t know I was planning on leaving and I was young and never thought about the consequences my actions could bring.”

Little did she know that her escape meant that her mother would be followed by secret security officials (the Stasi) for ten years, who, in addition to wanting her mother to work for them, were also trying to discover Raab’s whereabouts. “I feel lucky that I got out but I was truly penniless,” she says. “I worked in restaurants to make a living and looked into the university system. However, the university system in Germany is not as flexible as its American counterpart — students must attend full-time and it is a very competitive atmosphere. I wasn’t ready for it.”

“I had an uncle who had immigrated to Canada and I decided to do the same,” says Raab. “I knew I couldn’t go back and see my parents or I would be put in jail. It was very sad because I learned that my father had passed away and I was unable to attend his funeral.” (Over the years, she was able to see her mother a few times; her mother continues to live in East Germany today.)

After relocating to Canada, Raab did what she knew best — worked in restaurants and as an assistant bar manager in a hotel. She began dating a Chinese man and the two of them eventually opened a restaurant in an old Catholic school building.

on an Indian reservation near Edmonton. “We had the restaurant together for ten years. During the day, we ran the restaurant and at night, we both attended the University of Alberta. Each summer we would close the restaurant for six weeks.

“During one of these vacation breaks, we came to Las Vegas and while on a bus tour, heard the tour guide mention that we were passing the ‘famous hotel school’ at UNLV.” Raab and her boyfriend were intrigued by the idea of going to school there and later that day, visited the campus. “We met with then Dean David Christianson and asked if we could attend part-time in the summer when our restaurant was closed,” she says. “He said he hadn’t ever considered something like that but why not?”

Thus, Raab’s relationship with UNLV began when she started attending classes in the summer of 1987. “I kept going back to Alberta after that, still attending the university there and running the restaurant, and finally graduated from UNLV in 1993.”

“I loved coming to UNLV every summer,” says Raab. “I really looked forward to it and felt like coming here was for fun.” Eventually, her boyfriend was offered a job in Hong Kong and they decided to break up. “I went back to Canada and ran the restaurant by myself for one more year, then everything started falling apart in that old building. I decided to move to Las Vegas and get an MBA from UNLV.”

The restaurant in Canada is now run by her ex-boyfriend’s nephew. In addition to focusing on a Las Vegas restaurant for her dissertation, Raab also used examples from her experience in the Canadian restaurant. “The restaurant is still very profitable because the overhead is so low,” she explains.

After earning her MBA, she worked as a controller for a restaurant chain before deciding to return to school and get her Ph.D. “I chose UNLV over Cornell because I knew I loved the environment there,” she says. “After I finished that degree, I taught at Hong Kong’s Chinese University and then at the University of New Hampshire.”

Raab just couldn’t stay away from UNLV though and returned to the campus in 2005. “It must have been fate because I met my husband here,” she says. In 2005, she married writer and professor Douglas Unger, co-founder of UNLV’s top-ten ranked creative writing program. “At this university, we have really good professors and a great office staff too. UNLV just keeps growing and improving — if you want to be a professor in a hospitality school, why not here?”

Although her life has taken her literally around the world, Raab is happiest right here in Las Vegas. Her future hopes include conducting more research and combining the results with academics. “I never really planned anything in my life,” she says. “I truly believe things happen that are meant to.”
The New Method of Vacation Home Ownership

Robyn Campbell-Ouchida, '00 MA  Photo by Marsh Starks

What could be better than owning a luxury vacation home at a world-class resort and receiving rent revenue when you’re not using it? More and more, people are finding out, as condo/hotels are the newest trend in vacation home ownership. Industry statistics suggest that there could be between 40,000 and 90,000 new condo/hotel units coming to market by 2008¹. These units sell at a higher price per square-foot multiple than a traditional condo and are typically smaller. Many people are purchasing them as investments. They’re not your typical vacation homes — they are fabulously furnished condominium suites in some of the most famous resorts around the world. Las Vegas has been a leader in this trend.

With this type of ownership situation, owners have the option of putting their units into the hotel’s rental program when they are not using them. The program is very attractive in that they actually do own the property and can receive income from it. While the developer does not guarantee the rental of the unit, by capitalizing on a hotel’s name recognition, owners usually receive a higher level of rental income than they would from a traditional vacation home.

Condo/hotels are marketed as a lifestyle choice for the baby boomer generation. Many people in this age group are looking for second homes yet don’t want all the responsibility of them when they are not nearby. In comparison with a time-share situation, where you “own” a certain block of time, condo/hotel units are available to owners when they want, based on the managing company’s regulations. While time shares have been growing in popularity since the 1960s, condo/hotels are a relatively new entrant into the real estate and hospitality markets.

“The jury’s still out on the probable success of condo/hotels. They are basically a way to get hotels financed in a tight market,” says John Sweeney, chairman and CEO of Global Resorts International. “The condo sales provide a revenue stream and help the company raise the capital to finance the hotel. These projects still need a solid hospitality operation to stand on their own and make sense.”

More than 3 million households own time shares in the United States, and condo/hotels are hoping for a similar success story. And it’s not just Americans in on this trend — 6.7 million people worldwide now own vacation intervals (people purchase the right to use an interval at a resort for a specific number of years) at 5,400 resorts in more than 200 countries and territories.
What are the major differences between a time share participant and a condo/hotel owner? “People who go after time shares are usually the actual users of the venues, while condo/hotel owners are looking for investments,” says Sweeney.

“The draw to hotels is that when these units are rented out, customers get part of the money and the hotel is getting free rooms,” says Professor Robert Woods. “It’s a great idea for hotels. It’s also not a new idea — similar concepts have been developed about every 20 to 30 years.”

While there are (at press time) approximately six condo/hotels under construction in the Las Vegas area, the Platinum Hotel and Spa was the first to open with this ownership system. All units feature full kitchens with stainless steel appliances, washers/dryers, plasma TVs, fireplaces, outdoor balconies, and living areas. There also are a fitness studio and pool available on the property as well as a spa. As one of the smaller properties in Las Vegas, there are only 255 units.

The Platinum is advertised as a hotel, and when guests check in, they won’t know any difference. “There is daily maid service, just like a hotel,” says Debbie Grigas, owner relations representative for the property. “We are a nonsmoking, nongaming property, which makes us a little different from most of Las Vegas, but this is what our guests are looking for.”

Dennis Gradillas, ’91, is the director of the rooms division at the Platinum in Las Vegas. In this position, he is responsible for the housekeeping department, public areas, front desk, PBX/room reservations, bell desk/valet, concierge, and VIP services. Previously in a similar position at the Hard Rock Hotel in Las Vegas, he has learned the intricacies of working for a condo/hotel as opposed to a regular hotel.

“While guests won’t notice the difference, for me it’s very different,” says Gradillas. “Because the owners are responsible for their own units, we have to track the costs of repairs and maintenance and make sure they are accounted for properly by the owners.”

Because the Platinum is not licensed with the county as a residential hotel, owners are able to reside in their respective units for only 29 continuous days. “At that point, they are able to check out and back in if need be,” says Grigas. “Our occupancy is between 75 and 80 percent on average.”

Owners can opt not to put their units into the rental rotation as well, but in the Platinum’s first year of operation, “only two owners chose not to go into the rental program,” says Grigas. “Everyone has seemed to be very pleased with the way the program works.”

The majority of the Platinum’s owners are from California, Nevada, and the Chicago area. The units are most often bought as investment properties, and nearly half of the owners reside in Nevada.

Why has this become such a popular investment trend? According to Gradillas, “There are two reasons. First of all, two years ago when these properties were becoming hot, real estate appreciation was a good way to invest, and second, people like the idea of investing in something that will pay its own mortgage. That’s why so many Nevadans bought them instead of buying them as getaways for themselves.”

According to Woods, “Vacation ownership is a popular trend for a number of reasons. First, the aging baby boom population is interested in investments that also provide vacations. Second, that same population is interested in second homes. And third, up until the current mortgage crisis, there was availability of easy money for mortgages. The fourth reason is that people believe that they will make money on their investments.”

What makes the Platinum work as a condo/hotel? “I think it’s because they got out in front of everybody,” says Gradillas. “All these developers were talking about doing this, but they actually went ahead and did it. The timing, the strength of the market behind it, and the fact that this property is managed by a sound, conservative company — Marcus Hotels — made people comfortable.”

While it’s too soon to know how condo/hotels will do in the Las Vegas market, Sweeney says time shares do well in this vacation hot spot. “They keep growing and — with so many large, well-known hotel companies in the business, including Hilton, Marriott, Starwood, Four Seasons, and Ritz-Carlton — provide a residual ricochet impact. People identify with these brands and want to be part of them.”

One Las Vegan who has gotten into the condo/hotel trend is Palms owner George Maloof, ’88. “We felt a demand from the people who want to be a part of the Palms experience,” he explains. “We came up with the concept for Palms Place and were really pleased with the phenomenal response from the public. I think part of our appeal is that we are not on the Strip yet are close enough that owners feel they are amongst it without having to deal with the traffic and other hassles it can bring.”

Maloof goes on to say, “I look at this new trend as being part of being involved in Las Vegas. I think that what’s already in the ground is how it’s going to be for a while. People are going for familiar brands, and developers with experience will proceed with their projects and do well. It’s a great way for someone to say they own a place in Vegas.”

Time shares and condo/hotels are an undeniable part of today’s hospitality industry. Therefore, students in the Harrah Hotel College are learning about this topic as part of their studies. “We discuss condo/hotels at some length in two classes, HMD 240 (Introduction to the Timeshare Industry) and HMD 440 (Strategic Management in the Timeshare Industry),” says Woods. “Students get a pretty good dose of condo/ hotel. While these projects are a reasonably small segment of hospitality today, they are really a combination of hospitality (hotel part) and real estate (condo part). This subject should also be discussed in accounting, finance, and marketing classes.”
UNLV Singapore, as UNLV’s first overseas campus, continues its pioneering status in its outreach to international students. While the sterling reputation of the main campus is still its biggest drawing card, UNLV Singapore has found that the intense competition of other universities requires some publicity about the excellence of our programs. This includes attending overseas recruitment fairs to educate potential students — and in Asia, more importantly, to educate their parents about the advantages of attending UNLV Singapore's Hospitality Program.

Dean Andy Nazarechuk, referred to affectionately by his students as Dr. Andy, welcomes the opportunity to let Asia know about our program. “Other American and Australian universities have entire departments with full-time staff dedicated to recruitment, but at UNLV we are used to letting our reputation speak for itself. However, in Asia, the reality is that many potential students don’t know about UNLV, and with professional training schools popping up like weeds throughout the region in anticipation of the influx of international tourism, we realized that we had better get out there and let people know about our program.”

Dr. Andy’s answer to the “professional recruiters” is both unique and daring: student ambassadors! Students enrolled in the program compete for the opportunity to attend the overseas recruitment fairs to tell potential students and their parents about UNLV’s Singapore campus. This gives current students the chance to travel and answer questions about what they are learning in our program.

“So far, about 20 student ambassadors have been chosen to represent UNLV Singapore at education fairs in Malaysia, Indonesia, South Korea, China, Thailand, India, and Vietnam,” says Clare Ng, director of admissions and UNLV alumna. “Competition to be a student ambassador is high, and it gives the students great experience that will be helpful in their future careers as hospitality managers.”

Ng further states, “Other universities hire professionals to go to these fairs, but we think that using our own students helps future students feel comfortable asking questions.”

The student ambassadors share this opinion. Richmond Kok, who will graduate in December 2008 and is one of the first students to fill the role of student ambassador, says, “I believe that potential students definitely benefited more from student ambassadors in understanding our campus life since we are students ourselves.”

Hwang Shu Ying, also scheduled to graduate at the end of 2008, concurs, “I think, in general, potential students find it more valuable to talk to a student because we can provide firsthand information and personal experiences in the school, which a university representative cannot do.”

The experience is not just about selling the program. Tjie Siew comments, “When you speak with enthusiasm, it encourages others to join the program. Being future leaders in the hospitality industry, it makes sense for us to learn how to help people of different cultures and backgrounds.”

It has been a memorable experience for every participant. “The fair was a good experience as I got to interact with a lot of different people. I also got to learn more about our program, about UNLV, and about service,” says Deborah Sim, who plans to graduate in 2009.

Future class of 2008 member Jacques Chua agrees, saying, “It was a valuable experience as it allowed me to acquire new knowledge. I felt that as a student representative, I was able to relate to potential students’ needs and their concerns in terms of study environment, study scope, and workload.”

Would they like to be student ambassadors for UNLV Singapore again? The answer: a unanimous YES!
UNLV Alumna Bethany Souza, ‘93, has parlayed her hospitality education into one as a successful reality TV personality on HGTV’s “Designed to Sell” in Chicago. But it doesn’t stop there—as a multi-tasking, career-focused super-mom of a seven-year old, she’s an expert real estate agent, inn owner, manager of a design firm, and runs an executive corporate housing company. It’s all in a day’s work.

Here, Souza reflects on her career and UNLV influences that have helped her get where she is today.

Why UNLV?

After earning my first hospitality degree from Johnson & Wales University, I wanted to further my education in the industry. I narrowed it down to the (then) top four hotel schools in the nation (Cornell, Purdue, Michigan State, and UNLV). UNLV was the first school I toured and I knew immediately it was where I was going to attend. The program was so diverse and the opportunity for real industry experience was untouchable by any other school. The fact that there was 360 days of sunshine and a basketball team that was headed for a championship was purely icing on the cake.

Hospitality Meets Real Estate

I was approached by a recruiter for a large investment real estate firm that was looking for young executives for
their mentoring program. I was torn about leaving the hospitality industry but ultimately very excited about this new opportunity.

I first began selling apartment buildings and really enjoyed it, but it really bothered me that my new career had no relation to my education and years of hospitality experience. When I heard that someone in our company had just listed a “hotel” for sale, my wheels started turning and I wanted to find out how I could join the hospitality division. It turned out there wasn’t such a division as that was the first hotel listing for the company. The company was young and growing and the founders were open to the idea of building a new division. Myself and two senior brokers began cold-calling hotels across California looking to meet with the owners to discuss their interest in selling. It was so exciting to find how receptive hotel owners were to speak with me because I had graduated from UNLV and had actually worked in the industry. I was getting more appointments than my senior mentors because of the instant rapport which stemmed from the hospitality background I had been afraid wouldn’t be utilized.

The Glass Pool Inn—Sold!

When I started at UNLV, Steve Wynn was just building The Mirage. When I left Las Vegas, Excalibur was being built and was considered to be on the far edge of the Strip. Just a stone’s throw further south sat the most classic of all classic LV hotels, The Glass Pool Inn (which ironically was originally named the “Mirage” until Mr. Wynn himself sat down face to face with the owner to buy the name). In real estate the most important thing is not the name, but location. And that’s what put me face to face with the owner who had built the hotel in the late fifties. The Glass Pool Inn was situated across from the (then soon to open) Mandalay Bay Resort and was contiguous to vacant airport land that was coming up for auction, making it an integral piece in future Strip development. Built as a tourist attraction with an above-ground swimming pool with huge glass viewing windows, the Inn sat on 1.48 acres of land, had 27 rooms, and a poolside lounge complete with shag carpet. A comparable property of size and condition located anywhere else would have been worth far less than $500,000. But because of its prime location, I sold it (close to a decade ago) for $5.5 million (which at the time was one of the highest prices ever paid per square foot on the Las Vegas Strip). I credit the fact that I was a UNLV alumn was what got me that first appointment. It turned out the owner’s daughter was also a student.

A Star is Born

“Designed to Sell” was originally shot only in Los Angeles. When the show became one of the top ranked programs on HGTV, they needed to produce more episodes from other cities. They had an open call audition for real estate professionals in Chicago and after several callbacks I was offered the job. We are now in the middle of taping our third season in Chicago and I love every moment of it!

A Vegas Moment on “Designed to Sell”

“Designed to Sell” is categorized as “reality TV,” meaning it is unscripted and quite candid. As the real estate expert, it is my job to walk through the home and point out (with as much sass as possible) all the things that need to be changed in order for the home to sell for top dollar. One of my favorite episodes links back to my first year at UNLV when I worked at Caesars Palace. The homeowner had these white vertical blinds which were edged in gold and cut at an angle at the bottom.

My first reaction was that they looked exactly like the gladiator costumes at Caesars Palace. I thought for sure that my comments would be lost in translation and edited out, but they ended up as using it for a theme throughout that show. It’s fun to put a personal spin on things and have your friends that “understand it further” get an extra laugh.

Influences of TV on Career & Life

The show is wonderful for business. It seems silly but by being recognized from TV, people tend to trust you more — it gives you validation, much like a degree does. Outside of “Designed to Sell,” I own an inn, manage a design firm, and run a company that provides executive corporate housing and second home management.

Connecting with long lost friends is one of the best perks of being on TV. I’m actually hoping this article will help me reconnect with some old UNLV pals.

Words of Wisdom

I often recall a story Dr. Simon Crawford Welch told us about a restaurant he owned in Australia and how a couple dining there had a horrible experience. Instead of simply comping the dinner and letting them leave with a bad memory, he told them if they returned the next night he would comp BOTH nights’ dinner. He knew if they walked out upset, the potential for bad press could cost the restaurant much more than the cost of the free dinners. The couple returned, had a wonderful time, and got to see his restaurant for all the wonderful things it really was. The lesson was that in business you need to actively view problems as opportunities. Word of mouth will make or break you. Often life and business can seem like one challenge after another — if you go about things with a solution-oriented mindset, you will be amazed how problems can turn into positive opportunities.

Give Thanks

It’s extremely important to give back to anything that once gifted you and as a graduate there is no better way to say thank you than by supporting your school. UNLV gave me an amazing education to build a career upon and has opened many doors. I hope to one day be able to fully give back as much.

Bethany can be reached by visiting her website www.bethanysouza.tv.
“Don’t have a cornea!” my friend exclaimed, sending me sprawling into peals of laughter. “Don’t you mean coronary?” I asked, pausing for breath. “Oh, oh yeah.” I still laugh every time I remember that conversation. My friend’s foible resulted in nothing more than a bruised ego, but the stakes are often much higher.

**Mend your speech a little, lest you mar your fortunes.**

— Shakespeare

Language is the window through which we present ourselves to a foreign world. In his book *Me Talk Pretty One Day*, David Sedaris humorously describes the bias encountered by those with poor speech habits. “Whereas those around me might grow up to be lawyers or movie stars, my only option was to take a vow of silence and become a monk.”

The inability to communicate clearly causes people to appear sloppy or uneducated. It also suggests deeper shortcomings: Foundations such as upbringing, interests, and personality are called into question. If you suffer from “harbor tunnel syndrome,” “postmortem depression,” or “migrating headaches” you may also have a case of “wrong-worditis.” Symptoms include using terms such as “windshield factor,” “notary republic,” “Heineken maneuver,” “Islamic pentameter,” and “for all intensive purposes.” Left untreated, “wrong-worditis” will metastasize, leaving lost opportunities in its wake.

Despair not! With early and repeated use of the following remedies, even the worst offenders can attain a level of efficiency, effectiveness, and persuasiveness.

**Seek first to understand, then to be understood.**

— Stephen R. Covey

Listening is crucial to productive communication. Often people are overly concerned with expressing their ideas and neglect giving equal time to others. Conversation is not just about one idea; it’s about two people coming together and each bringing out more than one half.

In *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Dale Carnegie observes, “Listening is one of the highest compliments we can give.” He also suggests that to be interesting, we must be interested. “Ask questions people enjoy answering. Encourage them to talk about themselves and their accomplishments.” Be genuine, truly listen, and remember what makes this individual tick.

**Action speaks louder than words but not nearly as often.**

— Mark Twain

Although speech is the most obvious way of communicating, body language also has a voice. In fact, a study by linguists V. Fromkin and J. Rodman found that up to 90 percent of a message is transmitted nonverbally. Given the importance of communication in business, it is imperative to consider both verbal and nonverbal messages. A conversation devoid of movement gives the impression of stiffness, inflexibility, and distance. Conversely, hurried frenetic movement labels the speaker as
The following behaviors all contribute to the total message:

1. **Hand gestures** are used to emphasize or illustrate important points. They also express passion and emotional attachment to the subject matter.

2. **Head nodding** regulates and maintains the flow of conversation.

3. **Postural changes**, such as leaning forward, express interest.

4. **Facial expressions** display a range of genuine emotions critical to charisma.

5. **A firm and deliberate handshake** suggests confidence and stability.

6. **Eye contact** demonstrates respect and interest. When meeting multiple persons, shift the gaze occasionally to ensure that all are included in the conversation.

7. **Appearance**: You are what you wear. Much is inferred by grooming and dress.

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**There must be no arbitrariness in what is said. This matters above everything.**

— Confucius

Meandering dialogue does not accomplish results. Frequently recall the purpose for the communication. Reduce tangents, poor word choice, bragging, and rambling. Give forethought to interviews, reviews, negotiations, speeches, presentations, and everyday conversations.

Deleted movie scenes provide an interesting illustration. Such scenes elaborate on the back story, flesh out characters, and often contain some hard-to-achieve shot or beautifully acted moment that the director is loath to strike. These scenes eventually end up on the cutting-room floor because they fail to advance the story and, thus, bog it down. Similarly, if ideas, points, and stories don’t strengthen the purpose, they will instead detract from it. Deliver information in concise, clear terms. Determine the core message, and eliminate everything that doesn’t reinforce it.

**Be a craftsman in speech that thou mayest be strong, for one’s strength is of the tongue.**

— Maxims of Ptahhotep

The English language is always evolving, but recent trends have some scholars worried. In the 1950s, the average American teenager had a 25,000-word vocabulary. The intervening 50 years have witnessed its decline to 10,000 words! Three out of every five words have disappeared from our collective language capacity.

Widespread popular entertainment brings a unity of cultural reference to our society, along with a plentitude of simple catchphrases, making it unnecessary to create original sentences.

Although slang has always been part of speech, slang as expressive shorthand has become more prevalent. “Cool” is positive, “bummer” is negative, and “whatever” is indifferent. We have lost our proverbial scalpel and replaced it with a broadsword.

English is a rich language; take advantage of the many words that exist to convey precisely what is intended.

Several methods help in learning correct usage and new terms:

1. **Read more.** Keep a list of unknown words, look them up, and practice using them.

2. **Use the dictionary and thesaurus** often. From the Latin word meaning treasure, a thesaurus provides a treasure trove of possibilities.

3. **Play word games** such as Scrabble, Boggle, Balderdash, or Text Twist.

4. **Be alert** and don’t be afraid to ask questions about word usage.

The goal is not to show off with words most people don’t understand. That, too, impedes communication as it separates people from fully understanding and respecting each other. The purpose is to build a more precise word toolbox and use it wisely.

**By a factor of three, what you say is not nearly as important as how it makes people feel.**

— Seth Godin

The Italian proverb advises, “You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar!” For persons seeking honey, Carnegie adds: “If you want to gather honey, don’t kick over the beehive!”

A chief goal in interpersonal communication is to minimize offensive edicts that breed defensive reactions. Defensive reactions stifle communication. The statement “You need to move your car!” is sufficient for law enforcement, but for the hospitality industry, it comes off as rather inhospitable. It’s the old form vs. function dichotomy. The content may be adequate, but the presentation is lacking.

The Internet social networking company Friendster turned an abrupt but factually correct message (“Error: You’ve been logged off due to inactivity”) into a thoughtful favor: “Sorry! We thought you left, so we closed your Friendster session for your security/privacy. Please log in again!” By making this simple change, Friendster has embraced what social networking is all about. Use of diplomacy and respect for others in every conversation will prove that a little bit of honey soothes even the stickiest of situations.

**Speech is a mirror of the soul: as man speaks, so he is.**

— Publilius Syrus

Knowing how to communicate effectively will place you in a position to improve your fortunes. More importantly, improved communication will positively affect your biggest assets — the relationships cultivated with others.

Roy Jones ’04 is the director of rooms for the BlueWater Resort & Casino in Parker, Ariz. His work has previously been published in Hospitality Executive magazine and Indian Gaming magazine.
Las Vegas’ Skyline Just Keeps On Growing…

But what about the challenges of human resources in these properties?

Robyn Campbell-Ouchida, ’00 MA

Photo by Marsh Starks
With the phenomenal tourism growth continuing in Las Vegas, it makes one wonder where all the employees come from each time a new hotel/casino/resort opens. There are estimates that in the next 10 years, there will be a need for 100,000 workers. If that sounds amazing, just listen to this — there will be more than 50,000 job openings on the Las Vegas Strip in just the next three years.

In the past, nearly 7,000 people were moving into the Southern Nevada valley almost every month, so finding employees wasn’t too hard. However, now with the mortgage crisis and other economic failures in America, many gaming corporations are looking outside the city, even internationally and in struggling American markets.

Chris Cappas is vice president of employment & training for Harrah’s Las Vegas. “We do not necessarily look for individuals with a casino background for most of our positions,” she says. “We look for employees with customer service experience even if it is in a different industry. We will all be faced with some huge challenges to overcome in the next few years. The key will also be employee engagement and retaining our key employees.”

Cappas went on to say that although a college degree is not necessary to work in an entry-level or customer service position, having one “will usually open the door to future career advancement and usually will allow someone to climb the career ladder much quicker.” She continues, “The degree may be in a completely different field, but at least a degree suggests the person is goal-oriented and can persevere through a project.”

According to the November 2007 issue of Casino Connection, as the “industry undergoes considerable growth, competition for top-tier employees has forced various operators to step up their recruitment and retention efforts. With a number of large-scale projects, like MGM Mirage’s CityCenter and Boyd Gaming’s Echelon, and smaller (if only in comparison with those megaresorts) projects, like Las Vegas Sands’ Palazzo and Wynn Resorts’ Encore, coming online at the end of this year, that competition is only going to increase.”

Here it is a few months later, and The Palazzo’s opening has come and gone. “We hired nearly 4,000 team members to open the Palazzo,” says Don Merritt, the resort’s director of training and development. “Some of these team members transferred from The Venetian, and the majority were already living in Southern Nevada.

“It’s an ongoing challenge to keep team members motivated,” he continues. “Everyone is always at their best when a property opens, but that excellence has to be sustained and built upon so guests continue to have the best experience possible. We offer a variety of training and recognition programs for our team members so that they will want to stay with us. Training and education are so important in supporting a culture of ‘Unmatched Guest Service.’”

To that end, The Venetian and The Palazzo focus on what they call the “Exceptional Work Environment.” “This is all about how the company can support, nurture, and best communicate with our team members,” says Merritt. “If team members feel respected and that they are treated with dignity, they’ll go home from work feeling good about what they did. That’s something we spend a lot of time on. When our team members feel good about themselves and how they are being treated, it translates to a very positive experience for our guests. We have to be able to attract employees from other upper-scale, five-star-oriented properties. As the world’s largest AAA Five Diamond resort, it’s crucial that our guests feel special in every interaction they have with our team members.”

Cass Palmer is the chief human resources officer for The Olympia Group, whose subsidiaries and related entities include the Southern Highlands master-planned community and some real estate and mixed-use projects in Las Vegas. “We’re working the numbers now to see how many employees we will need to hire for the Southern Highlands Casino Resort, which is scheduled to open in late 2010,” says Palmer. “I’m an advocate for college education and believe it prepares individuals with a more well-founded basis to compete. But I also know that many gaming employees continually try to move up to the next tier of resorts. For example, a “mom and pop” company always loses employees when a “Tier B” casino opens, and likewise, the “Tier A” properties lose out to “Tier A” ones. It’s an upward-migration pattern where people are looking to better their lot in life.

“For example, if someone has been working a swing or graveyard shift, they will often move properties to obtain a day shift. However, the reason you don’t see mass numbers moving is because seniority pays off and employees are happy.”

What about the lore of the Las Vegas “openers?” In the past, these were
people who “jumped” to a new property every time one opened. “I think that this still happens with tipped positions to some degree,” says Merritt. “But I don’t think with the higher level of properties opening that you are going to see as much of the ‘jump’ mentality. People don’t want to put their families through the hassle of COBRA insurance, waiting to re-earn their vacation time, shift schedules, etc. … There are a lot more personal lifestyle considerations, and if they’re already working for a top-notch operator and are happy and taken care of, why would they look elsewhere?”

Palmer states that there are five main qualities employers look for: (1) communication skills, (2) problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, (3) professionalism, (4) teamwork, and (5) organizational skills. “All five competencies clearly are what colleges are teaching,” he says. “It has been shown that an applicant who can effectively communicate will be hired four times faster than one who can’t. Isn’t that a great case for education?”

As a member of UNLV’s Career Advisory Council and the chair of the Governor’s Workforce Investment Committee, Palmer has seen a lot of recruitment efforts. “The big difference between a UNLV hotel graduate and one from somewhere else is that the UNLV one is acclimated to our 24/7 lifestyle and has usually had experience in the field, making him more realistic of expectations. I have seen a high burnout rate of out-of-town applicants, even those with a college education.”

It makes sense that operators are scrutinizing new ways to fill open positions in an increasingly tight job market. “We have employed individuals with degrees who have little or no experience in the area in which they have been hired — where traditionally the industry has been known to hire individuals based upon experience in the industry,” says Cappas. “Having a degree allows you the flexibility to have multiple careers within the same company. For example, I have a bachelor’s degree in home economics and have had four different positions within nine years with Harrah’s Entertainment, and none of them have had anything to do with my degree.

“I think 20 years ago, it was the perception that you could make a great living here without attending college, but over time, that perception has changed. More and more, high school graduates know that a college degree is important and valued for moving up in the casino industry,” says Cappas.

She went on to say that “so many times, a high school graduate is looking for instant gratification. They hear ‘through the grapevine’ that you can make $70,000 parking cars or over $100,000 as a banquet server. The truth is that you can’t just walk in off the street and obtain one of those positions immediately. Yes, the money is there — however, to really be in the high-paying-tip jobs, it takes seniority, years of experience, and luck.

“Many of these people start off as a steady-extra (no guarantee of hours, no benefits, no set schedule) and work their way up to a full-time position. For many tipped positions, the busiest days are the weekend hours, so those would not be preferred days off. It may take years to gain seniority by working undesirable hours and days off to reap the rewards. Also, as you grow older, the physical toll it takes on your body isn’t easy either.”

Merritt agrees, saying, “Many employees have seen what they could do if they had a degree and after years in a job that is physically demanding, decide to go back for one to help them with their long-term career.” Like many other gaming companies, The Palazzo offers a tuition-reimbursement program to its Team members, and the response has been impressive.

“We’ve advertised the program through our internal communication process, and many team members have taken night and weekend courses,” says Merritt. “Of course, they also have ‘flex time’ so they are able to take courses they especially are interested in even if they conflict with their work schedule.”

When asked about how students can best prepare for the onslaught of new jobs in new resorts, Cappas says, “I think having a college education is the most important part, not necessarily focusing on the major. Students should get experience with a summer job, a part-time position during the school year, or an internship. The students need to get real-life work experience so they can be on the same playing field in the interview process. There is a lot of competition, and students need to make sure they are always the ‘best’ candidate in the interview process.”

On March 2, 2008, the Las Vegas Review-Journal reported on the Nevada job market in an article titled “Strip boom, job seeker’s boon.” According to this article, the state Department of Employment, Training & Rehabilitation, said, “A developing megaresort boom, coupled with a likely improvement in the housing sector, will push Nevada’s job growth to 5.1 percent in the third quarter of 2010. That’ll be up from 1.4 percent in 2007 and 4.7 percent in 2006, though not as high as 2005’s 6.3 percent.

The department’s analysis is limited to statewide numbers, so it doesn’t offer a separate forecast for the Las Vegas area or Clark County. However, it’s still good news for those who will be looking for a position come 2010. How can students best prepare for a position in one of the new megaresorts?

“Hospitality needs to be thought of in terms of a global perception — that we all make a difference, from the housekeeper all the way to top management,” says Merritt. “Those of us in the hospitality human resources field need to help people understand that we’re here to serve and that we want to create the best possible experience for the guest. What can we do every day to make our environment exceptional for our guests and for our team members? That’s one of the most important questions.”
In 2002, the Hotel College established a Professional Golf Management (PGM) program accredited by the Professional Golfers’ Association (PGA) of America. Since its inception, the PGM program has been training young men and women to become leaders in the golf industry while receiving PGA membership through their education at UNLV. The Las Vegas golf community has embraced the program, and UNLV PGM students are becoming regarded as important contributing members.

The fall semester of 2007 was especially exciting for the PGM students, as it provided ample opportunities for the young professionals to contribute their time and expertise to local efforts. Early in the semester, a group of students volunteered for the Play Golf America Day, a PGA growth of the game initiative hosted at Stallion Mountain Golf Club. The students put their PGA training to use and assisted in the instruction of dozens of beginning golfers. Mike Davis, master PGA professional and PGA chapter president, commented that the students were vital in the success of the event.

As the semester progressed, the PGM program continued to serve the community by providing students to assist in events, including the PGA Tour frys.com Open held at TPC Summerlin, the UNLV Women’s Golf Collegiate Showdown held at Angel Park, the Member/Guest Golf Tournament at TPC Summerlin, the New Vista Community Fundraiser at Red Rock Country Club, the Thunderball Long Drive Contest at Las Vegas National, and the largest demo day in the Western states, called Club Fest at Silver Stone Golf Club.

The PGM program continued its three-year relationship with Par for the Cure, a breast cancer research foundation. The Par for the Cure Celebrity Classic Golf Tournament held this year at Lake Las Vegas Resort was supported by UNLV PGM students. In addition to assisting in the tournament operations, the PGM Student Association ambitiously raised $4,500 to donate to the foundation. The students are passionate about their involvement with Par for the Cure every year, and this year was no exception.

In a final volunteer effort, the PGM students used the experience they gained throughout the semester’s volunteer efforts to help benefit their new academic department at UNLV. They helped organize and run the inaugural Recreation and Sport Management Fundraiser Golf Tournament, held November 19 at TPC Summerlin. The PGA of America was extremely generous in sending Rick Martino, the PGA’s director of instruction, to the tournament to hold a seminar and workshop for all participants in the tournament. Martino served as an invaluable addition to the event, as his seminar provided a learning experience for all participants in the tournament. Martino’s involvement helped grow the field to more than a hundred participants, an impressive accomplishment for any first-year event. Students in the UNLV Professional Golf Management program have risen to meet the needs of their community, and they will continue contributing their time and effort for years to come. The next time you walk into a Las Vegas-area golf shop, take a minute to ask about UNLV PGM, because it’s very possible you’ll be talking to a member of this prestigious program.

For information regarding this Recreation and Sport Management Department Fundraiser Golf Tournament, to be held November 17 at TPC Summerlin, please contact Chris Cain at 702-895-2932 or christopher.cain@unlv.edu.
In the increasingly busy world in which we live, all too often stress gets the best of us. Between running to endless meetings and appointments, surviving on caffeine, skipping meals, working out, and participating in social activities, it’s getting harder and harder to be healthy, from both a physical and a mental standpoint. Thus, last year’s opening of the new Student Recreation and Wellness Center (SRWC), a 184,000-square-foot facility, was met with a lot of excitement. Students would now be able to learn about healthy options and get exercise while socializing with others.

In addition to having state-of-the-art gym equipment and workout facilities, the SRWC provides many extras that may not immediately come to mind as important parts of a college facility. For example, the Wellness Center taps into the latest trends in health and wellness to provide students a wealth of opportunities to address their overall well-being. This includes a pharmacy, student health center, Rebel Wellness Zone, and student counseling and psychological services. Available to students who have paid the student health fee, these services allow students to receive important information and medical assessments without leaving campus.

The recreation and fitness aspect of the SRWC offers a cardio theater, an indoor jogging track, a lap pool as well as a spa and leisure pool, a relaxation room, multipurpose activity courts, a four-court gym, circuit training programs and free weights, and the Balance Café and juice bar. In addition to the “do-it-yourself” workout options, a variety of classes and programs are offered, including yoga, indoor cycling, Pilates, and kickboxing.

The SRWC is also home to the Jean Nidetch Women’s Center, Outdoor Adventures, and Intramural Sports. A number of students studying in the college’s Recreation and Sport Management program are employed by the SRWC, where they are learning not just fitness but, as some would say, “skills for life.” Dan Gosserand and Susy Sandoval, both scheduled to graduate in 2008, are two such undergraduate students.

Gosserand transferred to UNLV from Fresno City College. “After I was in the hotel college, I noticed that UNLV had a recreation major, and it was something I felt I would be interested in,” he says. “I felt that there were many opportunities in Las Vegas for networking and events to get experience in the field.”

Why did he want to work at the SRWC? “When I saw the actual building being built, I could tell it was going to be an extremely nice facility,” says Gosserand. “It looked like it would be an awesome place to work, and once I found out that there were going to be several positions there, I decided to go for it.”

Sandoval chose UNLV because as a Southern California native, she would have the opportunity to leave home and be independent “but be close enough to home to return and visit my family often. I chose recreation because I am a people person, and I find that people often focus so much on working and not so much on having fun. I want to help people learn new things — and have fun.”

Sandoval’s position at the SRWC is much more than just a job to get her
through school.

“At Outdoor Adventures, I am a trip leader, office attendant, and equipment manager. I am really fortunate to have the opportunity to learn so much from this job. I am learning about risk management, planning, and the technical skills needed in the field of outdoor recreation. I am also fortunate to be working with such a great group of people; we really live up to the meaning of teamwork.”

Likewise, Gosserand also works for Outdoor Adventures. “This position is allowing me to get a better understanding of different mountain terrain and wilderness first aid and to lead a group of people on an experience they may not have ever had before.”

Both Sandoval and Gosserand have witnessed the challenges of today’s busy lifestyle. “The ever-increasing workday is a big challenge,” says Sandoval. “People just work too much, eat on the run, don’t socialize enough, don’t laugh enough, and don’t play enough — most people are basically just unbalanced. It can be turned around when people realize that life is not just about working hard; there is room for play, and even better than working out, you can get your exercise by playing with your dog, your children, and your friends.”

Gosserand believes that good health and well-being start with taking chances and trying new things. “Anyone can sit on their couch, watch TV, and say, ‘I could do that,’” but the minute you make up your mind to start doing it is when the real sense of accomplishment comes. I believe that getting outside and being active is very important to physical and mental health. I don’t think I have ever heard anyone say that they regretted going hiking or mountain biking.”

“I think a healthy mind is essential to a healthy body,” states Sandoval. “When your mind is preoccupied with stressing matters, you don’t take care of yourself, making you more vulnerable to making unhealthy choices.”
Invent the Future is UNLV’s first comprehensive effort to secure the promises of tomorrow through a $500 million fundraising initiative.

Alumni and other friends have already committed more than $38 million to the William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration for student and faculty learning; program excellence; and the future endeavors at INNovation UNLV.

Thank you for being part of the successes that will reach our students, community, and industry for generations to come.

To view our entire progress, visit campaign.unlv.edu
MEMBER HONOR ROLL

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Christopher Allen ’98
John Ankner ’93
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Lorin Balaban
Jamie Baronfeld ’07
Emily Bauer ’00
Paul Bellamy ’75
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Hye Ree Kwon ’07
Britany Lancaster ’99
Eunice Lee ’07
Paul Lefever ’78
Chien Chien ”Serene” Lim
Holly ’99 and Robert Lindsay
Adam Lopez ’02
Joseph Lucchese ’02
Rolf Maile ’85
James Malick ’80
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Stuart Mann
William Matuk ’84
Chris Mazza ’95
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Timothy Morrissey ’86
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Karin Olsen
Terry and Christopher ’93 Pahlmann
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Dana Pupo ’04
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Carola ’93, ’96, ’03 and Douglas Raab
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A FINAL NOTE
We strive to ensure accuracy in this listing of benefactors who supported the Harrah Hotel College during July 1, 2007 – April 4, 2008. Please accept our apologies for any errors or omissions and feel free to contact Robyn Hadden ’05, Director of Alumni & College Relations at Robyn.Hadden@unlv.edu or call 702-895-3148.
Congratulations

Associate Dean
Seyhmus Baloglu, Ph.D., CHE, and Associate Professor Curtis Love, Ph.D., each have articles listed in the top-10 most popular articles in the Journal of Convention and Event Tourism. The articles are “Association Meeting Planners’ Perceptions of Five Major Convention Cities: Results of the Pre-Test” and “Association Meeting Planners’ Perceived Performance of Las Vegas: An Importance-Performance Analysis.”

Christine Bergman was promoted to full professor and received tenure. Bo Bernhard was promoted to associate professor and received tenure. Cynthia Carruthers and Gail Sammons were promoted to full professor. Kathryn LaTour was promoted to associate professor and received tenure. All appointments become effective July 1.


Grace Chatfield is a visiting lecturer.

Dan Cormany ’04 MS was honored for the best experiential learning paper (written with Andy Feinstein), which he presented at ABSEL (Association of Business Simulation and Experiential Learning).

Assistant Professor Mehmet Erdem contributed to the following published articles: “Identifying the components of job satisfaction attributes: A focus on private club managers” in the FIU Review, 25 (2), 33–40; “Gap analysis as a diagnostic tool for improving the slot play experience” in the Journal of Hospitality Marketing and Management; and “Risk-return and cost of equity of small and large casual-dining restaurants” in International Journal of Hospitality Management, 27 (1), 109–118.

Kia Frericks has been promoted to assistant director of advising and will be responsible for external and campus events, student outreach, and staff training.

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Seyhmus Baloglu

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Culinary arts management major Aaron Phillips won the S. Pellegrino Almost Famous Mountain West Regional Competition, held Saturday, Jan. 26, at Le Cordon Bleu Las Vegas. He went on to compete against nine other culinary students at the national competition in Napa, Calif., judged by a number of celebrity chefs. KVBC TV invited Phillips to demonstrate his winning dish, pan-roasted Cornish hen with savory bread pudding, haricot vert, and cranberry-apple relish. UNLV students have won the regional competition three out of four years. Upon graduation, Phillips will have the skills necessary to take on an executive chef position. His ultimate career goal is to be a chef/owner where the public can savor his personal creations.

Bill Werner

Andrew Feinstein


Congratulations to Nakia Jackson-Hale, director of programs for the International Gaming Institute, on the birth of Lillian Grace Hale. She arrived Nov. 16, 2007.
Congratulations

Student Andrew Kao (who also serves as vice chair for the International Association of Exhibitions and Events student chapter) received one of this year’s Helen Brett™ Scholarships. The Helen Brett™ Scholarship was established by Robert Kolink, CEM, CMP, and named for his grandmother, Helen Brett, who was a pioneer in the trade show industry. The purpose of the scholarship is to assist individuals who are exploring the study of exhibition management with the end goal of advancing their career in this field.

Liz Lamatrice is the new career coordinator in the Bob Boughner Career Services Center. She has worked in career development as well as the hospitality industry, most recently at Bellagio. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree as well as a Bachelor of Science degree, both from Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio.

Nancy Matheny, MA, CSEP, is a visiting professor in the Tourism & Convention Administration department. She has worked in the entertainment business and as a special events professional for more than 25 years. As an active member of the International Special Event Society (ISES) since 1997, she is a past chapter president and has served on numerous local and international committees, including ISEF, the fundraising arm of ISES.

Judy Nagai has been promoted to director of external relations. In this new role, she will serve as the fundraising officer, working with the UNLV Foundation, to further develop private and corporate giving to support the strategic initiatives for the college.

Patti Shock received the Outstanding Achievement in Industry Leadership Award from the International Association for Exhibitions and Events (IAEE). This awards program recognizes professionals who have made outstanding contributions to the exhibitions and events industry. Shock accepted the award in December during IAEE’s Annual Meeting & Exhibition in Las Vegas. To view a list of articles authored by Shock, visit http://meetingsnet.com. Topics include “How to Plan Outdoor Events,” October 2007; “Here’s to Beverage Functions,” October 2007; “The Business of Cocktails,” December 2007; and “Creating Tablescapes,” December 2007.

Jeff Voyles ’98 is an affiliate assistant professor in the hotel management department. He lectures and conducts seminars on topics ranging from casino game protection to surveillance and homeland security.
John E. Porter, ’69, and his wife, Teresa, live in Garberville, Calif. Porter is the managing partner of Benbow Inn & Resort, a Four Diamond historical resort located 200 miles north of San Francisco in Humboldt County. He is also a partner in Porter Hospitality Management LLC. Porter and his wife have three children: Annie, age 15; Tyler, age 25; and Sam, age 23.

Marc Vanhasselt, ’88, is currently the vice president of channel operations for the Americans for Prometric in Baltimore, Md. Prometric is the global computer-based testing and assessment leader. Prior to his current position, Vanhasselt worked as general manager and regional director for Sylvan Learning Systems in both the Netherlands and Malaysia. He can be reached at marc.vanhasselt@gmail.com.

Natalie (Chiang) Gunara, ’90, is a full-time mother of a 14-year-old daughter, Nicole Alexandra Gunara. She moved back to Jakarta, Indonesia, in 1992 after working for The Mirage in Las Vegas and Westin Bonaventure Los Angeles. She has also worked at the Jakarta Borobudur InterContinental Hotel as a banquet sales coordinator and associate engineering manager. Her most recent position was as the executive club manager and director of sales at Mandarin Oriental Jakarta. She invites friends to contact her at gunara99@yahoo.com.

Bill D. Slusher (aka Max Bogart), ’90, is a self-employed studio musician. After going back to school to earn four degrees (all with honors), he decided that the wall full of plaques was great, but expressing who he is through music was more important than working for others. He has been onstage playing rock ’n roll since he was 12 and says, “It’s never been a contest which path I’d choose.”

Andrew Hale Feinstein, ’91, lives in Claremont, Calif., with his family. He is the dean and James A. Collins Distinguished Chair for The Collins School of Hospitality Management at Cal Poly, Pomona. Feinstein previously served as the UNLV Department of Food & Beverage Management chairperson and senior advisor to the UNLV president.

David Porter, ’93, joined Pollin Hotels LLC as the general manager for the new, hip Starwood Aloft Portland, scheduled to open summer 2008. He recently spent the past three years as the director of sales for the Mark Spencer Hotel in downtown Portland, Ore. Porter needs to fill more than 50 positions before opening this summer. He welcomes potential candidates to check out the property at www.aloftpdx.com; e-mail him at dporter@aloftpdx.com if interested in working for the company.

Jennifer Elfenbein, ’98, joined Four Seasons Hotel and Resorts in the finance division upon graduating from UNLV. Elfenbein’s first assignment with Four Seasons was in Kona, Hawaii. She later moved to the Four Seasons in Scottsdale, Ariz. In 2005, Elfenbein was promoted to director of finance at the Four Seasons Los Angeles at Beverly Hills. In January of this year, she moved to Canada as the director of finance at the Four Seasons Resort Whistler.

Rachel S. Shinnar, ’98 MS, ’04 Ph.D., joined the Walker College
Alumni Updates

of Business at Appalachian State University in North Carolina in 2004 as an assistant professor and faculty fellow. She teaches in the department of management.

Colleen (Walters) Birch, ’99, resides in Las Vegas. She is the director of revenue management for Harrah’s Entertainment’s Western Division, which is primarily made up of the Las Vegas marketplace. She leads the efforts to set the strategy for the Las Vegas market and coordinates weekly reviews of current hotel/gaming revenue forecasts with the executive operating committee. This determines the strategic plan of action for both short-term and long-term revenue management planning. Prior to working in revenue management, Birch served as a manager in the front office, housekeeping, and reservations areas at Caesars Palace.

Meghan Saxton-Izquierdo, ’99, lives in the Santa Barbara, Calif., region, where she and her husband purchased a home, an area they love immensely. She previously served as the director of catering at the Hotel Mar Monte in Santa Barbara and is now director of catering at the Santa Ynez Valley Marriott.

Tom Wilkinson, ’99, is president and founder of Vegas4Locals.com. He is also a part-time instructor at UNLV and at CSN. He invites friends to reach him at tom@vegas4locals.com.

2000s

Scott Ramin, ’00, ’04 MS, recently joined Oklahoma State University Cowboy Dining, which runs the food service in Boone Pickens Stadium and other suite- and club-level athletic venues. He also assists in running the restaurant at Karsten Creek Golf Club, home to the OSU golf program. He also helps with training staff, menu development, and other culinary-related projects. Chef Scott shares, “It will be a fun and exciting job and allow me some flexibility without a set schedule or job, which is something that I like.”

Juliet Douglas, ’02, worked several years as a professional singer in a local lounge show. She has also worked in various hospitality and food and beverage jobs. In 2007, she launched Green Orchid Events, an event planning company specializing in weddings and social events. She can be reached at Juliet@greenorchidevents.com.

Adam Lopez, ’02, works for Crystal Cruises (previously managed by Caesars Entertainment). Having worked for Caesars Palace Las Vegas, he took a job with Crystal Cruises and fell in love with the both the travel and his new wife, whom he met at sea. He runs the entire casino department on the cruise line and has traveled to all seven continents.

Yurong “Diana” Xu, ’02, is the senior financial analyst for the planning and analysis department at Harrah’s Entertainment. She currently lives in Las Vegas.

C.W. Cook, ’03, recently was recognized as the 2007 club manager of the year for North Carolina by the North Carolina Chapter of the U.S. Professional Tennis Association. Cook is general manager and chief operating officer of North Hills Club in Raleigh, N.C.

Debbie Howarth, ’03, is an assistant professor in the International Hotel School at Johnson & Wales University in Providence, R.I. She also attends Boston University and is working on her doctorate in education, media and technology. She can be reached at dhowarth@naisp.net.

Brett Hughett, ’03, lives and works in San Jose, Calif. He was recently promoted to property manager at Oakwood San Jose, a 789-unit property combining conventional apartments and corporate housing. He is also engaged to be married in 2008. Hughett invites friends to reach him at bhughett@oakwood.com.

Jillian McNiff, ’04, joined Boston University Fitness and Recreation Center after spending more than three years in professional sports. She manages external marketing and community outreach for the facility, which opened in 2005. She enjoys being back on a college campus and plans to start a doctoral program in the fall.

Zhuo Wang, ’04 MS, joined Radio Shack Corp. in 2005 as a pricing analyst to help the company launch and grow demand-based pricing optimization and promotion forecasting. He was promoted to demand planner to drive demand forecasting and replenishment of the company’s DC’s and retail stores. He is currently pursuing his master’s degree in business administration part time with IU-Kelley. Wang lives in Fort Worth, Texas, and invites you to reach him at waangz@yahoo.com.

Tom Hartley, ’06 MHA, lives in Uncasville, Conn. After his 22-year tenure with the Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Fla., he transitioned to Mohegan Sun as director of transportation services. He has 30 years of hospitality experience within both Disney and Mohegan Sun organizations. He notes that he thoroughly enjoyed UNLV’s Master of Hospitality Administration program.

Lily Ko, ’07 MHA, was recently promoted and now teaches at Singapore’s Temasek Polytechnic in the hospitality and diploma program. She completed her executive Master of Hospitality Administration degree at UNLV Singapore in December 2007.

Mukesh Kumar, ’07 MHA, completed his master’s in December 2007. Since receiving the degree, Kumar has been promoted to the post of course administrator at Singapore’s Nanyang Polytechnic, where he co-manages the diploma program in hospitality and resort management. “I find this extremely rewarding as it gives me the opportunity to share what I have learned at UNLV to add value to my students’ education,” Kumar says. “My appreciation for the hospitality industry has certainly broadened and gained in depth.”

Serene Lim, ’07 MHA, lives in Singapore. She is in the special events business, serving as a director of creative development for a company in Singapore. She plans themed events and national celebrations in Singapore and around the region. As one of the first to graduate from the UNLV Singapore master’s program, she states, “I had prior background in the hospitality business. With this master’s degree, I hope to move back into this field of practice.” Lim says she pursued her education at UNLV Singapore because of her deep interest in the hospitality industry. “I am really happy to say I made it, and it was a real honor to have been given the opportunity to participate in the commencement in Las Vegas,” she says.

Tina Olewinski, ’07, lives in Las Vegas and works for Harrah’s Entertainment in the planning and analysis department with the marketing team. She can be reached at tinolewinski@yahoo.com.

Richard Tan, ’07 MHA, currently serves as the senior manager of operations for the Ascott Group. He heads up one of their major properties in Shanghai. He is one of four students who graduated in December 2007 from UNLV Singapore.
For the last several years, the William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration and MGM MIRAGE have partnered to provide minority students with scholarship opportunities. The MGM MIRAGE Minority Scholarship helps provide talented students in the Hotel College with financial support while they pursue their degrees. Over the course of this partnership, many students’ lives have been touched by this scholarship. The benefits are numerous, from increased campus involvement to reduced financial burdens.

Omari Head, a recent UNLV graduate and past recipient of the MGM MIRAGE Minority Scholarship, is now working at the Fairmont Hotel in Chicago, Ill., in the rooms division management training program. Head is grateful for the scholarship and the professional opportunities he’s had with the company.

“Receiving this scholarship presented the opportunity for me to focus more on school. I didn’t have to work full time, but I did work part time as front desk agent at Bellagio,” says Head. He was also able to spend time getting involved in the UNLV campus. Head says that being involved with student activities, especially diversity programs that impacted the campus, was an important experience for him. He found that his work experience with MGM MIRAGE mirrored that importance.

“As an employee, I was able to be an ambassador for other students who are from underrepresented demographics and share the work experience and scholarship opportunities that the MGM MIRAGE has. Working for this company really convinced me that MGM MIRAGE is a company that firmly believes in diversity,” says Head.

Jacqueline Aviles, a current student and scholarship recipient, says that the award is helping her complete college. “The MGM MIRAGE Minority Scholarship allows me to focus more on school by taking away the stress of financial responsibilities. It also motivates me to study harder and get good grades,” she says.

Aviles will graduate in December 2008 and plans to pursue a career in event planning. Her current work experience at The Mirage for the “LOVE” Cirque du Soleil show and her course work at UNLV are preparing her for that career in the hospitality industry.

Dean Stuart Mann says that the affiliation with one of the largest entertainment companies in the world is a valuable one for the Hotel College. “I am grateful to MGM MIRAGE for their support of this program. Our partnership with them allows us to interest minority students in the many exciting opportunities in the hospitality industries and prepare them to become future industry leaders.”
Hold a cocktail party on campus? How about a wedding reception or a sports bash? It can be done, as can a number of different types of events, thanks to the banquet and meeting room space available at the Stan Fulton Building. With more than 6,000 square feet of space as well as a professional catering staff, the Stan Fulton Building can accommodate small meetings and conferences as well as receptions for up to 300 people and full-service dinners for 200 people. The Stan Fulton Building is also home to a hip yet comfortable lounge-style bar.

Conveniently located at the edge of campus on the corner of Flamingo Road and Swenson, the Stan Fulton Building is an ideal setting for special events and meetings. Executive Chef John Gremo and his talented culinary team will deliver an unforgettable dining experience, whether your group is in need of a continental breakfast, a working lunch, or an upscale, seated dinner. A variety of menu options are available and Chef Gremo can also personalize a custom menu to enhance the overall goal of your event.

The next time you’re looking for the perfect space in which to host your special event, look no farther than the experts at the Harrah Hotel College. With the range of services and room styles available, there is certain to be one that fits your needs perfectly!

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT FRANK VITUCCI AT (702) 895-3903 OR SFBEVENTS@UNLV.EDU.
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Visit http://celebrating50.unlv.edu for more information on anniversary events.

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