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Premier: The Magazine of the UNLV Harrah Hotel College

Angela Ramsey
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Caitlyn Lopez
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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2023

premier

The magazine of the UNLV Harrah College of Hospitality

GAME CH♥NGER

Gaming Innovation students are grabbing the attention of casino game developers and showing the world what Vegas does best.



STOWE SHOEMAKER REFLECTS ON A DECADE AS DEAN

WE'LL DRINK TO THAT - THE NEW REBEL SPIRIT BEER

UNIQUE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN STADIUM AND EVENT MANAGEMENT



UNLV

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Forever in Our Hearts



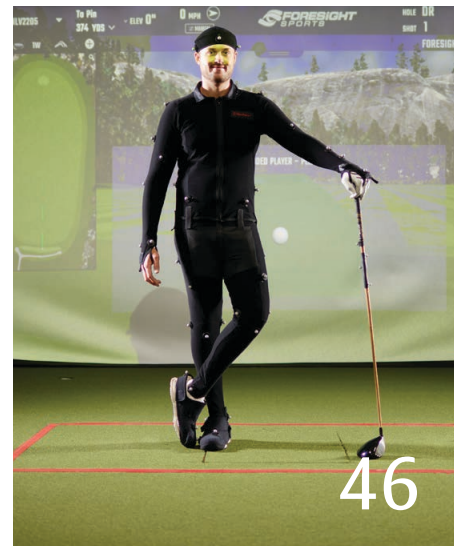
FEATURE

It Takes a Community



FEATURE

Game Changer



RESEARCH

Making the Cut

premier magazine

2023 EDITION

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Editor-in-Chief

Angela Ramsey

Assistant Editor

Caitlyn Lopez

Creative Director

Craig Granger

Photographers

Josh Hawkins

Enrique Villar

Becca Schwartz

Writers/Editors

Angela Ramsey

Caitlyn Lopez

Matt Jacob

Other Contributors

Dean Stowe Shoemaker

Marion Alper

Mikaila Becze

John Domol

Hieu Nguyen

Kaila Seidler

Radioactive Productions

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For questions, suggestions, or to submit address changes, please contact:
hospitalitycollege@unlv.edu

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Dean's Note

Reflecting on a decade as dean.
Looking forward to the work ahead.

by Stowe Shoemaker, Ph.D.

What a privilege it has been to serve as dean of the Harrah College of Hospitality over the past ten years!

When I was hired in 2013, I set out to build upon the great work of prior deans by ushering the college into a new era of educational excellence – one that embraced the changing landscape of the industry while preserving our “practitioner” roots. It’s been an amazing experience, from forging new partnerships with industry to opening professional pathways for students. We can all be proud of the college’s standing as a prominent industry thought leader, which is evidenced by our position on QS World University Rankings, where we have claimed the top spot for U.S. programs (second in the world) since the body began ranking by subject in 2019.

After serving ten years in this role, however, I believe the timing is right for a new leader to step in with fresh ideas and the vision to champion the college into its next phase of its evolution. Therefore, on July 1, 2023, I am pivoting to a new role – special assistant of the UNLV Foundation president, where I will concentrate my energy on advancing important new and ongoing external partnerships for the university, in addition to fundraising to support the mission of the college.

I believe I come prepared for this new role, given that my tenure as dean was heavily focused on relationship-building. For instance, without the support of industry partners, we would never have been able to construct, and completely pay for, Hospitality Hall, which has become the jewel of the UNLV campus and a model for successful publicly/privately-funded capital projects. On top of the nearly \$30 million raised for the building, industry and community supporters have given generously to the college (more than \$16 million) to fund student scholarships and the development of programs such as the Sands Center for Professional Development, the Tribal Education Initiative, and a program in fast casual restaurant operations.

In addition to providing financial support to the college, community partners helped us navigate a major rebranding campaign and celebrate our 50th anniversary – with well wishes pouring in from alumni and friends far and wide. You may remember our social media campaign highlighting the many “congratulations” messages that lit up hotel marquees along the Strip.

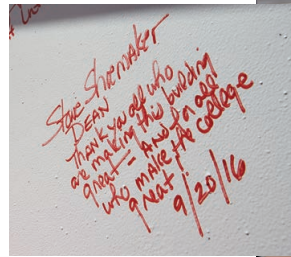
The college’s curriculum overhaul has been widely celebrated as well. Thanks to the hard work of faculty and staff, the college’s academic credit format has been completely restructured so that students now have more flexibility to specialize in industry segments. Additionally, the college now has more freedom to update specializations as the industry evolves. This effort is a major source of pride for the college, not to mention a huge win for students.

Of course, the best part of this job has been helping students find their passion in hospitality and watching them mature into their careers. I have loved mentoring students, visiting with them in hallways and in the coffee shop, and helping them with their classes and research projects. I’ve equally enjoyed engaging with alumni and supporting Rebel pride at mixers and at so many great events, like UNLVino and the Vallen Dinner.

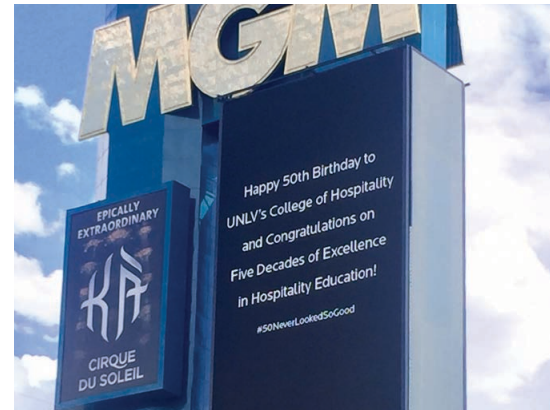
There are so many “thank yous” to go around that it would take pages to do so. I’ve been so lucky to have the help and support of industry partners like the Dean’s Global Advisory Board, whose members have been an amazing sounding board for me over the years. I want to praise the staff and faculty members who continue to work for the good of students and contribute to the relevance and vibrancy of the college. Special thanks go to the college’s administrative faculty, who are some of the hardest working people on campus!

And to all of you who have reached out to share your love and support—I am eternally grateful. I am extremely proud of my service on behalf of the College of Hospitality, and I am excited to embark on this next chapter of my career.

It has been an honor to serve you.



Speaking at the new building’s groundbreaking. A message signed at the topping out ceremony (inset).



50th Anniversary message from one of many community partners the college has worked with over the years.

“It’s been an amazing experience, from forging new partnerships with industry to opening professional pathways for students.”

Grad Students Talk Trends at Fancy Food Show

Graduate students from the Harrah College of Hospitality served as the Junior Trendspotter Panel at the Specialty Food Association Winter Fancy Food Show, held in January 2023 at the Las Vegas Convention Center. Under the guidance of professors Joseph Lema and Seyhmus Baloglu, the Trendspotter panel identified upcoming trends in the food and beverage industry, such as non-alcoholic cocktail culture, broader plant-based foods, and global pantry. The panel was composed of eight graduate students: Carrie (Yunxuan) Zhang, Ken (Yuang-Sheng) Chiu, Angelika Bazarnik, Crystal (Yuze) Ji, Dennis Baloglu, Shatha Alhujuri, Sooyeon Lee, and Michael Bertetto.



French Grad Students Hone Hospitality Skills in Vegas

Graduate students from the French L'Institut Paul Bocuse and sister school Emylon Business School came to the UNLV campus in summer 2022 to study international hospitality management and culinary leadership. Over the course of nine weeks, the 90-student cohort explored topics in event, casino, and food & beverage management with a group of elite UNLV instructors, including Murray Mackenzie and Robert Rippee. The program is part of a joint learning program between Bocuse/Emlyon and the College of Hospitality's Sands Center for Professional Development. A new cohort returns summer 2023.



Hospitality Student Orgs Build Skills and Affinity

Nothing helps Hospitality College students become more well-rounded and connected to their peers than Hospitality College student organizations. Whether they are highlighting cultural bonds (e.g., Association Representing Koreans), industry niches (e.g., the Wine Society), or affiliations with professional organizations (e.g., Hospitality Financial & Technology Professionals), student orgs offer something for everyone. On top of social activities, group members flex their professional muscles by organizing industry speakers, tours, fundraisers, and recruitment events. Visit unlv.edu/hospitality/organizations to learn more.

Abarbanel Takes the Reins at IGI

On January 1, 2023, Brett Abarbanel was named the new executive director for the UNLV International Gaming Institute (IGI). Abarbanel has worked at IGI since 2016 as the director of research, with an affiliate research position at the University of Sydney Science, Brain and Mind Centre. After completing her Ph.D. at UNLV, she went on to work as the head of Social and Recreational Gambling Research at the UCLA Gambling Studies program. In addition to her appointment at IGI, Abarbanel serves as an associate professor at the Harrah College of Hospitality.



College Hosts 2023 Regional CHRIE Conference

Hospitality and tourism educators from 14 states and seven Canadian provinces gathered at UNLV's Hospitality Hall February 16-18, 2022, for the West Federation Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (WF CHRIE) Conference. Sponsored by the Hospitality College (with associate professor Cass Shum as the conference director), the conference featured academic sessions, industry panel discussions, and poster sessions highlighting graduate student research from participating institutions. WF CHRIE is part of International CHRIE, a non-profit professional association that works to continually improve the quality of global education, research, service, and business operations in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Students Get a Unique Beverage Education at the PR%F Awards

In Fall 2022,, a group of Hospitality College students participated in the PR%F Awards – a double-blind tasting competition featuring spirits, wine, cocktails, and a slew of other beverage categories. Under the supervision of assistant professor Murray Mackenzie and Chef Christopher Lindsay, more than 40 student volunteers worked in front-of-house and back-of-house positions at the two-day event, which was held at the college's banquet space in the Stan Fulton Building. It was a rare opportunity for students to interact with beverage buyers from all over the country.



New Assistant Dean Focuses on Enrollment and Student Success

The college is happy to welcome Rhonda McElroy as assistant dean of student success. McElroy worked as the college's director of graduate programs prior to ascending to the assistant dean position. Previously, she served as the executive director of graduate programs for the University of Illinois' engineering college. Tasked with bolstering enrollment, McElroy and her team support undergraduate and graduate students during every phase of their academic journey – from recruitment to completion.



Forever in our Hearts

The Hospitality College said goodbye to four of its greats this past year.





Donald Arthur Bell

APRIL 5, 1937 - AUG., 17, 2022

Kathleen Sallot Bell

SEPT. 5, 1943 - JULY 15, 2022

Don and Kathy Bell were instrumental in laying the foundation for the Hospitality College and helping a generation of students find their way in the hospitality industry. With their shared love of academia and food and beverage, the Bells were a match made in heaven. Kathy received her master's degree from Kent State University and her Ph.D. from Michigan State University (1981), then joined the college in 1988 and quickly became a favorite with hospitality students. Don was hired as an associate professor for the college in 1981 after graduating from Michigan State University with his bachelor's degree (1962), master's degree (1971), and Ph.D. (1979). A beloved mentor to students and faculty alike, Don was promoted to full professor in 1985 and served the college for more than 30 years in this role before retiring as professor emeritus in 2017. The Bells' legacy lives on through their indelible imprint on hospitality education and the cherished memories of their loved ones and friends.



Timothy James Durnford

JULY 1, 1961 - AUG. 14, 2022

Tim Durnford impacted the lives of everyone he met, including the dean's executive team on which he lovingly served for three-and-a-half years. Tim's passion for hospitality originated from his early involvement in Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) and work in restaurants. It was a love that prompted him to study at Colorado State University, where he met his future wife Susan in 1982. After earning a master's degree at the Cornell Hotel School, Tim began a 25-year career at the institution, working in a number of administrative faculty positions along the way. In 2019, Tim and Susan moved to Las Vegas to be closer to their children and for Tim to assume the role of associate dean of finance and administration for the Hospitality College. Among his many virtues, Tim will be remembered for always helping others - whether it was his family, friends, colleagues, neighbors, or perfect strangers.



Alfred Wayne Izzolo

AUG. 20, 1942 - APRIL 28, 2022

Until the day he retired in 2020, Al Izzolo was a staple at the Harrah College of Hospitality - not to mention a legendary mentor to aspiring hospitality professionals. Prior to joining the faculty in 1976, the Bronx native was a restaurant recruiter who frequently visited the college to hire students. It wasn't long before Al was the one being recruited. A true industry man, Al reveled in the opportunity to teach future professionals. But throughout his four-decade career, he gave so much more to the college! When Al wasn't hosting fundraisers to bring in early donors, he was helping create administrative standards, securing internships, and advising student organizations. The devoted husband and father continued to support college events even into his later years. His dedication to students was evidenced by the flood of heartfelt comments and condolences that poured in following news of his passing. For Rebels far and wide, Al Izzolo will forever be a source of wisdom and inspiration.



FRONT OF HOUSE

The Vallen Legacy Set in Stone

The newly named Jerry and Flossie Vallen Executive Suite at Hospitality Hall tells the story of the tenacious spirits who helped build UNLV.

By Angela Ramsey

An independent
“Hotel School”
represented a
new educational
model ...

On May 7, 2022, the Harrah College of Hospitality dedicated Hospitality Hall's fourth-floor executive suite to the college's founding dean, Jerry Vallen, and his beloved wife, Flossie. The posthumous dedication pays tribute to the Vallen legacy while inspiring a new generation of Hospitality Rebels.

In addition to signage bearing the Vallen name, the Jerry and Flossie Vallen Executive Suite and Veranda features a hallway gallery with historical photos highlighting important college events such as the groundbreaking of Beam Hall, UNLVino's early years, and a grant signing that solidified the college's long-term alliance with the Nevada Resort Association.

A Man on a Mission

Jerry Vallen's 22-year tenure as dean was distinguished by his fierce loyalty to the program, relentless advocacy for students, and unique ability to bring academia and industry together. But success didn't come easy.

In 1967, Jerry Vallen moved his family from Canton, New York, to head up a new “Hotel Administration” department on a barely-known campus in the desert. It was a bold move for the husband and father of four.

“Can you imagine the courage it took at that time?” says Vallen's son, Gary Vallen. “He took a family of six to Las Vegas from a little town! All of his friends told him it was the biggest mistake of his life!”

The Philadelphia-born academic quickly got to work shaping the new department while doing battle with the legions of naysayers who doubted the legitimacy of the program. As he traversed both administrative and political obstacles, Vallen grew enrollment sharply by actively recruiting transfer students. Along the way, he made countless uncertain students feel at home at UNLV.

“Not only did [Dean Vallen] help students,” says Hospitality alumna and general manager of Palms Casino Resort, Cindy Keiser Murphy, “he helped parents by instilling that sense of pride about coming to study Hospitality at UNLV.”

Just two years after his family’s big move, Vallen fought for and won the program’s autonomy. An independent “Hotel School” represented a new educational model in which academia and industry worked hand in hand. Dean Vallen would go on to earn the respect of not only the university but of academic institutions and industry practitioners throughout the world.

A hallway photo gallery features images of the Vallens making history at UNLV.



A “Second Lady” Like No Other

Florence “Flossie” Vallen was much more than a dean’s wife. Whether she was providing meals to homesick students or collecting tickets at the door of UNLV’s fledging wine festival, UNLVino, Flossie Vallen was a stalwart presence during the college’s formative years. Though tiny in stature, she was generous in spirit, supporting the college and its students through good times and bad. Her tireless dedication helped lay the groundwork for the college’s rise to international prominence.

“Jerry may have been the foundation of the college,” says long-time friend and colleague Larry Ruvo, “but Flossie was Jerry’s foundation.”



The Interview: Scott Morrow

THIS ALUMNUS-TURNED-GAMING LECTURER NEVER LEFT HIS CAREER TO CHANCE.

By Caitlyn Lopez

Gaming lecturer Scott Morrow's love story with Las Vegas began in the late 1980s. The UNLV Runnin' Rebels basketball team was making national news, and the city was abuzz over the opening of the Strip's first megaresort, The Mirage.

Armed with excitement and ambition, Morrow moved from south New Jersey to pursue his passion in the gaming industry and landed a job at The Mirage. While honing his craft, he was struck by how quickly fellow employees with UNLV degrees were moving up the professional ladder. It inspired him to return to college and get not just a bachelor's degree but a master's in hospitality management.

Fast forward a few decades, and Morrow now finds himself on the other side of the lectern, teaching the next generation of industry leaders how to get in the game.

Is this what you thought you'd do when you grew up?

No, my dream originally was to be a high school teacher and football coach. I was going to a community college when the casinos [from Atlantic City] held a career fair at the student union. I needed to make some money, so I told my parents I was going to go work as a dealer. My mom really pushed back, but I promised I would finish my degree eventually. Once I got to Atlantic City and went to dealer school, I found that it was in my DNA. I really love the gaming business.

Why UNLV?

When I was in Atlantic City, I would write to UNLV just to get the admissions packet. I was following Runnin' Rebels basketball at the time, and I just always wanted to go to UNLV. When my wife and I moved to Vegas, we bought basketball tickets for the national championship team the second we stepped off the plane.

Later, when I started working at The Mirage, I noticed an influx of UNLV hospitality graduates in the MGM management associate program. I watched these folks come in with little experience - but they had that UNLV background - and they were getting promoted. I knew I could either get upset about it or finally go finish my degree. I put my foot on the gas, got my degree after 19 years, and kept my promise to my mom!

When was a time you were daring?

I left a tremendous job in Las Vegas to go work in Macau, China, to be a part of MGM's opening team. It was life-changing and really the tipping point of my career. Later, I went to work in the U.S. Commonwealth of Saipan, and that experience helped me polish my International guest service skills. I learned about the different cultures and even picked up a bit of Mandarin. These experiences help me connect and appreciate our international students on a different level.

Favorite gaming-related movies?

- *Rounders*: It gave poker a big lift and was portrayed pretty accurately.
- *Molly's Game*: It's based on a true story of an Olympic-class skier who runs underground poker games.
- *God of Gambling*: It's a Chinese movie with subtitles. It's about a gambler who loses his memory and makes a friend who "discovers" his gambling abilities.

Where do you see the gaming industry headed?

The gaming industry is alive and well; it's just reinventing itself. We're having record profits and job opportunities since the pandemic. I think there's going to be a major shift toward the online space with the proliferation of sports betting and online casinos across the country.

What do you like about teaching?

It's an honor to be on campus and interacting with our students. I enjoy asking what their dreams are, and then I do everything in my power to help them fulfill those dreams. I share with them my incredible network of industry professionals and give them job leads. Not only am I teaching them to be book-smart but also how to build their own network and career launching pad as they move into the industry.

What advice do you give students?

Uphold your character and reputation, work hard, and create a great network of colleagues - and please include me in your network!


I know it can be difficult to wake up every day, drive to school, find parking, get to class, study - but I'm here to remind students that it is worth it. UNLV has opened so many doors for me and allowed me to have a wonderful career.



With patents soaring into the double digits, Gaming Innovation students are grabbing the attention of casino game developers and showing the world what Vegas does best.

By Angela Ramsey

GAME CH♥NGER



The casino games industry is booming, generating more than \$400 billion in annual global revenue. And with legalized gambling expanding throughout the world, the demand for new and improved casino games is on the rise. Even in places like Las Vegas and Atlantic City, where gaming has been an economic staple for decades, expectations are rapidly changing, calling for new gaming experiences calibrated for a new generation of players.

That's where UNLV instructor Daniel Sahl's Gaming Innovation course comes in.

A COURSE LIKE NO OTHER

Tapping into some of the best minds in the gaming industry, students enrolled in the Gaming Innovation course are bringing viable casino game concepts to the table – literally. It doesn't hurt that the Gaming Capital of the World is at their doorstep!

Offered every fall semester through the UNLV Harrah College of Hospitality, the course calls on each of its 20-some students to work individually or in groups to produce novel concepts for the gaming industry. The entire class then works to narrow down the concepts, selecting three or four with the most potential. Depending on the market viability of the chosen games, Sahl (with the assistance of industry partners) will help the student(s) develop a proof of concept of the game (which may include a playable demo) or help file a patent.



"This is truly a unique class," Sahl says. "There are lots of schools that do game design, but this is the only place where you can learn how to design and commercialize casino games."

Course projects to date have shown measurable results. Since the class launched in 2013, 24 patents have been issued to UNLV students.

It is a formula that continues to benefit students in more ways than one.

"We've had multiple students who have successfully commercialized their innovations through a sale or licensing agreement with game developers," Sahl says. "This is one of the only classes in the world where your final project might actually pay off your student loans."

AN EXPERIENCE FOR EVERYONE

Established as an elective, the Gaming Innovation class is coveted by UNLV students from a variety of disciplines, including hospitality management, engineering, fine arts, and law. Non-degree-seeking

individuals with an eye on the gaming industry regularly enroll as well.

Also, the course's online hybrid format makes it easy for students from other states and countries to be part of the class.

Sahl says the Gaming Innovation course is set up as a collaborative space that celebrates individualized skills and talents. The student who is doing the programming, for example, is not the same student who is developing the game's design, music, or overall theme. It's an environment where no one is excluded.

"One of the biggest misconceptions is that you have to be good at math to be in this class," Sahl says. "I have some students who are phenomenal at math. Others are phenomenal at art and design. It's really a class for anyone at any skill level."

Innovation student and Hospitality College senior Joo Yeun Kim identifies "concept development" as her forte. Kim's game, Baccarat Spin, takes the traditional game of baccarat and adds a twist to appeal to younger players.

“This is one of the only classes in the world where your final project might actually pay off your student loans.”

- Dan Sahl, Ph.D.

“Young people don’t want to play games based on luck only,” Kim says. “I knew that to catch their attention I needed to add an element of skill.”

As one of the few hospitality programs in the world with a bona fide concentration in casino gaming, the Hospitality College gave Kim an academic outlet for her fascination with the casino industry. Kim’s internship with gaming company IGT has further enhanced this interest, particularly the financial side of the business.

“The way casinos make money is very different from the hotel,” says Kim, who plans to make a career in casino game technology. “And individual games make money very differently from each other. It’s so interesting to me.”



“There is a lot of demand among developers for students who have experience and ideas in game design”

NURTURING TALENT

Sahl has been a gaming innovation devotee ever since attending the class in its 2013 inaugural semester. He would go on to complete a doctoral dissertation on casino game design while working under the tutelage of former Gaming Innovation instructor and gaming innovator, Mark Yoseloff, who established the Center for Gaming Innovation within UNLV's International Gaming Institute (the university's think tank for gaming research and policy).

Following in Yoseloff's footsteps as the new director of the Center for Gaming Innovation, Sahl set out to inspire students the same way he was inspired.

“There's is a lot of demand among developers for students who have experience and ideas in game design,” he says. “If a student is committed to the process and wants to build their own portfolio of games, I'm here to help.”

Sahl encourages students to develop any and all types of gaming tech, though historically, the most successful games have involved new concepts in table games, slots, sports betting, and lottery. Not every game



makes it past the conceptual stage, but Sahl makes sure all students leave the course with a working knowledge of startups, licensing, marketing, regulatory concerns, intellectual property, and other key elements specific to the casino gaming industry.

BUILT-IN INDUSTRY SUPPORT

The success of the Gaming Innovation class is in no small part the result of strong relationships with casino industry experts.

Hospitality College industry partner Konami Gaming, Inc., for instance, provided funding for the mock casino lab/classroom where the Gaming Innovation course and other Hospitality College gaming classes take place.

The Gaming Innovation course also enjoys the backing of mobile gaming and sports betting company DraftKings, which supports the program and helped establish the DraftKings Gaming Innovation Studio at UNLV. The studio employs students to develop and experiment with a wide range of gaming prototypes.

Gaming Innovation student presents concept at gaming exposition.

DraftKings, which has operated a game design facility in Las Vegas since 2020, advocates for students through hiring as well as serving on the gaming innovation course's mentorship team.

“They [DraftKings] helped me with my idea,” says Kim, who tweaked her game concept following her first presentation in front of the group. “At first, my game was too simple. After getting their feedback, I changed my concept completely. They were very helpful.”

Not only did Baccarat Spin make it through to the home stretch of the class, but Kim's game is now heading for a next phase of development: demo creation. Though game development is a long process that spans well beyond the length of one class, the support Kim receives from Sahl and his industry network might just get her to the finish line.

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It Takes a Community





From on-property instruction to dinner theater, the Hospitality College is aligning students with the community in novel ways – and taking practical learning to a whole new level.

By Angela Ramsey & Caitlyn Lopez

The Hospitality College has always been known for its “theory-meets-practice” learning approach. A growing number of courses are taking that approach a step further by inviting industry practitioners into the classroom for interdisciplinary projects, team teaching, and community productions.

Here’s a look at four courses that are breaking traditional teaching molds to bring creative real-world learning experiences to UNLV students.

Students learn the basics of running large-scale meetings and events from industry veteran Don Ross.

Top Event Professionals Team Up With College Instructors for an Events Course Beyond Compare

Instructors: Dr. Inna Soifer and Jaimi Garlington (doctoral student)

Skills: Communication, Customer Service, Event Logistics

By Angela Ramsey



Anyone in the trend-bending events industry will tell you it's almost impossible to learn all you need to know about the business in a traditional classroom. Fortunately for Hospitality College students, the Las Vegas meetings, expositions, events, and conventions (MEEC) community consistently gets involved with classes, providing site tours, and serving as classroom speakers.

But a new Hospitality College events management course imagined an even more comprehensive learning experience – one in which industry partners served as the teachers and event spaces served as the classroom.

The events management course was the brainchild of Harrah College of Hospitality dean Stowe Shoemaker.

“There’s no better way to learn conventions and events than to be learning with people who are actually working in the industry,” Shoemaker says. “So I thought,

why not break a course into sections and have industry experts work with faculty to actually teach each section?”

Shoemaker began putting the course together with doctoral student Jaimi Garlington. After meeting with a series of MEEC experts, the pair identified nine guest speakers who would cover separate segments of the industry throughout the semester. And in Fall 2020, the Essentials of Events Execution was born.

Garlington then worked with co-teacher and part-time instructor Inna Soifer to organize the course as a boots-on-the-ground learning experience where students would tie textbook concepts to real-life scenarios.

“Each class, the students get to hear from a guest speaker who talks about how they go about their jobs and how they deal with challenges,” Garlington says. “We wanted to inject practical, critical-thinking elements into the course.”

The students harness those critical

thinking skills by working on a milestone related to their final project: designing, building a budget for, and pitching their own event. Students envisioned projects ranging from a full-moon cultural celebration to a Halloween bash catering to locals.

“Las Vegas’ main attraction, the Strip, is often avoided by locals,” says senior Bailee Joubert, whose group worked on the Halloween event. “So we wanted to create an event that would entice them to celebrate one of the most popular holidays in their own city.”

Garlington says the class projects were uber creative and, in many cases, ready for market. The student’s ultimate success was in no doubt related to course time with their MEEC expert guest speakers – a dynamic that lifted the barrier between the student and the executive.

“[Students] were able to get their hands dirty and ask experts for help in real time,” says Garlington. “At that moment, the formal power dynamics are gone.”



Strangers Become Family at Student-Led Dinner Theater Experience

By Caitlyn Lopez

Instructors: Dr. Finley Cotrone & Chef Mark Sandoval

Skills: Team Building, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Event Planning

“[Students] were able to get their hands dirty and ask experts for help in real time”

Another major perk of having students in the trenches with MEEC experts is that students got the opportunity to find aspects of the industry they like best.

“I have always been most interested in the special events side of MEEC,” Joubert says, “but hearing from various industry experts showed me that there are many more types of jobs than I ever imagined.”

Among the A-list guest speakers was Don Ross, long-time VP of meeting operations for Caesars Entertainment. Before providing a complete front-of-house/back-of-house tour of the Caesars Forum convention center, Ross and his team gave students an insider tutorial on the ins and outs of the exhibitions and trade shows business. Throughout his talk, Ross kept coming back to one critical point – the customer.

“This job is about relationships,” Ross told the class. “No two clients are the same. Our job is to figure out how to make the client happy and deliver on it.”

Other topics during the semester focused on: stakeholder management; destination management companies and service contractors; venue sourcing and site selection; event sponsorship; business ethics and trends in the MEEC, etc. In addition to Caesars Forum, students visited the Mandalay Bay Convention Center and Southern Glazer’s Wine, Spirits and Beer.



There’s nothing quite like a large family gathering to bring out the drama in everyone – especially family reunions where reminiscing, rehashing, and gossiping can spark mayhem. It’s the kind of hilariously chaotic event that even makes for great theatre.

An adventurous new hospitality events class discovered that it also makes for a one-of-a-kind dinner theater experience.

During the Fall 2022 semester, hospitality students created a two-week interactive dinner theater engagement in Beam Hall’s Boyd Dining Room called the Moroné Family Reunion. The guestlist consisted of the general public invited to play along with embedded actors as extended Moroné family members while being treated to a delicious Italian dinner.

The students had a hand in both the performance and the behind-the-scenes prep. Responsibilities included all the logistical planning, such as designing the event’s logo and branding, developing the dinner menu, laying out the floor plan, marketing the event, and assisting with the script.

“In 22 hours of class time, we were able to create something that could stand proudly next to all the best shows in town,”

Our mentality changed from ‘This is a class project’ to ‘This is a real show’

says course instructor Dr. Finley Cotrone. “We did some team building the first day of class and then hit the ground running.”

To ensure the students were prepared for the task at hand, Cotrone hand-selected those who were willing to take risks and embrace the creative process. Rather than be graded on the event’s monetary success, the students were evaluated on their ability to collaborate, contribute ideas, and handle conflicts throughout the course.

This emphasis on creative thinking and problem-solving allowed students to focus on the process and the skills they were learning, rather than just the end result. It also fostered a supportive learning environment where they could freely explore their ideas and creativity without fear of failure.

“Having the creative freedom to design the event without a bullet list of instructions made everything feel much more real,” says hospitality senior Jeffrey Kloss, who played Cousin Dom, the event’s disc jockey. “We were given



Student actors integrate with guests at the Moroné Family Reunion dining experience.



a blank canvas, like we would have had in the real world, and we took it seriously.”

The students received valuable support and guidance from community partners during the planning process. The Dorset Wine Company generously donated wine and vodka for the event series and shared their beverage expertise. The OneSeven Agency worked with students to create a comprehensive marketing plan and press release.

Cotrone, who has a background in interactive theater and improv comedy, enlisted the help of her network to fill character roles. UNLV theater instructor Kate St-Pierre, who is also the artistic director at the LAB LV, served as the creative director, designing the run of show, creating dynamic characters, and scripting memorable moments. Theater students were invited to audition for roles.

It was a legitimate cast of characters that put the students’ skills to the test in a real-life event setting.

“Our mentality changed from ‘This is a class project’ to ‘This is a real show,’” Kloss says. “It expanded my limits and gave me a creative boost. Now, I can do something like this professionally and not be afraid.”

Serving as the students’ culminating experience, the event challenged students to use every event planning muscle at their disposal. They were charged with applying the principles of organizational behavior to effectively manage volunteers, using their understanding of purchasing and cost control to plan the menu, and employing their hospitality marketing skills to effectively promote the event.

Throughout the course, the students honed their problem-solving, conflict resolution, and team communication skills. Their new improv skills also proved invaluable, allowing them to trust their instincts and adapt to any unexpected challenges.

“If anything, my hope is that all the students walk away with the confidence to try something new,” Cotrone says. “You won’t know if something will be a hit unless you try.”

Unique F&B Course Creates Pop-Up Restaurant for Discerning Customers

By Caitlyn Lopez

Instructors: Chef Christopher Lindsay, Dr. Murray Mackenzie, Koco Heo

Skills: Critical Thinking, Problem-Solving, Customer Service, Communication



“When you’re put in a class like this, it forces you outside your comfort zone and encourages you to grow as a person”

Before enrolling in FAB 410, hospitality senior Donovan Strouse considered herself a “microwave chef” with limited cooking experience. However, when she was unexpectedly assigned a kitchen role in class, she was inspired by her peers to rise to the challenge. A few weeks later, she found herself volunteering in the back-of-house, excited to show off her new skills.

“When you’re put in a class like this, it forces you outside your comfort zone and encourages you to grow as a person,” Strouse says. “I’m grateful for how much more confident I am in my abilities because of this class.”

The class’s final culminating experience challenges hospitality seniors like Strouse to demonstrate their proficiency in both theory and practice by creating and operating a pop-up restaurant called Bistro 410.



Students manage customers, cook, and serve to create Bistro 410 (recipe for the Chocolate Brownie Explosion, shown above, is on page 44).



From menu planning to venue décor, students are responsible for every aspect of the restaurant. They spend the early weeks of the semester working in teams to research various cultures and cuisines and develop marketing plans using websites, social media, and food photography. Then, together as a class, they craft a collective menu that spotlights a featured entrée item and specialty beverages for each event.

“We’re not just handing them some materials and recipes to replicate each service,” says Chef Christopher Lindsay, one of the class instructors. “The students own and create everything essentially from scratch. We’re just providing them with a shell of a restaurant.”

In addition to pleasing their instructors, students strive to impress paying customers who expect top-notch food and excellent customer service. And their efforts are paying off! Each dinner service brings in about 60 guests, ranging from industry professionals to the community at large. It’s a true test of the students’ skills and abilities, and a chance for them to shine in a real-world setting.

“Sure, the restaurant can be looked at as an extension of the class, but we don’t even think about that,” Strouse says. “In our minds, we’re opening a restaurant for the day, and we want it to succeed.”

Working and communicating as a team can be a difficult task in itself, but the real challenge is how students navigate problem-solving and conflict resolution in a fast-paced, high-stress environment. In these situations, students learn to draw on their individual strengths

as they work together toward a common goal.

“We’re building their critical thinking skills and giving them the confidence to make decisions on the spot,” says class instructor Dr. Murray Mackenzie. “They’re not only solving the problems, but they’re seeing if those solutions were effective at the end of the day.”

Fortunately, they have some excellent role models to look up to. The course’s three instructors – Lindsay, Mackenzie, and Koco Heo – are all experts in their respective fields, and they demonstrate how to work together and leverage each other’s strengths to achieve success. Lindsay is the culinary mastermind, helping students come up with delicious recipes; Heo excels in marketing and technology, providing guidance in promoting the restaurant; and Mackenzie is well-versed in dining etiquette and beverage pairing, teaching students how to create a memorable dining experience for customers.

“The restaurant has a legacy,” Strouse says. “People come to Bistro 410 because they recognize the name and they know they’ll enjoy a high-quality dining experience.”

Bistro 410 is open from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. on select Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays during the spring and fall semesters. For more information, visit unlv.edu/hospitality/news or email info@unlvbistro410.com.

HR Management Class Tackles Workforce Recruitment in the Post-COVID World

By Angela Ramsey

Instructor: Dr. Laura Book

Skills: Research, Branding, Communication, Training and Development

Staffing issues continue to vex companies across industries, forcing them to ask, “What does this generation of professionals want in the workplace?” This is the question assistant professor Laura Book’s Human Resource Management for Hospitality graduate-level course explored during the Fall 2022 semester.

The project called on students to develop a recruitment plan for Clique Hospitality, a locally-based hospitality company that designs and manages nightclubs, lounges, and restaurant concepts inside hotel-casinos. Despite their success in the marketplace, Clique Hospitality - like so many other companies - has struggled with hiring following the pandemic. The student-generated recruitment plan looked specifically at hiring for Clique’s new restaurant in Palace Station.

“We have an amazing product,” says Clique HR executive and UNLV alumna, Jennifer Bauer. “Where we struggle is recruitment. We want to better communicate the value of our brand to the right audience.”

With that goal in mind, the class rolled up their sleeves and got to work.



Garima Verma works with a fellow graduate student (above) and presents to her HR class (above right).

First, Book immersed the course’s 12 master’s students in staffing theory, exploring strategies for recruiting and retaining talent, particularly in times of labor shortages. Then she divided the class into three teams: The first group focused on who the company should target and how to reach this segment (e.g. targeted social media, hiring events, etc.). The second group evaluated the company’s branding effectiveness against its competitors while crafting an employee value proposition (a statement that includes everything of value that the employer offers its employees). The last group produced a detailed list of benefits that would be attractive to employees as well as cost-effective benefits options that would provide the company with a return on investment.

As part of the first group’s deliverables, they proposed a social media strategy that would promote open positions using content tailored for a specific audience.

“People may not know the company from the employee perspective,” says group one member, Garima Verma. “We want to show snippets of the company’s work culture: How does it feel to work in a restaurant for that company, for instance.”

The class also drew upon market research, like recent surveys suggesting new generations want their employers to offer professional development training that is individualized to their interests - not a one-size-fits-all approach. Other incentives, like travel perks, tickets to concerts, etc., are appealing to millennials and Gen Z as well. Another major factor influencing current employment trends is flexibility. As Verma - a native of India - and her ethnically diverse classmates can attest, this trend is

more universal than ever, defying culture and geography.

“After the pandemic, everyone is shifting the way they want to work,” Verma says. “We want companies to understand that our lives do not revolve around work. Work has to fit into our lives.”

Book emphasized that students serve as a critical sounding board for hospitality companies seeking to build a stable, committed workforce, as they provide insights from the point of view of both the employer and the employee.

“When community partners work with students, it is a win-win,” says Book. “Companies are getting exposure to a pipeline of talent leadership for their organizations; and, at the same time, our students get to experience the industry from the standpoint of a real operator. It forces them to think, ‘What would I do if this were my company?’”

The students’ investment in that question was evident in the thoroughness of the final product, which was presented to Clique Hospitality at the end of the semester. The company then was able to take the recruitment plan back to their teams and begin to incorporate the students’ insights into a practical course of action.

“This plan gives us some very clear ideas on how to find potential employees, how to communicate with these folks, and how to keep them,” says Bauer, whose company is already planning its next steps with UNLV.

“We want to continue strengthening our relationship with UNLV and help students grow through internships, classroom visits, and other project work if possible. That’s what good community partners do.”



THE RIGHT PLACE FOR

“There are plenty of resources, opportunities, and support here for students! Plus, we have diverse, creative, and active student groups.”

- Junghoon Lee, doctoral student
(research interest: consumer behavior in the golf industry)

“UNLV is an exciting place to be because we are on the come-up. I feel like I am part of a university-wide team on a mission to take UNLV to the upper-echelon of academic institutions.”

- Mana Azizoltani, doctoral student
(research interest: application of statistics in hospitality)


“It is one of the best universities for hospitality programs. I graduated from UNLV with my bachelor’s and master’s, and am now pursuing a Ph.D. because I love UNLV so much!”

- Boran Kim, doctoral student
(research interest: technology in hospitality and social responsibility in gaming)

GRADUATE STUDENTS

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"The level of knowledge that our professors have is unbeatable. The student population here is also so kind and easy to talk to.
The knowledge you gain and the friendships you form here are incredible."

- Scarlett Baughman, master's student
(research interest: female leadership in the wine industry)

"UNLV gives students the practical exposure, with numerous co-curricular activities, to become well-rounded professionals. **The program also offers graduate assistantships,** which help international students like me to pursue their dreams without the burden of hefty student loans."

- Garima Verma, master's student
(research interest: culinary and human resources)

To learn more about graduate programs at the Harrah College of Hospitality, visit unlv.edu/hospitality/graduate-programs

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On the Job

Student internships translate into workforce readiness


The UNLV Hospitality College has long championed experiential learning. In addition to mentorship opportunities and on-the-job training, the college helps facilitate internships with top hospitality brands. These internships provide students with invaluable hands-on experience, allowing them to hone their communication skills, solve real-world problems, and deliver exceptional service to actual customers. **Here's what a few students had to say about their internship experiences:**



“The most valuable part of my internship was the opportunity to train with talented managers. I was also delighted to find myself in the company of hardworking alums who demonstrated what an impactful and fulfilling career looks like after graduation.”

- **Sonny Dejoria (Center)**
Auberge du Soleil
Napa Valley, CA



“Gaining exposure and learning from  **multiple departments** was beneficial for me. It helped me piece together the puzzle and see how each department is intricately connected. I was able to take away a better image of what career path I would be suited for and what I find passion in.”

- **Taylor Bauman**
Palms Casino Resort
Las Vegas



“I was not expecting to build the network I created during my internship. The staff and members at the country club were some of the best I have ever worked with in the golf industry. Being a part of their team was a dream come true.”

- **Samuel Irvin (4th from left)**
Sahalee Country Club
Sammamish, WA



“I learned the power of saying ‘yes’ and how it can lead to new opportunities if you just stay open-minded. During my internship, I always said ‘yes’ to working with and meeting new departments. It helped grow my interests in the industry and taught me a lot about myself.”

- **Kevauntay Means (Right)**
MGM Resorts International
Las Vegas

Insights From a Professor

Hospitality College associate professor shares life experiences and the words of wisdom he lives by.

By Hieu Nguyen, UNLV senior majoring in Hospitality Management

With \$600 from his sponsors in his pocket, Mehmet Erdem left Cyprus, flew 6,000 miles across continents and found himself on a college campus with 30,000 students in the United States. As Erdem remembers the fear, uncertainty, and excitement he felt arriving in a new country, he also recalls an instant lesson in acculturation during one of his stays with a host family. It was Thanksgiving. A bunch of people had gathered for dinner, and a box of chocolates was being passed around the table. In Erdem's native Cyprus, people often say "no" to such an offer just to be polite, even though it is something they really like or want to have. Then, they wait for the other person to keep insisting, which eventually leads them to accept the offer. With America being different, you can imagine there was no chocolate left for Erdem that day. He chuckles when thinking about learning his first lesson on cultural differences. He didn't realize at the time, however, that life is full of pleasant surprises, and the United States would open many doors and lead him to the road of creating meaningful impacts.

Today, Erdem is a successful academic at the UNLV College of Hospitality working with students and conducting research to benefit the industry. Though he still has a deep emotional attachment to where he was born, Las Vegas has grown on the educator. He and his wife are now proud to call this lovely city their home and birthplace of their two sons. The best part is, he could not find a better place to deepen his love for hotel operations, technology research, and education.

"I grew up in a politically disputed region of the world with very limited opportunities to pursue a higher-education in hospitality. I will never forget the day I found out that I got a full scholarship to pursue a college education in the U.S. That moment was life-changing. As I embarked on my journey for higher education in hospitality, I still did not have a globally recognized passport or any resemblance of experience in international travel."

What does Dr. Erdem love about his job?

"I love the opportunity to meet so many different people from diverse backgrounds," he says.

Erdem recalls one of his classes that had students from 11 different nations. Being a college professor, he meets students from all socioeconomic backgrounds and upbringings as well. Erdem also is grateful for the professional relationships he's developed. Over the course of nearly 20 years, some of his students have become his colleagues in academia and co-authored research papers with him, while others took on executive positions in the industry, returned to his class as guest speakers, and continue to stay in touch.

"I see them grow professionally and personally," the educator explains. "Even if I'm only able to contribute a tiny bit to their lives, it's extremely uplifting and fulfilling nevertheless."

But what else is so rewarding about teaching? Isn't it just a repetitive profession where professors prepare lectures, teach, grade assignments, and go home?

According to Erdem, teaching accounts for less than 40 percent of the job. The remaining 60 percent of the commitment includes research and service to the profession. For example, in a typical semester, Erdem works with a research journal as an associate editor, manages a committee of faculty members, and serves on the research advisory board of a trade association.

Beyond preparing lectures and delivering lessons, Erdem has the privilege of mentoring and nurturing graduate students to help them become experts in their interested fields while learning to distinguish themselves on the path to success as scholars.

"It feels like being a parent or an older brother," Erdem says. "It comes with a considerable deal of responsibility yet produces a great deal of joy. You see a person flourish and bond with them over time as they move up the career ladder and become successful in their chosen career. It is a great gig!"

What makes his experience even more fulfilling is the opportunity to cultivate relationships and drive curiosity. Erdem's philosophy has always been to treat people the way he wants to be treated.



Here are seven other nuggets of wisdom Erdem likes to share with students:

Allow yourself to be genuine.

“It’s important to communicate from the heart. Say thank you with sincerity. If you remember it’s a person’s birthday, pick up the phone and leave a short message or chat for a couple of minutes. It costs nothing other than a tiny bit of time. If you hear some good news about a former classmate or colleague, reach out, congratulate them, and say how proud you are of them. These little actions are small, but extremely powerful as they can break barriers and generate genuine conversations.”

Don’t approach relationships as transactions.

“We don’t have to always brainstorm a laundry list of the benefits we can possibly get from talking to a person. For example, at your company’s Christmas party, you don’t necessarily have to chase the boss to have a conversation. Instead, try to talk to other people in the room, take time to know other colleagues or somebody’s spouse, and their children, and ask how they are doing. Little things like that show that we care about the person and that we make an effort to get to know them. At the end of the day, let us see fostering relationships as a self-growth process.”

Stay current and stay involved.

“Much like the overall hospitality industry, hospitality technology is ever changing. To stay refreshed, it’s important to get involved and subscribe to news outlets and trade journals. One of my most inquired research studies was inspired by a conversation I had while attending a convention. Also, be actively involved with associations and take leadership roles when you can. I joined a professional association as a student, and years later, got elected as the president of that association. Get out there and meet people. You will be surprised by the opportunities and possibilities that come along.”

Welcome the unpaid work.

“I took on the role as associate editor at a top hospitality technology research journal. Even though the job was time consuming and entirely voluntary, it proved to be a rewarding experience. I oversaw the review process of submissions to the journal and helped authors from all over the world improve their manuscripts so that they would qualify for publication. I took comfort in knowing that I was given a

unique opportunity to contribute and help advance the study of hospitality technology by ensuring rigor in published scientific papers. Through volunteer work, I was able to collaborate with some brilliant people from around the world and help other researchers get their papers published. It gave me the opportunity to gain new experience in a field I’m passionate about. I encourage students to do the same.”

Don’t underestimate the power of trying new things.

“We may be introduced to a project at work that does not fall into our expertise. Let’s take a person who works as a front office cashier, for example. The individual may get a chance to volunteer and get involved in a project with the sales team. By helping sales team, this person finds out they enjoy working in sales and marketing. Or it might be the opposite, and the individual realizes they prefer to stay within the rooms division department. The good part about trying different things, is that we open ourselves up to new experiences, which may include discovering what’s not our cup of tea.”

Don’t be afraid to be vulnerable.

“You shouldn’t be ashamed of being yourself and showing your vulnerabilities when a situation calls for it. I’m constantly asking my students for feedback on how I can better my instruction and improve my class contents. If I don’t know the answer to a posed question, I simply say that I don’t know and then follow up on it to make sure that we both learn and get something out of it. It’s important to be able to admit when something is not working. Fix it and learn from it. It is the best way to advance in your career.”

Avoid falling into the “expert” trap.

“It is great to be an expert in something but do not let that mentality limit your calling, especially in an industry that is ever evolving. Some of the positions that you might hold in the next five to 10 years, may not currently exist. Rather than aiming to work to become an expert, think about your work as a journey of finding your interest or discovering a passion that is meaningful and rewarding. Don’t be afraid to be versatile and gain a broad range of knowledge until you find an area you truly feel passionate about and ready to take a deep dive into it.”



Tribal Colleges Enjoy a UNLV 'Hospitality' Welcome

By Angela Ramsey

The UNLV Harrah College of Hospitality welcomed the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) Board of Directors to Hospitality Hall for their summer 2022 board meeting.

In honor of AIHEC's visit, the college hosted a special reception with food, drink, a traditional blanketing ceremony, and a performance by local Southern Paiute dancers. The college invited university dignitaries from across campus to join in the celebration and share their research interests and partnership opportunities with the group.

Composed of presidents from the nation's 35 Tribal Colleges and Universities, the AIHEC Board provides leadership and advocacy on public policy issues related to American Indian and Alaska Native higher education. The group's visit to UNLV occurred at a pivotal time for UNLV, as the university's commitment to serving traditionally underrepresented student groups has a growing emphasis on Native student outreach and recruitment.

Additionally, UNLV has launched a Tribal Education Initiative centered on specialized programming in tribal law and gaming operations. Funded by a \$9 million gift from the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians (\$6 million for the hospitality program; \$3 million for the law school), the initiative aims to provide Native students the knowledge and skills to access leadership positions in their tribes' hospitality and gaming enterprises.



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Alumnus of the Year

Chris Smith '98
BS Hospitality Administration

By Matt Jacob

To say that Chris Smith knew by the time he reached third grade that he was destined to become a Rebel and land a job at a Las Vegas Strip resort is a stretch. But not much of one.

"Las Vegas got in my blood when I was 8 years old, and our family made a stopover on a road trip," Smith says. "During that visit, we went to Circus Circus, and I remember being enamored by the lights, the action, the excitement – all of it.

"As we got older, our family would routinely take a long summer road trip, and I was always the one with the Rand McNally map, searching out the hotel. I guess you could say I was Hotels.com before the internet."



“I remember being enamored by the lights, the action, the excitement — all of it.”

Flash forward to the end of Smith's high school days in Southern California, and that Vegas blood was still flowing through his veins. So when it came time to settle on a university and major, well, there really wasn't a decision to be made: the UNLV College of Hospitality.

“I always maintained an affinity for Las Vegas, so studying hospitality just seemed like a natural fit; no other field really pulled me in,” Smith says. “And it being home to one of the top hospitality schools in the country, UNLV was a no-brainer.”

Smith's initial plan: Earn his hospitality administration degree, hightail it back home to SoCal, and eventually become a hotel general manager. The plan changed, however, after Smith took an eye-opening human resources class, landed an internship, and then an entry-level position in HR.

From there, as Smith succinctly puts it, “I haven't looked back.”

Following more than 14 years as director of corporate human resources for Caesars Entertainment in Las Vegas, Smith in 2017 accepted an executive HR role with a Caesars property in northern San Diego. Some 18 months later, he returned to Las Vegas to take on the role of vice president and head of HR for Boyd Gaming. Smith currently serves as the senior vice president of human resources at Station Casinos.

As his professional career has flourished, Smith has remained tightly connected to his alma mater. In addition to volunteering his time and talents as a mentor to Hospitality College students, he has served on the college's alumni board and is an active donor.

When did you know for sure that you made the right choice to become a Rebel?

Honestly, right away. I instantly had a bond with Las Vegas and the university. Leaving Southern California at 20 years old and coming to Las Vegas forces you to adapt and make friends quickly. It's even more difficult when you are under 21 in a town that is built on over-21 entertainment. But UNLV provided that social connection right away and opened doors to the city that I had no idea existed.

You've spent your career in human resources within the resort/gaming industry. How did you end up choosing that career path?

By accident. I 100 percent intended to get my degree and pursue a career as a hotel general manager. Then I took a class taught by UNLV professor Vince Eade that opened my eyes to the HR side of the business. Curious to learn more, I did an internship working for the head of HR at Station Casinos. From that experience, my interest continued to grow.

Then through a partnership with UNLV and the Aladdin Hotel & Casino, I landed a job as an entry-level HR clerk during a time when the property was reopening and eventually worked my way into a recruiter position.

I have now spent 25-plus years working in the field, and among the many things I've learned is the journey is never ending in HR. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't learn something from our business leaders and my team.

One of UNLV's core missions is to help students cultivate a sense of self-determination. Describe a moment when you had to rely on self-determination to accomplish a task.

There are many examples, but one in particular really set the foundation for my future.

Like many college students, I balanced a full college schedule with a full-time job, with mine being on the Strip. I elected to work the graveyard shift to ensure I could devote time to both endeavors. It's amazing the amount of energy you have at 21 years old to work crazy hours and handle a heavy schoolwork load, all on very little sleep. However, I kept my eye on the finish line and where I wanted to be in the end, and it helped me get through some very challenging days.

Learning those habits early prepared me for the demanding work in hospitality. I realized quickly that every day brings a new challenge, and perseverance is a big part of success in this industry.

UNLV students and alumni are encouraged to embrace the “Rebel Spirit” — to be daring and gutsy and to resist convention. Describe a time when your “Rebel Spirit” was on full display.

Generally, I would not label myself as daring. However, being part of a rebranding effort at Harrah's Rincon Casino-Resort — a Caesars property in north San Diego — was by far the most innovative cultural experience of my career. In an effort to stand out among the dozens of tribal casinos in the surrounding area, the resort's leadership team — in partnership with tribal council leaders — renamed the area Funner, California.

It took everything I knew about the conventional team-member experience and either amplified it or reinvented it. From how we engaged with customers to appearance standards, it truly was a cultural evolution.

What I learned from that experience and have carried into my current role is that we should question convention. That said, reinvention doesn't have to be overly dramatic to significantly impact the employee experience. Sometimes, the simple things make the biggest difference.

Rebels Forever

Alumni Board Members Leave a Lasting Impact on Hospitality College

By Caitlyn Lopez

From Vegas nightlife to the casino floor, members of the Hospitality College Alumni Chapter Board work in all corners of the industry, bringing a wealth of experience and expertise to their roles on the board. Their professional range is essential in ensuring the college's programs and initiatives are reflective of the challenges faced by hospitality professionals today.

Alumni Marcus Threats and Patrik Balint have made significant contributions to the college through their service on the board, and although their terms ended in December 2022, these Rebels remain dedicated to supporting the college in any way they can.



Patrik Balint '14 MS/MBA
Customer Revenue Management,
American Express GBT

Patrik Balint's enthusiasm for helping fellow Rebels has been evident in his work as an alumni board member; his innovative thinking has earned him a reputation as a compassionate leader.

Perhaps Balint's most notable contribution was the launch of the board's Capstone Conversations. The program allows hospitality students to dine and network with alumni at the college's student-run Capstone Café, providing a valuable opportunity for them to seek career advice, make connections, and receive guidance from experienced industry professionals.

"I am thankful for Patrik's contributions to the chapter's student engagement initiatives," says board president Jenn Oshiro Rivers. "The success of the Capstone Conversations program is a testament to his dedication to supporting the development and success of hospitality students."

Maintaining strong connections with hospitality students is a key priority for Balint, who plans to continue his involvement in the college's mentor program. Over the past four years, Balint has had the opportunity to guide and support hospitality students as they launch their careers, taking great pride in preparing the next generation of industry leaders for success.

"These are high quality students going to the best hospitality college in the world," Balint says. "As professionals, we get to see what students are expecting from the industry and what their plans are. There's input on both sides."



Marcus Threats
'87, '99 MBA
 Hotel Broker,
 Marcus & Millichap

Marcus Threats has played a crucial role in shaping the college's alumni board literally since day one. As a founding member of the board, Threats (and a handful of fellow Hospitality Rebels) created the group in 2002 as a platform for alumni to stay connected with each other and the college.

After attending law school in San Diego, Threats returned to Las Vegas and rejoined the alumni board in 2018, serving on both the alumni engagement and student engagement committees. His commitment to the cause of engagement has helped strengthen the ties between alumni, students, and the college, and his efforts have had a lasting impact on the board's success.

"Over the years, Marcus has made it his mission to bring Hospitality Rebels together," says Maggie Hausbeck, assistant dean of external relations for the college. "He is committed to supporting students and fellow alumni alike, and inspires a passion for lifelong learning and professional development."

Despite his departure from the board, Threats' unwavering support of the Hospitality College will continue. He's passionate about advancing the college's diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives through educational outreach at predominantly black middle and high schools in Clark County. He has also generously given his time as a mentor in the college's mentor program and taught finance classes as a part-time instructor.

"What has kept me involved in the college is the recognition that I wouldn't be who I am today without my degree," Threats says. "UNLV has allowed me to do things that most people spend their entire lives dreaming they could do, and I want to share that with others."

We would like to acknowledge the members of the UNLV Harrah College of Hospitality Alumni Board:

PRESIDENT

Jenn Oshiro Rivers '05, '08 M.Ed

VICE PRESIDENT

Andrew Jordan Fischette '10

SECRETARY

Celine Endy '18

TREASURER

Aniela Szymanski '99

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The Harrah College of Hospitality Alumni Board works to foster pride and engagement among alumni and students while also advancing college priorities, such as recruitment, industry collaboration, and more. Directors can serve for up to three consecutive two-year terms.

Interested in volunteering or learning more? **Contact Maggie Hausbeck at margaret.hausbeck@unlv.edu or 702.895.1052.**

With a trio of Hospitality College alumni leading the way, locally operated CraftHaus Brewery gets in the Rebel Spirit by creating the official beer of UNLV – and opening their doors to the next generation of professionals.

By Matt Jacob



IN GOOD TASTE

We'll Drink to That!

Whether reaching into the fridge or across the bar, you know what's coming moments after your warm hand grasps an ice-cold beer: a refreshingly delicious, fermented amalgamation of grain, hops, yeast, and water.

And to quote Will Ferrell from the movie *Old School*:
"Once it hits your lips, it's so good!"

But what if the joy that frosty goodness produces could reach another level with the infusion of some additional ingredients, all undetectable to the eye or palate? Ingredients like passion and pride, benevolence and spirit – *Rebel* spirit?

Could we – or, more accurately, a trio of UNLV Hospitality College alums – interest you in a sip of that?

It's been nearly two decades since Wyndee and Dave Forrest donned a cap and gown and walked across the stage at the Thomas & Mack Center to receive their UNLV hospitality degrees (she in hotel administration with an emphasis in entertainment management; he in hotel management with an emphasis in recreation and leisure).

Which means it's also been nearly two decades since the Forrests first fell in love with beer during a whirlwind, three-week post-graduation vacation that took them to eight European countries.

After fully immersing themselves in the craft beer drinking cultures in places like Germany and Austria, the couple returned to the states with a new hobby. Two years later, with an 18-month-old son in tow, they traveled back to Europe with an itinerary mostly planned around beer.

By this point, their hobby had exploded into a full-on passion – particularly for Dave, who began homebrewing in his kitchen, eventually winning a competition that sent him to a beer camp at the Sierra Nevada brewery in Northern California.

“Dave and I wanted to find a way to connect and give back to the university, especially the Hospitality College.”

-Wyndee Forrest '04



Not long after Dave came home, the unexpected hobby that had turned into a passion turned into a business idea. After overcoming a handful of obstacles – the biggest being a licensing process that led to Wyndee unwittingly becoming a registered lobbyist – the Forrests opened CraftHaus Brewery in a Henderson industrial park in September 2014.

After the usual early growing pains, CraftHaus became a big hit with locals – so much so that a second outpost opened in downtown Las Vegas in September 2019. By this point, fellow UNLV Hospitality College alum Cameron Fisher – who graduated in 2009 with a major in Foodservice Management – had joined the team as CraftHaus' head brewer.

With additional small-production breweries – as well as a wine bar and distillery – joining the Forrests' flagship spot in the Henderson industrial complex, a congenial booze district organically emerged.

Along the way, the trio of Rebels reconnected with their alma mater, distributing CraftHaus products at multiple Hospitality College alumni events.

(L-R) CraftHaus head brewer Cameron Fisher '09, with owners Dave '04 and Wyndee Forrest '04.

It wasn't easy, but thanks to a loyal customer base and a lot of takeout orders, CraftHaus weathered the pandemic storm.

Then in late 2020, with the world riding the never-ending COVID-surge roller coaster, it struck Wyndee and Dave that there could – and should – be more engagement between themselves and the university that provided the hospitality education that made CraftHaus possible.

“Dave and I wanted to find a way to connect and give back to the university, especially the Hospitality College,” Wyndee Forrest says. “Not only are Dave, Cameron, and I all hospitality alumni, but our brand ambassador, Mike Villasenor, also is a UNLV grad.

“We thought there was a great partnership potential that eventually could be parlayed into an educational component that wasn't available when we were going through the program. It seemed like perfect timing, especially with the craft beer industry seeing a big boom in recent years.”

They ultimately came up with this idea: Create the “official craft beer of UNLV” that would be offered at sporting events, through local retailers and at both CraftHaus taprooms, with a portion of the proceeds donated back to the university.

Wyndee and Dave consulted with Hospitality College Dean Stowe Shoemaker and Maggie Hausbeck, Assistant Dean for External Affairs. After both gave an enthusiastic thumbs up, the Forrests and Fisher went to work on developing the beer and associated packaging.

Finally, in March 2022 – after a little trial and error, taste-testing, and the clearing of some legal hurdles – Rebel Spirit was officially born.

Business was thriving. And then ... COVID.

Ask anyone who has had success in the beverage business, and they'll tell you that how a product looks on the outside is just as important – if not more so – as what is contained on the inside. So let's start with Rebel Spirit's external look, which was the brainchild of local designer Victoria Hart of Pink Kitty Creative.

Of course, the 16-ounce can features the school's iconic scarlet and gray coloring. The former comes in the form of the beer's name – with “Rebel” in a classic script font – against the gray background.

But look closely at the can and you'll notice subtle homages to both the Hospitality College and university in general.

The shimmering vertical silver stripes are a nod to the entrance to Hospitality Hall; the official UNLV logo and red ribbon, which can be seen on banners hanging from light poles all across campus, is featured on the side of the can; and the famous steel flashlight sculpture that has been a fixture on campus since 1981 is depicted on the front underneath the lettering.

“I told Victoria my idea – that I wanted the packaging to be hospitality focused,” Wyndee Forrest says. “After she did a photo shoot on campus and took a picture of the flashlight, we said, ‘Let's blend the old with the new.’

“The flashlight is kind of an Easter Egg. If you know, you know. And when you see it, you see it.”

Once you pop the top of the cleverly designed can and tip it, out pours a crisp, smooth-tasting golden ale with a 5% ABV. Head brewer Fisher crafted the flavor in consultation with the Forrests, who wanted a drinkable beer that could be enjoyed by all Rebel fans.

“We were mindful to choose a beer style that would appeal to many palates, not just a craft beer drinker's palate,” Wyndee Forrest says. “The look and flavor is a great example of a traditional beer style.

“We also wanted a beer that was ideal for tailgating, which is why we chose a golden ale with a lower alcohol-by-volume

content. We knew that many people would be enjoying the beer during long athletic events. So we wanted to make sure that folks could enjoy a few beers responsibly and still safely get home.”

Since production first started ramping up in early 2022, CraftHaus has been brewing between 80 and 160 cases of Rebel Spirit monthly. It's available on tap and in cans at both CraftHaus locations and in cans at Allegiant Stadium (home of the UNLV football team and Las Vegas Raiders).

Also, retailers such as Total Wine & More, Lee's Discount Liquor, and Khoury's Fine Wine & Spirits sell Rebel Spirit in 16-ounce four packs.

And, of course, there's Rebel Spirit served at campus events.

“Whenever we make a beer, we want it to be bigger than ourselves, and that was exactly our mindset with Rebel Spirit,” Wyndee Forrest says. “We want it to have meaning to other people as well. So it's exciting to see customers come in and ask for it. It's also exciting to see UNLV alumni, current students and people who support the university out there enjoying what we have created.

“It's definitely a source of pride – like sending your babies out into the world and watching them be successful.”

While Rebel Spirit (the beer) continues to flow throughout the Las Vegas Valley, the other kind of Rebel spirit continues to flow through the veins of the CraftHaus team.

Eager to share their knowledge with and inspire the next generation of brewers, small business owners and hospitality professionals, the Forrests are opening their doors to UNLV students.

During the Fall 2022 semester, a group of about 50 hospitality undergraduate students toured the CraftHaus brewery and taproom in Henderson. Fisher explained the entire brewing process, detailing the various ingredients that go into each batch and what makes each beer different.

Afterward, the students moved to the taproom, where Wyndee Forrest led

“Whenever we make a beer, we want it to be bigger than ourselves.” - Wyndee Forrest '04

the group through a sensory analysis of five different beer styles. She also explained the entire business operation, pointing out that CraftHaus is three entities in one: a manufacturer, a wholesale distributor, and a retailer.

“With large-scale businesses, you place an order [for something] and it magically shows up,” Wyndee Forrest says. “But you don’t know who made it, you don’t know the story behind it. So that’s what we really want to convey to students – that there are real people behind this, that this is our passion and it’s what it drives us every day to improve upon our product, improve upon our story and improve upon our communication.

“That’s really the big difference between craft beer and macro-beer manufacturers – the people, the stories, and the passion behind it.”

Going forward, Forrest says the plan is to offer at least one tour per semester – and not just for Hospitality College students. She says she has been contacted by officials from the UNLV Howard R. Hughes College of Engineering who are interested in showing students how a brewery works, “because there’s always something to fix in a brewery!”

Also, representatives from the UNLV Lee Business School have reached out for a tour so their students can see how a small business operates.

Beyond the educational tours, the CraftHaus team is hoping to soon make an even greater – and more lasting – impact with UNLV. The ultimate goal: Work with Dean Shoemaker and other administrators to develop a craft beer-specific academic concentration within the Hospitality College.

Forrest says she, her husband, and Fisher would have a hand in creating the course.

“What we can offer hospitality students is our unique perspective, which is valuable to their success, the success of our town, and the success of hospitality globally,” Wyndee Forrest says. “After all, the craft beer industry is built on camaraderie. And camaraderie is really the sister to hospitality.

“So making people feel welcome and supporting them and lifting them up – that’s what our industry is built upon. It all goes hand in hand.”

Chocolate Brownie Explosion



SERVINGS: 24 BROWNIES

INGREDIENTS

18 oz unsweetened chocolate
 4 cups salted butter, softened
 6 oz unsweetened cocoa powder
 2 tsp cinnamon powder
 13 large eggs
 3 additional egg yolks
 7 cups granulated sugar
 4 tbsp vanilla
 2 cups all-purpose flour
 3 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips

By Chef Chris Lindsay

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 280 degrees. Spray or grease three 9-inch x 13-inch pans and line with parchment paper.
2. Combine unsweetened chocolate and butter in a medium saucepan and melt over medium-low heat (do not exceed 130 degrees), stirring constantly until almost melted.
3. Add cocoa powder and cinnamon to the mixture and stir until smooth. Remove pan from heat.
4. Using an electric mixer on medium speed, beat the eggs/yolks, sugar, and vanilla in large mixing bowl until light yellow in color and slightly fluffy and smooth (about 2 minutes).
5. With the mixer on low speed, slowly add melted chocolate-butter mixture to the egg-sugar mixture. Blend on low until smooth (about 2 minutes).
6. Add flour to the mixture and mix thoroughly (about 2-3 minutes).
7. Pour batter equally into the three greased, parchment paper-lined pans (about 3/4 inch deep).
8. Smooth surfaces with a spatula and sprinkle semi-sweet chocolate chips on top.
9. Bake on center rack of oven for 30 to 45 minutes at 280 degrees or until the surface is dry and begins cracking. The batter should be set, and a toothpick inserted into the center should come out clean. Do not overbake.
10. Remove and cool for 1 hour. Cover and refrigerate overnight.
11. The next day, cut brownies into 2-inch x 2-inch squares and reheat in microwave for 50-55 seconds before serving. For optimum taste, serve warm with vanilla bean ice cream and melted chocolate sauce.

Dash of Rebel flavor featured in Turkish culinary book

In partnership with the Aegean Exporters' Associations and Nevada Restaurant Association, several Hospitality College faculty members contributed to *Turkish Tastes*, a comprehensive culinary reference book about Turkish culture and cuisine.

Dean Stowe Shoemaker, assistant professor Murray Mackenzie, and Chef Mark Sandoval are part of a global lineup of chefs and hospitality experts featured in the book, sharing recipes, perspectives on food and wine, and tips on health and nutrition.

The Nevada Restaurant Association demonstrates how incorporating authentic Turkish ingredients into dishes can help local chefs create more innovative plates and elevate educational experiences in the culinary arts.

Turkish Tastes can be downloaded for free at turkishtaste.org/book.



Dean Shoemaker (R) mingles at the 2022 Summer Fancy Food Show in New York.



WHAT'S NEW IN RESEARCH

Making the Cut

UNLV PGA Program is Tracking the Swings of Students and Pros Alike

A unique partnership and research facility is evolving the game of golf.

By John Domol

Bobby Jones famously said that golf is a game of inches: the slightest deviation can make or break your entire round. A golf swing is a complex machine full of moving parts – shoulders, hips, and arms communicating in harmony, sending the ball whistling down the fairway.

The trick is remembering how exactly you did it. And UNLV's swing lab is full of reminders.

Housed within UNLV's Hospitality Hall, the Dwaine Knight Center for Golf Management operates one of just 17 programs

accredited by the PGA of America through its PGA Golf Management University program. Around 100 undergrads are enrolled annually, training to enter a golf economy worth about \$2 billion locally and \$84 billion nationally.

"We're really fortunate to have this program," says Christopher Cain, director of UNLV's PGA program. "And fortunate to have the opportunity to serve nearly 60 golf courses in Southern Nevada; golf is a big deal here and fits perfectly into the hospitality program."

UNLV's is one of just a few university programs to be situated within a hospitality management school. As a formal academic concentration in the top-ranked UNLV Harrah College of Hospitality, the program reflects the deepening tie between the golf business and its growing presence within the hospitality and tourism industry.

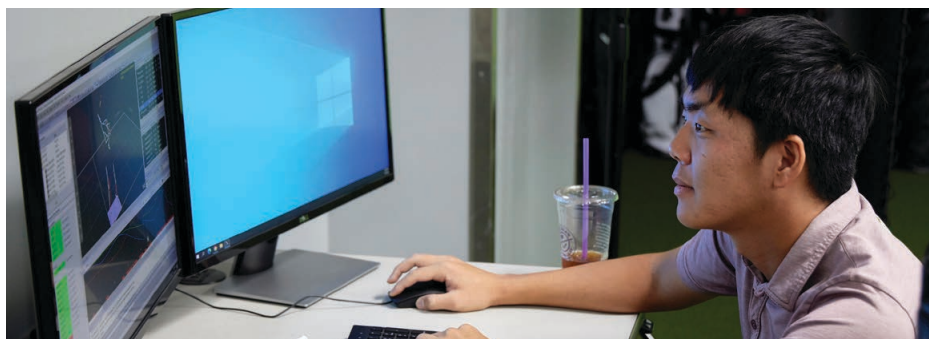
Right Club for the Job

Golf has been around for centuries, but the game continues to change – especially the clubs. There's nothing out there quite like Happy Gilmore's hockey stick-putter yet, but lighter weight materials and hybrids have altered the look of golf.

Using these modern clubs, along with advanced analytics that measure every movement of the golfer, the program's simulation lab has captured thousands of unique swings. Analytics have found favor throughout amateur and professional sports in recent years, and UNLV's lab epitomizes the power of parsing data in golf. Both students and professionals, such as PGA Tour pro Sangmoon Bae, have used it to fine-tune, correct, and evaluate their swings for competitive play.

The lab is one of less than a handful of its kind in the nation. The data collected reveals every nuance of a player's golf swing, along with the end result on the course – and this is where the program really shines.

The data collected reveals every nuance of a player's swing, along with the end result on the course.



“A lot of movements that produce results at the highest level – at the elite level – are hard to see with the naked eye,” Cain says. “So, we invested in a lab that can literally, down to the millisecond and millimeter, identify golfer swings so we can take a look at things at a much deeper level and analyze the differences.”

If you’ve ever wondered while watching a golf event, “How do they do that?” Well, that’s what’s being answered in the lab. The swing-tracking is made possible through a variety of systems working together, including 3-D motion capture models of the golfer.

With the help of motion-capture suits, force plates, and more than 10 cameras, information on strike force, accuracy, and ball positioning are simulated on a variety of virtually recreated golf courses.

The expertise of the program isn’t exclusive to the technical side, either. There’s a full public golf shop that gives students the opportunity to learn about inventory management, marketing, and how to fit golfers with the clubs that work best for them – broadening the applications of the program.

And it’s working. UNLV’s program has an astounding 100 percent success rate in placing graduates in jobs within the golf or hospitality industry after their time on campus.

“We’ve always had this passion of just trying to understand the game at a higher level, so we can improve our teachings in the classroom and also maybe add another brick of knowledge to areas of research,” says Cain.

The Most Important Shot in Golf Is the Next One

Being one of only a few PGA programs in the country means every piece of data can make a difference. And because of that, UNLV and Penn State University have partnered to increase the diversity of their research and double their captures, heightening their students’ – and their own – understanding of the game.

“There’s a ton of value in that,” says Eric Handley, director of Penn State’s Golf Teaching and Research Center. “UNLV might have a real strength that we can also benefit from, and Penn State might have a strength that UNLV can benefit from and work together in that regard.”

One of those benefits is having a say in what comes next. The partnership has the potential to fuel the next big thing – from a new generation of golf instruction to a hot, breakthrough technology or style (think belly putters) that sways consumer behaviors in the golf shop.

“With the data collection going on here, we can potentially influence what people decide to spend money on,” Cain says. “If they see maybe there’s an advantage to a certain club or technique in their game, and it’s backed by the science, then maybe we’ve discovered something here that’s pretty special.”

REALITY CHECK

Hospitality College faculty and graduate students collaborate with fellow researchers across academia, investigating some of the industry's most intriguing topics and trends. Here's a look at some of their compelling works from last year.

GAMING

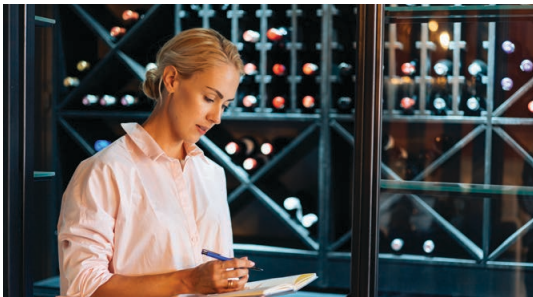
Responsible Gaming

The growing availability of data related to gambling behavior has given rise to numerous studies focused on responsible gaming. For this study, an interdisciplinary team of researchers reviewed 37 studies to evaluate the current state of data science applications for responsible gambling. The article was published in the *International Gambling Studies* (November 2022): "Applications of Data Science for Responsible Gambling: A Scoping Review." (Authors: Kasra Ghaharian, Brett Abarbanel, Dylan Phung, Piyush Puranik, Shane Kraus, Alan Feldman, and Bo Bernhard)



Gaming revenue and free play

Researchers analyzed the player performance data of 600 loyalty club members (over a 191-day sample period), collected from the records of a tribal casino operating in a competitive repeater market. The study seeks to understand the impacts of changes in free-play award values on visitation frequency and gaming revenue. You can find the article in *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly* (June 2022): "The Impact of Free-Play: A Longitudinal Study of Trip-Level Visitation and Wagering Behavior," (Authors: Anthony F. Lucas, Katherine Spilde, and A. K. Singh)



GENDER DIVERSITY IN HOSPITALITY

The study explores the relationship between the gender diversity of top management teams and the risk-taking behavior of the firm. The study also looks at how incentive pay and age affect this dynamic. You can read about it in the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* (February 2022): "Top Management Team Gender Diversity and Firm Risk-taking in the Hospitality Industry." (Authors: Ozgur Ozdemir and Ezgi Erkmen)

GOLF

Running a successful golf enterprise

Golf's Rebirth: Rapidly Evolving Applications in Hospitality and Sport Management (September 2022) identifies the soft skills – such as leadership, customer service, marketing, etc. – necessary to create a thriving golf enterprise. The book also highlights the various technical fields required to successfully run a golf facility, including food and beverage, events, revenue management, golf biomechanics, and technology. (Authors: Christopher Cain and Lisa Cain)





HOSPITALITY WORKFORCE

Employee reviews

Research shows that employees seek jobs at companies they view as prestigious. The aim of this research is to understand the impact of “star ratings” from online review websites like Glassdoor, as well as “Best Employer” awards, on perceptions of organizational prestige for hospitality applicants. The article was published in *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly* (November 2022): “The Impacts of Employee Reviews and Employer Awards on Job Seekers’ Application Intentions.” (Authors: Yunxuan Zhang, Cass Shum, and Amanda Belarmino)

TECHNOLOGY

Hotel kiosks

The study analyzes the effect of “technostressors” on guests using a check-in/out kiosk within a full-service hotel environment. Using survey data collected from 630 hotel customers, the research delves into guests’ perceptions about the check-in/out kiosk experience and how these perceptions influence their intention to revisit the hotel. You can read this article in the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights* (June 2022): “The Bright and Dark Sides of Hotel Kiosks: An Empirical Study” (Authors: Jungsun “Sunny” Kim, SungJun Joe, and Mehmet Erdem)

Gen Z and service robots

This paper looks at hotel employees’ perceived risks about service robots, in terms of job security, and the role of leadership in mitigating the negative effects of these perceptions. The researchers collected data from 281 frontline Gen Z hotel employees in China, who were rated on tech savviness, social skills, and service robot risk awareness. The article can be found in the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* (March 2022): “Robots Can’t Take my Job: Antecedents and Outcomes of Gen Z Employees’ Service Robot Risk Awareness.” (Authors: Heyao Yu, Cass Shum, Michelle Alcorn, Jie Sun, and Zhaoli He)



TOURISM

Literary tourism

Tourism researchers have sought to examine the motivations of literary tourists – a subset of tourists who organize their travel around places and events from literary texts. Using a theoretical framework, this study seeks to add scholarship to this area and provide guidance on ways to attract literary tourists in the post-COVID-19 world. You can read about it in the *Journal of Heritage Tourism* (November 2022): “Application of Theory to Literary Tourism: A Comparison of Parasocial Interaction Theory and Co-Creation Theory.” (Author: Amanda Belarmino.)

Cross-cultural look at competitive intelligence

This article examines the types of competitive intelligence (i.e., information on competitors leveraged for strategic advantage) used by revenue managers in Istanbul and Las Vegas. In addition to cross-cultural differences, the study looks at how the concept of competitive intelligence changed after the pandemic. The article is published in the *Journal of Revenue and Pricing Management* (May 2022): “A Cross-Cultural Study of Competitive Intelligence in Revenue Management.” (Authors: Tevfik Demirciftci and Amanda Belarmino)



Peer-to-peer accommodation

Researchers examined which motivators have the strongest effect on an individual’s intention to repurchase a peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation, like Airbnb. The study explores the effects of 13 motivators, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on these motivators. The article is published in the *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management* (March 2022): “P2P Accommodation Motivators and Repurchase Intention: A Comparison of Indirect and Total Effects Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic.” (Authors: Wen Jiang, Cass Shum, Billy Bai, and Mehmet Erdem)



far from HOME

**Highlighting
International
Students
and their
experiences
at UNLV**



Making Connections at UNLV

International student chose UNLV to live the American college experience.

By **MIKAILA BECZE**

Ka Young Bae considered Hong Kong and Anyang home for most of her life, but she was eager to experience American college life when considering higher education. UNLV's city scene mixed with the globally ranked hospitality program was enough to convince Bae to pack her bags and head west to Las Vegas. The senior has since embraced her new home by getting involved with as many organizations as possible and meeting great mentors along the way.

How have you been engaged on campus outside the classroom?

There are many benefits from being part of the UNLV community. I volunteered multiple times with the Hospitality catering team, which also led me to an official cook assistant position for the Fertitta catering team. I moved onto a position with the Admissions office as a Rebel recruiter I also involved myself in numerous hospitality clubs..

Have you been mentored and/or inspired by a faculty member? Who were they and how did they make an impact?

I have definitely been inspired by one of my favorite professors - Dr. Finley Cotrone. She is not only an amazing professor but she always gives our class personal life lessons in the hospitality industry and how she grew her career with Four Seasons. Outside of school and work, she also works with National Society of Minorities in Hospitality (NSMH) and Dress for Success.

What is your favorite memory or experience at UNLV?

My favorite experiences have to be Epicurean Society events and working as a Rebel recruiter. By joining those respective teams, I have made countless memories and lifelong friends, and it also led me to make even more connections beyond the club/work.

What is the number one reason a future student should consider UNLV?

For the hospitality program! This is the best school for this kind of study, and I have made so many connections through work, club activities, and just making friends in classes.

Describe your involvement in student organizations.

I am involved with the Epicurean Society (current VP and previous secretary) and Hospitality Financial & Technological Professionals (current head of marketing and recruitment and previous secretary).

What else should we know?

As an international student, I felt very welcomed by other local students and am very thankful for my experiences, scholarship, and connections I made at UNLV.

From Bavaria to the Neon Desert

German exchange student makes a once-in-a-lifetime journey to immerse herself in the business of hospitality and the customs of a new country.

By Kaila Seidler, UNLV senior majoring in Hospitality Management and Film

Imagine traveling halfway across the world to study hospitality management in the Entertainment Capital of the World. This is Sarah Jung's reality.

An international student from Munich, Jung is attending the UNLV Harrah College of Hospitality through the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX) program. The program gives young people 18 to 24 years old the opportunity to be fully immersed in another language and culture by spending two semesters abroad.

Though CBYX students like Jung get to choose the country in which they want to study and work, the program is in charge of placement within that country. Jung never thought she would be placed in Las Vegas; but for her, being here is like a dream come true.

"It's been amazing for me," says Jung, whose passion happens to be the hospitality industry. "I get a totally different view of the Strip."

Jung says she had always wanted to spend a year abroad, and after a friend recommended the program to her, she decided to apply. Her acceptance marks the first time in more than a decade that UNLV has hosted a student through CBYX.

Students enrolled in CBYX split their time between classes and work experience related to their field of interest. Jung is a part-time student, taking two courses while working part time at Caesars Entertainment as a special event coordinator (she also works with exhibition services).

"This is a great program for students who want to learn, gain work experience, and get paid," Jung says. "You get to work in the field that you're studying in a completely new environment."

The hotel-casino setting is a big change for Jung. As an event management student back in Germany, she worked at the Trade Fair Center in Munich and also was involved in coordinating trade show visits for politicians.

Jung's experience at the Hospitality College has allowed her to both expand her knowledge about the inner workings of the hospitality industry and discover professional opportunities within the field.

"Every time you have class, you learn about 10 new jobs you didn't know about before," Jung says.

The German also has made it a point to get involved on campus, stating it's "really easy to make friends and meet other international students here." Jung's favorite campus event so far has been UNLV Premier, which she attended with her host siblings who are UNLV students as well.

During her time in the United States, Jung has been living with an American host family, who both happen to work at UNLV. In her first month, the family took her on a road trip to the Grand Canyon, which Jung admitted was "one of the best things she's ever seen." Living with her host and having authentic "American" experiences, such as celebrating Thanksgiving, also has been a highlight for the exchange student.

Besides work and study, the CBYX program requires community involvement – a component Jung also has thoroughly embraced. In addition to her host family's church, she has become involved with the local organization Goodie Two Shoes, helping more than 500 students from low-income schools receive brand new shoes.

"My favorite part is everything," Jung says of her experience in Las Vegas.

Additionally, Jung received a congressional internship that allowed her to spend six weeks in Washington, D.C., working in the office of U.S. representative Juan Vargas. She then returned to UNLV for the spring semester.

The CBYX Program is transferable both ways. Financial support for American students studying in Germany is fully provided, and there is no German language requirement. UNLV students interested in studying in Germany should reach out to kathy.callahan@unlv.edu and kristina.schmid@unlv.edu for information including application deadlines, scholarship information, and more. Anyone interested in becoming a host family should also reach out.

Sarah Jung on the right with her host sister Emma Schmid.



Checking In

TRENDS, INNOVATIONS
& STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Unique Career Opportunities
in Stadium and Event Management p.54

by Matt Jacob





Our Arena

In recent years, hospitality has merged with sports and entertainment, opening the door for unique career opportunities in stadium and event management. Meet two UNLV Hospitality College alums who are testing their hospitality management chops in this booming segment.

By Matt Jacob

If you have had the opportunity to attend an event at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas – be it a UNLV or Las Vegas Raiders football game, international soccer match or concert – there’s a good chance Samantha Banz and Nolan Miles helped shape your experience.

No, neither are athletes nor performers. Rather, the two Hospitality College alums serve integral guest experience roles through separate jobs at the stadium.

Banz, a 2017 Hospitality College graduate, is the senior premium suites manager for Silver & Black Hospitality (Levy Restaurants), which handles food and beverage operations at Allegiant. Her primary responsibility: Ensure that the stadium’s 127 VIP suites and eight club spaces are properly set up and stocked with the food and drink items specified by guests.

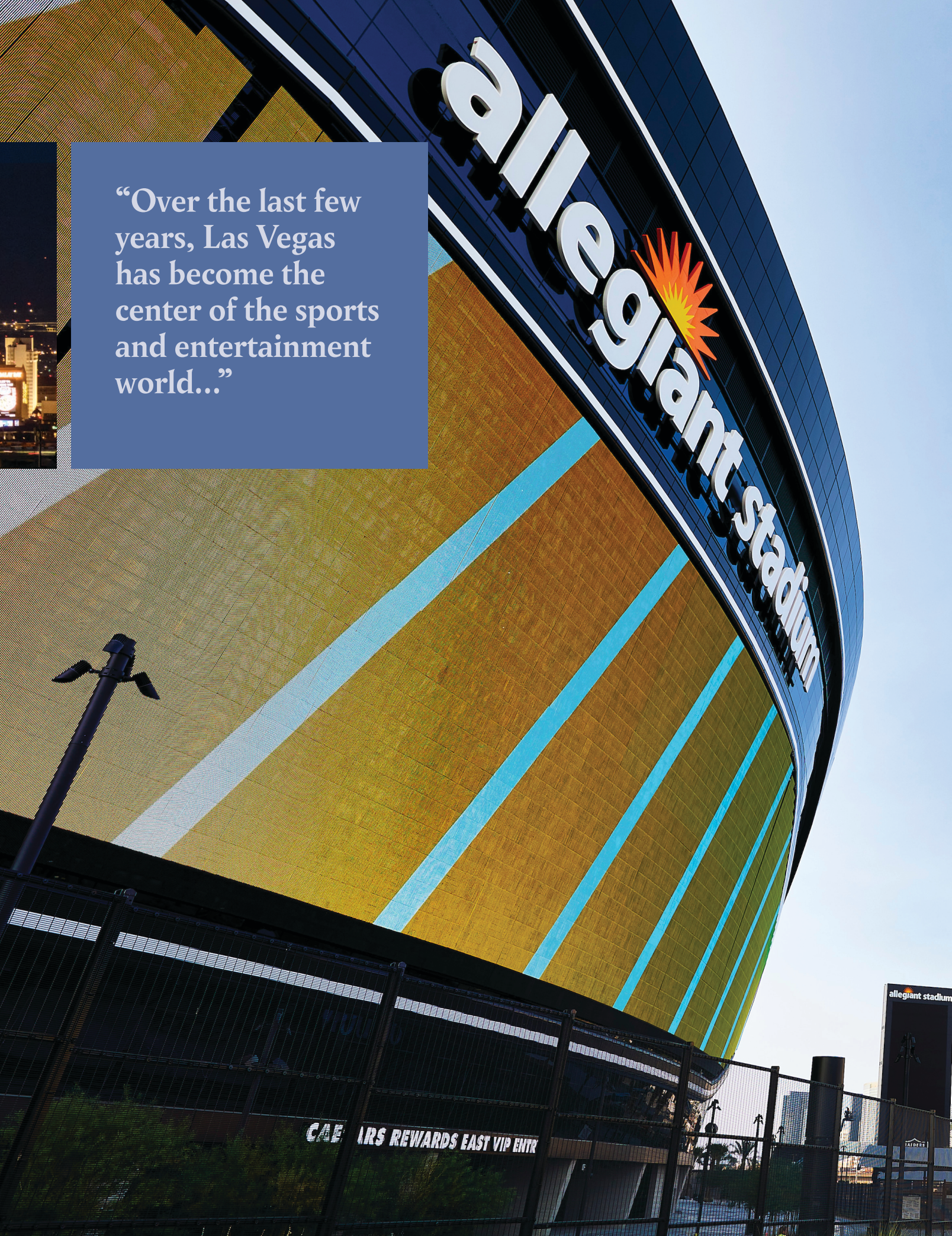
Meanwhile, Miles has been working on the front lines at Allegiant since October 2021 as a guest experience representative.

Miles, who completed his hospitality degree in December, is charged with everything from addressing ticketing issues to relocating guests with ADA-specific needs to overseeing photo opportunities and giveaways for kids.

Banz and Miles are part of a new generation of students who have confronted the traditional hospitality vocational path – hotels, casinos, restaurants, resorts – and opted for a new fork in the road: careers in stadium and arena management.

“Over the last few years, Las Vegas has become the center of the sports and entertainment world – especially with the Raiders and Golden Knights coming to town and talks of a Major League Baseball and/or NBA team coming next,” Miles says. “Also, The Sphere [just off] the Strip is going to be one of the most exciting concert venues in the world.

“But it’s not just Las Vegas. Stadium and arena management can take you anywhere in the world.”



“Over the last few years, Las Vegas has become the center of the sports and entertainment world...”

CAESARS REWARDS EAST VIP ENTR

allegiant stadium

TAIDERS

[Banz and Miles] opted for a new fork in the road: careers in stadium and arena management.

Banz and Miles share more than just a common career interest and workplace. Both arrived in Las Vegas from faraway lands – she from Switzerland, he from Guam.

Samantha Banz

Banz was immersed in hospitality from birth, as her family has operated a restaurant just outside Zurich for three generations. (It initially had a bed-and-breakfast component.)

Both her parents went the hospitality route, as did her uncle who once served as an executive chef for Hilton Hotels.

As a youngster, Banz periodically worked at the restaurant her great-grandparents opened. Although she had hospitality in her blood, she had absolutely no desire to follow in the family footsteps as an adolescent.

“Growing up, every conversation – whether it was with my parents, grandparents, cousins’ parents or at any family gathering – was centered around food, hospitality and guest service,” she recalls. “And my cousin and I would look at each other and say, ‘Who cares how this was cooked? We’re never going into food and beverage!’”

Banz began to have a change of heart during her junior year of high school. That’s when her family – which by then had relocated to Portland, Oregon – took a trip to Las Vegas around Christmas in 2011.

“That first visit to Vegas sparked a bit of a thrill in me, seeing all the huge hotels and how vibrant the city was,” she says. “After that, I thought, ‘You know what? I’m going to give this a shot.’”

By July 2012, Banz and her family had left Portland for Las Vegas, and she spent her senior year at Liberty High School.

From there, Banz enrolled at UNLV and decided to major in hospitality. She chose the event management concentration because it “allowed me to be a little more creative and operational.”

During her time as a Rebel, Banz helped plan the 2016 presidential debate dinner hosted by the UNLV Foundation. She also assisted with two annual Hospitality College events: UNLVino and the Vallen Dinner.

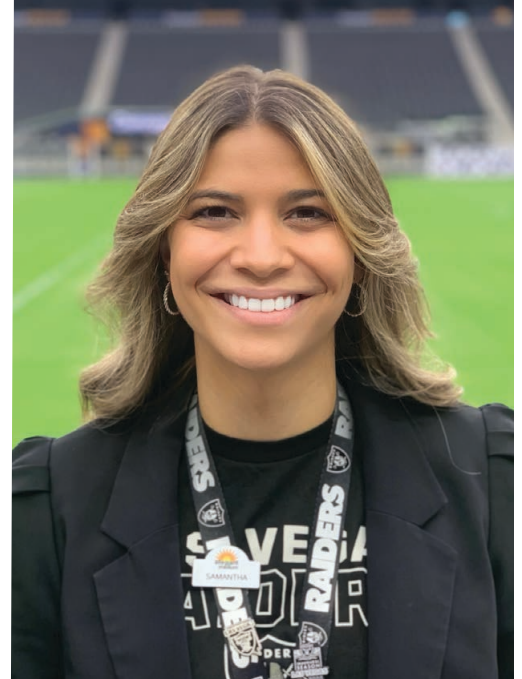
“All those things ended up speaking to me a lot more than the traditional concierge/front desk/restaurant management portion of the hospitality industry,” she says.

However, it wasn’t until 2016 that Banz found her true calling. She landed a part-time premium guest services job at brand-new T-Mobile Arena, the state-of-the-art venue on the Las Vegas Strip.

She then parlayed that into an internship that she more or less crafted herself after striking up a conversation with one of the arena’s executives. That internship was a crash course in all aspects of arena operations, from sales and finance to marketing and engineering.

Cut to five years later and Banz, 27, already has ascended to a senior manager position with Levy Restaurants. And her “office” is one of the world’s newest and most dazzling multi-purpose stadiums.

“I’ve gotten to take all of the traditional hospitality elements that I learned at UNLV and apply them in a much more creative, modern, and exciting way,” Banz says. “It’s still guest service, it’s still customer service. But you always get to experience something new. That’s the part I love most about the job.”



“After that, I thought, ‘You know what? I’m going to give this a shot.’”

Nolan Miles

Growing up on Guam, Nolan Miles had a front-row seat to the world of hospitality, as tourism is the primary economic driver for the island nation and U.S. territory. So as his interest in the industry blossomed in high school, he began considering his university options.

That included going an unconventional route: studying abroad.

“Not a lot of people who grow up in Guam leave the island to attend college,” he says.

However, Miles’ grandparents live in Las Vegas, so he was familiar with the city. And after doing some research, he learned that UNLV was home to a world-renowned hospitality program. So he took advantage of a financial-aid offer that waives out-of-state tuition fees for residents of certain states and U.S. territories, and enrolled at UNLV.

Miles’ plan was to study hotel-casino management, earn a degree, return to Guam and work at one of the island’s resorts.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Miles opted to head back to Guam, where he got a job and took a year off school. By the time he returned to UNLV in Summer 2021, a massive, \$1.8 billion stadium had sprouted from the desert floor just a few miles from campus.

As soon as he got a glimpse of Allegiant Stadium, Miles was mesmerized.

“It’s such a beautiful-looking building from the outside,” he says. “As someone who grew up a huge sports fan, I took one look at it and said, ‘I want to work there!’”

Miles’ wish came true. In January 2023, he was hired as an event coordinator for stadium operator ASM Global – this after first serving as a guest services representative for several months.

Both roles have drawn upon his hospitality management skills.

“After I got the job at Allegiant, I immediately thought a lot of the hospitality elements we were learning in the program could be applied to sports and entertainment as well,” he says.

“The guest experience and customer service aspect of the job really drew me in.”

So much so that Miles has pivoted from his original plan of returning to Guam and working in the hotel industry. The new plan?

“My career ladder as I see it is to hopefully [grow into] assistant general manager and general manager positions,” he says. “I’m hoping my career experience will serve as a stepping stone to greater things.”

Where the next stepping stone leads the 22-year-old remains to be seen. But one thing Miles is certain of is that old-school hospitality has infiltrated the modern day sports and entertainment industries. And it’s not going away.

“I think what people are really looking for in sports and entertainment experiences is the same as what they’re looking for in their hotel stays and vacation trips – those personalized experiences,” he says. “That’s where hospitality merges with the sports industry – creating these unforgettable, unique experiences.”

And with Las Vegas’ professional sports portfolio growing seemingly by the month – and more entertainment venues on the horizon – opportunities will be plentiful for UNLV Hospitality College students interested in traveling the same career paths as alums like Miles and Banz.

“When I started at UNLV, sports and entertainment wasn’t necessarily a path that was given to students,” Banz says. “It was, ‘Pick a concentration – food and beverage, events, or a casino.’ Now it can be events *and* food and beverage. So students no longer need to be siloed into traditional hospitality careers. There’s so much more to it.

“Sports and events management is now an industry in itself within the broader scope of hospitality. Getting to be part of that has been a thrill.”



Living the Dr



Ingrid Perez (L) works with fellow student at Hospitality Hall.

Ingrid Perez is among thousands of first-generation students at UNLV carving out their own path to success.

By Matt Jacob

The American dream story has been told so many times from so many perspectives over the decades that it's almost become culturally trite. Yet the individual stories remain inspirational. They are what keep immigrant parents striving to provide a better life for their children – and keep children believing that such a life truly is attainable.

Nobody knows this better than Ingrid Perez.

The daughter of immigrants from a small town in south central Mexico, Perez is one of 562 first-generation college students attending the William F. Harrah College of Hospitality, while it's estimated that about 50 percent of UNLV students will be the first in their family to get a degree.

No doubt, a great many have a backstory similar to Perez's.

"My parents came to the United States specifically to give me, and eventually my younger siblings, better opportunities," says Perez, a sophomore in the Hospitality College. "So from a young age, they

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“Since my parents didn’t attend college, I didn’t know anything about the whole college process.”

encouraged me to do well in school, knowing that would help me succeed further in life.”

She certainly looks to be well on her way.

Despite having to navigate all the challenges that come with being a first-year college student – and a few additional ones that come with being first-gen – Perez finished her freshman year with a 4.0 grade-point average. She accomplished this after graduating from Northwest Career and Technical Academy, a magnet high school that Perez chose to attend for two primary reasons: The pre-college-preparatory scholastic rigor and the hospitality program that was offered.

No, it wasn’t a no-brainer decision because she was raised in the “Hospitality Capital of the World.” In fact, Perez initially opted for Northwest because of its teacher education program. But when she saw there was a hospitality component, she did some quick online research and switched gears.

“It immediately seemed very interesting, and I especially liked that a career in hospitality involved a lot of talking to people,” Perez says. “So I decided to go that direction, figuring if it didn’t work for me, I could pursue a teaching degree in college.”

It didn’t take long for Perez to affirm that she made the right call. And once she did, she set her sights on her hometown university. “UNLV was 100 percent my only choice,” she says. “It was the only college I applied to.”

When her application was approved, it was cause for celebration – not just for her but also several close friends who also happened to get accepted to UNLV as first-gen students. “It was meaningful for all of us because we were taking that first step together,” Perez says. “But my family – especially my siblings – were extremely excited for me that I was getting the chance to continue my education.”

Although she was able to get a bit of a jump-start on her university studies in high

school, Perez – like most first-gen college students – had to overcome a fairly steep learning curve in the months leading up to her arrival at UNLV, as well as during her initial days on campus.

“When I started, it was difficult for me to find guidance from adults and staff, because I felt embarrassed that I had so many questions that I didn’t know the answers to,” Perez says. “Since my parents didn’t attend college, I didn’t know anything about the whole college process.”

Perez ended up receiving the guidance she needed from the peer mentor assigned to her at the beginning of freshman year.

“It was nice to be able to go to her with any questions I had, knowing she wasn’t going to judge me,” Perez says. “And since she was closer to me in age, it didn’t feel as awkward or as formal as it would have if I had sought out professors or staff members.”

The Peer Mentor Program experience had such a positive impact on Perez that she decided to pay it forward by signing up to be a mentor prior to the start of the 2022-23 academic year. During the fall semester, she took 30 freshmen under her wing, several of whom are first-generation.

It’s a role that befits her personality.

“I’ve always tried to be a role model for my three younger siblings,” she says. “I also worked for a time at the preschool here on campus, so it’s just naturally the kind of thing I lean into. I expect that to continue as a professional.”

Speaking of her next life phase, Perez doesn’t yet have a set-in-stone career path. While she chose human resources as her hospitality concentration, she hasn’t taken any HR courses. “One of the blessings of hospitality is that there are so many different

options. At the same time, having so many options can make things overwhelming,” she says. “I’m excited to dip my toes into HR, and if I enjoy it as much as I hope I will, I’ll continue down that road. If not, I’ll pivot and find something else I’m passionate about.”

For Perez, that last part is particularly important. Yes, she’s balancing a plate that looks like it’s constantly overflowing – in addition to her academic responsibilities, she is in between part-time jobs and is active in multiple student organizations, including the National Society of Minorities in Hospitality. And yes, she acknowledges life occasionally gets difficult and stressful.

But Perez insists that it’s all personally rewarding.

“Everything that I choose to do is something I genuinely enjoy doing,” she says. “That definitely helps keep me motivated. Because I know that at the end of it, I’m going to be proud of everything that I accomplish.”

And no matter what those accomplishments end up being, and no matter where they might take her, Perez will always remain grateful to her family for supporting her pursuit of the American dream.

“The high school I went to was not near my house at all. My parents could’ve told me, ‘You can’t go there because it’s too far away.’ But they didn’t,” she says. “That high school introduced me to hospitality and what a career in that field could look like.

“So as I look back, I’m proud of all the things I have done on my own, but I’m also thankful for all the people who helped me get to this point. Because this definitely has not been a solo journey.”

A story worth telling, indeed.

Giving Back

Hainan Sunup Receives Palladium Honor at UNLV Foundation Annual Dinner

Hospitality College alumnus Rickey Sun is recognized for his company's inspired investment in the college and the future of its international student body.

By Marian Alper

Harra College of Hospitality donor Hainan Sunup Investment Group secured its place among the 2022 Palladium Society awardees who were honored at the UNLV Foundation Annual Dinner in October. The Palladium Society recognizes donors who have made gifts of \$1 million or more in support of UNLV.

Hainan Sunup Investment Group is a diversified real estate and development company with a global impact. Under the guidance of company executive vice president - and Harrah College of Hospitality alumnus - Zenghui "Rickey" Sun '13, they are also making a major impact on the college's future.

Hainan Sunup and the Sun family were lead donors in the funding of the construction of the college's Hospitality Hall, completed in 2017. The Hainan Sunup International Student Success Center, located on the first floor of the landmark building, was named in recognition of their gift.

Based in Hainan, China, the Hainan Sunup Investment Group was established three decades ago. The company integrates three core businesses: urban renewal and transformation, rural revitalization and beautification, and operation and integration of cultural tourism.

It was Rickey Sun's experience as a student at the College of Hospitality - and his ongoing relationship with Dean Stowe Shoemaker - that inspired him to envision a place on campus where international students could gain proficiency in the English language and receive training to help them adjust to life in Las Vegas.

The Hainan International Student Success Center will not only benefit international students; it will also help forge meaningful multicultural relationships among all students. This will strengthen their cultural understanding and skills as they stake out their place in the global hospitality industry.

"Having the support of Rickey and his family - with their strong commitment to the industry and international presence - really helps our students feel like they're on a path to success, wherever they're from," Shoemaker says.

Accepting the Palladium Society award on behalf of the Sun family and the company was Jin Tu '13 and his wife Michelle Chen. Tu heads the company's Las Vegas operations and was a classmate of Sun's at the Hospitality College.



OUR DONORS MAKE US STRONGER

We at the Harrah College of Hospitality extend our heartfelt gratitude to the alumni, faculty, students, corporate partners, and friends who have generously supported the college over the years. Contributions, no matter what size, help us stay at the forefront of hospitality education by providing critical resources for scholarships, professional development, and cutting-edge academic programming.

The college was thrilled to receive philanthropic support from hundreds of donors in 2022. Here are just a few examples:

The Mekjian family established the **Mekjian Family Merit Scholarship** in January 2022 to support hospitality students in good academic standing – placing special emphasis on event design and management, innovative restaurant management, and hospitality beverage management.

The **El Cortez Hotel Casino** gave \$500,000 to the college in March 2022 to provide support for the college’s academic building, Hospitality Hall. A classroom with the “El Cortez” name can be found on the second floor of the building.

In March 2022, Karl Titz (’89, ’90) donated \$250,000 to establish the **Karl Titz Family Endowed Scholarship** to benefit Hospitality College students. The scholarship highlights work skills, leadership, and the first-generation experience.

The college received a \$25,000 gift from the golf management company Troon in March 2022. The **Troon Scholarship** aims to provide educational assistance to students from diverse backgrounds seeking to enter the field of hospitality or PGA golf management.

In May 2022, the college received a \$500,000 gift from the **Conrad N. Hilton Foundation**. The funds are designated for the recruitment and support of traditionally underrepresented students with an interest in hospitality.

Alumnus Chuck Lehman (’71) established the **Lehman Family Endowed Scholarship** in May 2022 to give assistance to Hospitality College students with financial need.

The college received a \$300,000 bequest from the **Paul and Sally Houdayer** estate in June 2022 to fund hospitality scholarships. The third-floor conference room in Hospitality Hall has been named in their honor.



COMMUNITY MATTERS

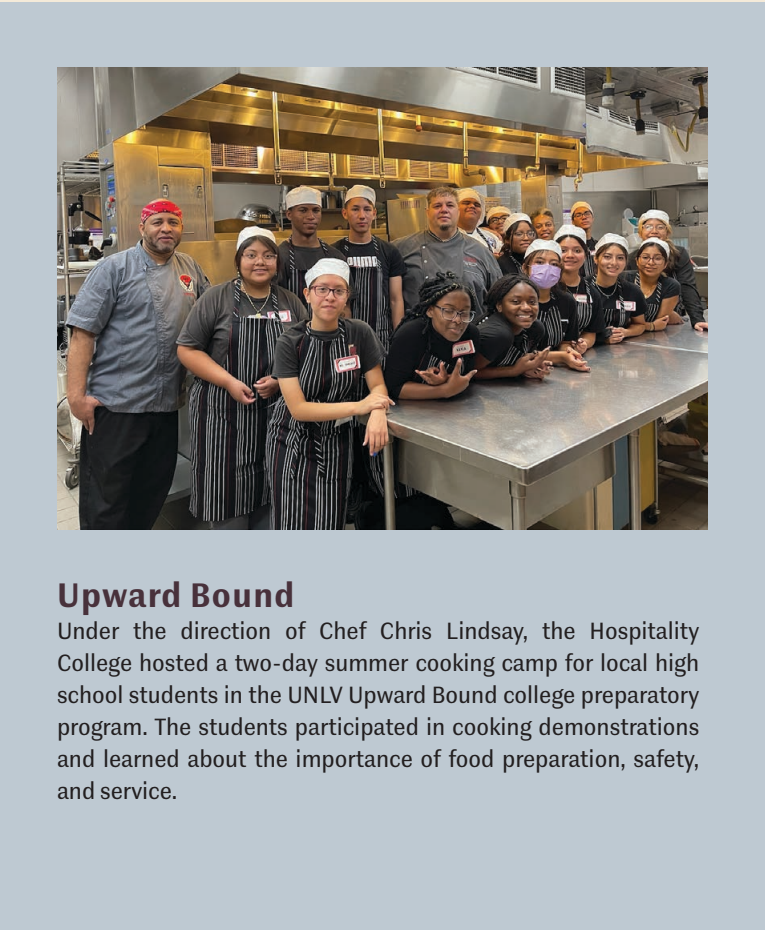
Prostart

More than 50 high school students from around Nevada competed in the 2022 Nevada ProStart Invitational hosted by the Hospitality College. Judges evaluated student performance in categories such as management tasks, edible arrangements, and cake decorating. Students also took part in a culinary competition.



Restaurant Week

The Hospitality College's alumni chapter donated nearly 1,100 pantry and home goods items to the UNLV Food Pantry as part of the chapter's Rebel Restaurant Week food drive in May 2022. The annual event encourages participating Rebel-owned or Rebel-affiliated restaurants and bars to offer specials to customers who bring in non-perishable items.



Upward Bound

Under the direction of Chef Chris Lindsay, the Hospitality College hosted a two-day summer cooking camp for local high school students in the UNLV Upward Bound college preparatory program. The students participated in cooking demonstrations and learned about the importance of food preparation, safety, and service.



ECF Bowling Event

Dean Stowe Shoemaker and members of the Hospitality College alumni board participated in the Epicurean Charitable Foundation's Strikes for Scholarships fundraiser in August 2022. The foundation offers full-ride scholarships to local high school students interested in studying Hospitality Management at UNLV.



REBELS FOREVER

UNLV.EDU/REBELSFOREVER



Rebels Forever is an inclusive membership program for alumni, without membership dues. Every graduate of UNLV is now a Rebels Forever member. The UNLV Alumni Association is thrilled to welcome each graduate into this growing global family.

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