Fraternity Brothers of the Vallen award winners reunite with classmates to talk about UNLV in the 80s, friendship, and the group's incredible rise to success.
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ON THE COVER
Harrah Hotel College alumni gather for a breakfast reunion at The Mansion at MGM Grand Las Vegas. (Photographed L-R): Rob Oseland, Scott Menke (seated), Jacques D’Rovencourt, Michael Muir, George Maloof (seated), Scott Sibella, Bobbie Barnes, Kyle Helms.

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“Pro schola, pro amicitia, pro vita.”

up front: a word from the Dean

**Pro schola, pro amicitia, pro vita.** These Latin words, meaning “for school, for friendship, for life,” highlight the theme for this edition of Premier. The story of Tim and Mike Muir, our cover piece, brings these words to life. It’s a story about relationships that are forged in school but last a lifetime—a story repeated time and time again in our college’s history.

Perhaps it is our affinity for the discipline of hospitality that drives us to preserve the bonds we create in college. Maybe it’s the college environment itself, where students come in as blank slates and end up connected by their common experience. Whatever the reason, countless enduring bonds have been formed right here at the Harrah Hotel College.

In the last issue of Premier I discussed the physical attributes of the new academic building (update on page 30) and how these physical attributes will contribute to student learning. We want Hospitality Hall to also serve as a place where students can carve out life-long relationships and build personal and professional networks that will help them as they move through their careers. But, the academic building is just one piece of the equation. The student clubs, Greek organizations, group projects, events like UNLVino, academic competitions—all of these elements become the shared experiences that lead to life-long friendships.

Such relationships have truly enriched the lives of Mike and Tim Muir. Still to this day they know that if they need professional guidance, a boost of confidence, or a good dose of reality, they can call on their friends from college. And this is the gift we want for all of our graduates—the ability to be able to move through life, face challenges, and achieve success, all the while knowing you can come back to those who were there for you in the beginning.

“For school, for friendship, for life.” I hope the story of Tim and Mike and their friends reminds you of the relationships you created while at UNLV. The story continues...

— Dean Stowe Shoemaker
Cover Story
From late night study sessions, to intramural sports, to Kappa Sig parties . . . this special group of hotel school grads share stories about UNLV in the 80s and the sowing of lifelong bonds.
For a group of would-be hotel majors in the mid ‘80s, UNLV was a sure bet. Rebel football was big, Tarkanian was king, and a little hotel school was making a big impression on the world.

The group of scrappy out-of-towners met on campus, became fast friends, and went on to play intramural sports together, pledge Kappa Sig together, and graduate with degrees in Hotel Administration between ‘86 and ‘89.

This is no ordinary circle of friends.

At a recent reunion hosted by one of the group’s proudest members, Scott Sibella (MGM Grand president and COO), it was a virtual who’s who of the hospitality industry, with guests that included industry giants like George Maloof, Scott Menke, and Rob Oseland, just to name a few (see cover).

The occasion? A private pre-celebration for buddies Tim and Mike Muir, who will be recognized as the Harrah Hotel College’s Hospitality Industry Leaders of the Year at the November Vallen Dinner of Distinction, to be held at MGM Grand (see Muir article on pg.8).

After hellos, hugs, and secret handshakes, the group fell into effortless conversation—the mark of a deep camaraderie that comes with shared history. Over the years, the friends talked as often as they could and saw each other whenever possible, but there was a sense that this gathering was special.

Over breakfast at The Mansion at MGM Grand, the men touched on business, family, and sports but soon turned their attention to UNLV. Most of them told a similar story about arriving on campus in the mid ‘80s armed with big dreams and a love for all things sports:

“Football… basketball… sports was a big deal,” New Jersey born Tim Muir jumped in. “There was so much energy!”

“That was the time UNLV was put on the map,” added Sibella, the only native Las Vegan in the group.

The energy was palpable citywide. Just before the rise of the mega-resort, there was a feeling that everything was about to break loose in Vegas. These guys knew that the city and hotel school were inextricably linked.
“The school had a great hotel management program,” said Jacques D'Rovencourt, who left Hawaii for UNLV. “Going here gave me the opportunity to work at the best hotels in the industry.”

“If you want to be the best and experience the best hospitality in the world,” explained Tim, “then you either need to work in Las Vegas or go to the UNLV hotel school. My brothers and I decided to do both. Hospitality is the DNA of Las Vegas.”

“It was the opportunity to go to a world-class school and get work experience,” added Scott Menke, who came to UNLV from Arizona.

Beyond sports and the hotel school, the gang rallied around their fraternity Kappa Sigma:

“Most of the people from Kappa Sig were all from out of state and hotel majors – all ‘Type A’ people,” said Tim. “At 18, everything was kind of equal. We all had big dreams. We were all hard workers—very, very competitive.”

“Tim was the catalyst, bringing all of us together,” added his brother Mike, who likens Tim’s charisma to a kind of gravitational pull.

Most everyone fell easily into Tim’s orbit—everyone including New Yorker-turned-Rebel Rob Mentnech, who is now the regional director for Best Western International.

“I met Tim the first day,” said Mentnech. “We liked each other right away because we talked funny.”

“Still do,” Menke joked.

Mentnech laughed. “Even though Tim and Mike had pledged the semester before me, I thought, why not just join? I was already doing everything with them anyway. The fraternity was a good way to get plugged in. Greek Week was big on campus. We won every year.”

The guys went on to exchange stories about late nights in the Student Union, studying in Beam Hall, scheduling games around graveyard shifts (Tim ran intramurals), selling homemade posters at Runnin’ Rebels games, and throwing parties. There was even talk about dressing up in tuxedos to sneak into VIP parties after boxing matches. Their collective strategy: go in through the kitchen and no one will ask questions.

These guys were what you call involved. On top of everything else, Tim and Mike—following the lead of their older brother Tom—served in high-ranking positions in UNLV student government. “Just like the hotel school was a leading program on campus,” said Mike, “we felt like it was important for us to be leaders on campus as well.”

Through all of the student groups, sports, and shenanigans, a rare chemistry was forming—a bond that would carry the group through the multitude of life changes, challenges, and successes that were to come:

“There are lots of friendships here, but a lot of business here too,” explained Sibella. “We always ask each other’s advice.”

“Every time I build something new, I ask these guys for their opinions… their perspectives,” said Menke.

“We learn from each other,” added Maloof. “Knowing how hard they’ve worked motivates you. It keeps you focused.”

As the reunion was coming to a close, and the gang prepared to return to the reality of present life and work, they expressed a deep gratitude for the opportunities their degrees had provided. But it had become clear after nearly two hours of conversation that the relationships were the most valuable takeaway from UNLV:

“It’s a journey,” explained Illinois born Rob Oseland. “You don’t realize everyone is going to have some level of success. You don’t think about the impact the relationships will have.”

“I think we stay friends because we have the same qualities,” added Mentnech. “Friendship is important, honesty… the intangibles.”

“When you develop these kind of relationships in an early part of your life—where you have that sort of unconditional trust—that carries forward,” Mike summed up. “It’s that immediate bond… and confidence… and happiness to be back together with friends.”
Fresh out of high school, Tim Muir was ready to commit to UNLV before ever stepping on the campus. After scouting several East Coast universities, which suffered from being "in the middle of nowhere" or just plain "too cold," the chance to go to school in Las Vegas—just a breath away from the world’s most iconic hotel casinos—was too good to pass up.

Tim’s brothers agreed and were soon heading west; older brother Tom transferred to UNLV from the hotel school at Michigan State, and younger brother Mike came in as a freshman the following year. These Jersey boys were destined to be graduates of UNLV’s Harrah Hotel College.

Tim, Mike, and Tom were no strangers to the hospitality business. As boys, they spent summer breaks at the Marlborough Bleinheim Hotel in Atlantic City working at their dad’s beach pool concession, sweeping cabanas and selling water to sun-soaked guests.

“We got a taste of what hospitality was all about being around this beautiful hotel that sat right on the beach and the Boardwalk,” recalled Mike. “Our father was in charge, so we were on our best behavior. We understood that it was all about the customer—to make sure they had a great experience at the hotel, the resort, or at the beach... the whole experience.”

“We threw a lot of wet sand at each other!” Tim chimed in, grinning. “We were mud throwers.”

“Timmy was usually the first one to throw the sand, and the last one,” Mike interjected. “Some things never change.”

Some things most definitely change. In the years that followed graduation, Tim and Mike went from sweeping cabana floors to building hotels.

“We made a lot of sacrifices when we came out of college and began working different operations,” said Tim, who can list nearly a dozen cities in which he and his brother lived and worked during their early careers. “When there was an opportunity to move and go to a different hotel, we’d go to learn a different skill set.”

With the encouragement of their mentor, former president and COO of Las Vegas Sands Corp. Mike Leven, the brothers found their way into hotel franchise sales and development. They would spend many years working with Leven for Days Inn, Holiday Inn, and U.S. Franchise System—the company founded by Leven and the Muirs.

Their hard work paid off. Throughout their careers, Tim and Mike established more than 5,000 hotel franchises around the globe and have helped countless individuals go into business for themselves—a steep rise to success that is reflected in their current roles: Tim heads new construction for franchise sales and development for Choice Hotels, and Mike serves as the executive vice president of hotel lending at Live Oak Bank.

UNLV is once again calling the brothers to the desert,
but this time it is to present Tim and Mike with the Harrah Hotel College Industry Leaders of the Year Award, an honor bestowed only on the rare few who have achieved greatness in the hospitality industry.

At the Nov. 17 Vallen Dinner of Distinction, the brothers will claim their award in front of their friends, their mentor Mike Leven, their parents, and older brother Tom, who like their parents, went on to find his true calling in education. It will be a homecoming not only highlighting the Muir brothers’ professional triumphs but also celebrating those around them who supported and nurtured Tim and Mike into the leaders they are today.

“Having Mike and Tim honored is well deserved,” said close friend Scott Sibella, who invited the college to hold the Vallen Dinner at the MGM Grand, where he now serves as president and COO. “They’re very proud to have gone to UNLV, and they’ve taken that experience, that education, and turned it into a huge success. The cool thing about them is how much they value relationships and their humility. When I see them, I see how successful they are, but I also see these two guys I went to college with. They’re the same.”

To register for the Vallen Dinner, visit unlv.edu/hotel/vallen.
Research: Industry Insights
Grooming New Managers to Stay

James Busser and Wen Chang provide resorts with the insights they need to keep star employees.
The hotel-resort industry has long prided itself on its hiring prowess, handpicking and grooming newly hired managers for careers intended to span years, if not decades. So why are so many entry-level managers resigning just weeks after completing training?

One major hospitality brand recently turned to Harrah Hotel College professor James Busser and his doctoral student Wen Chang for answers. Could deficiencies in its management-training program be to blame?

“They wanted us to take a critical look at the program to find areas for improvement,” said Busser. The company’s name, he added, must be kept confidential as part of a nondisclosure agreement.

As part of their study, which will be published in the *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Busser and Chang surveyed dozens of former management-program trainees through several cycles of the training. The two also worked with the company’s team of human resources managers to better understand the types of trainees it attracted. They soon learned that only a select few students, identified as stellar performers, were recruited into the program directly out of college. “It’s a very competitive program,” said Chang. “This organization accepts only a small percentage of students.”

Once on board, trainees were assigned a mentor from the company’s corporate headquarters, a close advisor whose role involved helping their charges navigate the year-long training process. Training complete, the new managers were assigned to one of the company’s hotel or resort properties to begin their careers. Many chose to resign instead.

“Despite a significant investment of money and time in these trainees,” Busser said, “the company couldn’t keep them following completion of the program.”

The reason, the surveys revealed, was pretty straightforward: Employees were leaving because their expectations were not being met. But why? Busser and Chang suspected the mentor-trainee relationship might be playing a role.

“The mentor portion of the program was highly controlled at the corporate level,” explained Busser. “But it became clear that some unevenness in the training program was occurring at the property level, resulting in situations that were inconsistent with employee expectations.”

“We wanted to sort this out,” added Chang.

Together the researchers dove deep into the survey data to explore the role mentors played in two specific areas: career development (relating to workplace skills and knowledge) and psychosocial support (the process of integrating employees into corporate culture).

Busser and Chang discovered that the mentors were doing a better job reinforcing the psychosocial aspects of the program than focusing on career development. The two then met with the brand’s human resources managers to recommend more training — this time for the mentors. Mentors, they said, were focusing too heavily on developing personal relationships. Instead, they needed to place more emphasis on developing trainees’ knowledge and skills. Focusing on the career development part, Busser and Chang reasoned, would help trainees develop more realistic expectations about the day-to-day reality of their new careers.

“There needs to be consistency among mentors about how they communicate organizational culture and expectations about progression within the company,” said Busser.

Interestingly, trainees who resigned after completing the program didn’t appear to depart with hard feelings. Most, in fact, continued to hold a favorable view of the organization.

“The incredible strength of the program is that the employees who were leaving still had very positive feelings about promoting the brand to others,” said Chang. She and Busser also discovered that, while employed, the trainees were willing to go above and beyond their duties, which was of huge benefit the company.

Chang, meanwhile, has had no second thoughts about her own training. She recently completed her doctorate and joined the faculty of Iowa State University in the fall semester.

“Ph.D. students here at the Harrah College really get to take advantage of the partnerships that have been formed between the college and the industry over the years,” said Chang. “These kinds of research opportunities only happen at UNLV. Doing research projects like this, you can see how your work has an impact.”

Busser echoed the sentiment. “The company was so energized by the findings and receptive to moving forward with improvements,” he said. “It has been a tremendous experience for all of us involved.”
What Happens in Vegas: UNLV’s IGI Hosts World’s Largest Gaming Research Conference
UNLV’s IGI welcomed the world’s gaming community to Las Vegas — Over 600 researchers and intellectuals from 31 countries convened at The Mirage Las Vegas for the world’s largest gaming research conference.

“We have mathematicians, historians, artists, political scientists, cultural anthropologists, biologists, criminologists, regulators, and psychologists—all here to share in this incredible pool of knowledge,” conference host Bo Bernhard told an eager audience at the 16th International Conference on Gambling and Risk Taking.

For five days this summer, speakers from across disciplines and across continents gathered at The Mirage to engage in spirited dialogue and debate over such topics as women in gaming, problem gambling, the future of gambling, international gaming laws and policies, and more.

“The gambling world is expanding into seemingly endless new frontiers,” said UNLV Harrah Hotel College professor Bernhard, who serves as the executive director of the conference organizer, UNLV’s International Gaming Institute (IGI). "As the intellectual capital for gaming, Las Vegas is the ideal place to explore common barriers, share best practices, and bring unity to the global gaming community.”

The IGI inherited the Gambling and Risk Taking conference from event founder, UNR economics professor Bill Eadington, who began the conference in 1974 to bring the best minds in gaming to the table every three years. His advice to Bernhard, who was tasked with growing the conference, was “invite the world, and let the world decide.” And decide, they did.

What began as a conference of three dozen participants has grown into an event with more than 600 researchers and intellectuals from 31 countries around the world (including more than three dozen Harrah Hotel College professors and graduate students), all arriving with the same goal as Eadington’s: to better understand the world of gaming.

“Bill Eadington wanted to make sense of this industry,” said conference keynote speaker Steve Wynn. The Las Vegas gaming mogul went on to share the lessons he’s learned over a four-decade-long career that put mega-resorts like The Mirage, Bellagio, and Wynn Las Vegas on the map. “Gaming is a passive activity,” said Wynn. “Every roulette table is the same. Every blackjack table is the same. They have no power. The only value is the experiential value of the enterprise.”

The much anticipated return of Steve Wynn to the place where it all began, The Mirage, was an experience in and of itself for conference attendees. “With the creation of The Mirage,” Bernhard told the audience, “Steve Wynn reinvented the genre, changing not just what the industry aspired to be, but also what this city aspired to be. He is the imagineer... the Walt Disney of the industry.”

The conference kicked off with cocktails at The Mirage’s Siegfried & Roy Secret Garden, where Siegfried—of the famed magic duo who opened The Mirage in 1989—greeted attendees. In addition to speakers and poster sessions, the event featured a traveling exhibit by the Las Vegas Mob Museum.
A fter a successful culinary career, including major stints at Postrio and Joël Robuchon at The Mansion at MGM Grand, Mark Sandoval found a passion for teaching and a new home at the UNLV Harrah Hotel College.

As the college’s new executive chef, Sandoval gets to share his love of cooking, tales of the industry, and strict work ethic with a new generation of aspiring hospitality professionals.

Why UNLV?

Time and fate. After 20 years in the food service industry, I really had achieved all of my culinary goals. Over the past few years, I’d been working with students at UNLVino, and I discovered that I loved teaching. When this opportunity at UNLV presented itself, it just seemed right. Of course, it helped that UNLV has the premier hospitality school in the world.

Where did you grow up?

Colorado Springs, Colorado.

What inspired you to get into your field?

When I was growing
EQUIPMENT: Sauce Pan/Deep Skillet/Small Bowl/Spatula
TEMPERATURE: Boil/Medium heat
PORTION: 1 each person - 35/750 Eggs halves
TIME: 30 min prep/10 min Cook

<table>
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<tr>
<th>INGREDIENTS</th>
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<th>FOR 750</th>
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<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>375</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mayonnaise</td>
<td>1 Cup</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bacon</td>
<td>6 Slices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finely shredded Cheddar Cheese</td>
<td>1/3 Cup</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mustard</td>
<td>3 tbsp</td>
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<td>Paprika</td>
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Place eggs in a saucepan, and cover with cold water. Bring water to a boil and immediately remove from heat. Cover, and let eggs stand in hot water for 10 to 12 minutes. Remove from hot water, and cool. To cool more quickly, rinse eggs under cold running water.

Meanwhile, place bacon in a large, deep skillet. Cook over medium-high heat until evenly brown. Alternatively, wrap bacon in paper towels and cook in the microwave for about 1 minute per slice. Crumble and set aside.

Peel the hard-cooked eggs and cut in half lengthwise. Remove yolks to a small bowl. Mash egg yolks with mayonnaise, crumbled bacon and cheese. Stir in mustard. Fill egg white halves with the yolk mixture and refrigerate until serving.

up, my family really came together at dinnertime. My dad was a great cook and always encouraged me to help make the meals. I loved the instant gratification I got when people enjoyed my food. The inspiration as a teacher comes from seeing the confidence students get when they prepare their own food.

What’s the biggest misconception about your field?
People think that being a chef is super creative. In reality, it’s about 10 percent creativity and 90 percent running a business, which means controlling costs, writing menus, placing orders, and working long hours.

What’s the biggest challenge in your field?
Being a chef means a lot of time away from your family. I have spent many holidays away from my wife.

One tip for success?
Dedication. If you want to get ahead... be the first person in and the last person out.

What would people be surprised to know about you?
I’m good at doing hair color. When my wife and I moved to Vegas, she couldn’t find a salon she liked, so I learned how to do it. My mother-in-law taught me.

Who was your favorite professor and why?
When I was at the University of Colorado in Boulder, my mentor was my art professor, Albert Chong. He had great energy — very calm, very true.

Who is your hero?
My dad. He was a high school teacher for 35 years. He taught me how to cook and how to play all sports. He never missed a game.

Pastime or hobbies?
I love gardening... growing vegetables and herbs. I also love mowing the lawn. It’s my zen activity — my time to figure out life.
Hospitality Trend Alert

WHAT’S NEW IN HOSPITALITY TECHNOLOGY?

Mobile Apps for Personalized Service
Tired of hearing about mobile apps being the new trend for the last 5 years? Well, be patient ... there are still a ton of opportunities being addressed by mobile apps especially when it comes to the personalized, customized service experience in the hospitality space. The winner of the Entrepreneur 20X competition held during HITEC 2016 was a start-up which offers a mobile app for personalizing travel via advice from locals. Other examples of creative mobile apps include up-and-coming restaurants like Eatsa (in the San Francisco area), where patrons select the ingredients for their meal, order it via a mobile app, and then simply stop by the restaurant to pick it up. Emphasis on mobile trends will continue to be, in a nutshell, personalized and convenient.

Associate Professor Mehmet Erdem

WHAT’S NEW IN MEETINGS AND EVENTS?

Experiential Meetings
It’s becoming more and more difficult for employers to justify sending their employees to costly conferences, especially when attendees get little out of endless breakout sessions and PowerPoint presentations. An emerging trend in the corporate meeting area is the idea of developing “experiential meetings,” where attendees actively participate in the presentation, which studies show improves retention of information. An experiential presentation might include a team building session at a nearby park or the use of “response clickers” by participants. This is enticing for employers who are looking for ways to boost employee morale, improve learning, and justify conference expenses.

Assistant Professor in Residence Todd Uglow, J.D.

WHAT’S NEW IN GAMING?

New and Innovative Student Inventions
The recent Global Gaming Expo (G2E) featured an Innovation Lab showcasing new inventions in gambling—specifically those taking place at UNLV’s International Gaming Institute (IGI). Students Evan Thomas and Troy Pettie highlighted their game “Line 'Em Up,” which incorporates skill-based gaming into the conventional slot machine structure in a way very similar to “Candy Crush” and other social games. Student Brittany Martino unveiled an invention that solves the problem of “edge sorting,” the latest and most lucrative form of card counting, by projecting a light onto the back of the card in the shoe where the “edge sorting” takes place. Finally, John Lukasik demonstrated “Scoring Frenzy,” which combines the mechanics of fantasy sports with the mathematics of house-banked sports book. The game provides a creative and fun solution to the widespread desire to bring fantasy sports wagering into casino environments.

Professor and IGI Executive Director Bo Bernhard

WHAT’S NEW IN RESTAURANTS?

Aquaponics
It’s no surprise that environmentally-conscious consumers are looking for fresh, sustainable options when they dine out. As a result, a growing number of restaurants and chefs are seeking meat and produce from local farms, many of which use alternative growing techniques. Aquaponics, for example, is a system in which fish and hydroponic plants are raised together in a single symbiotic growing environment: the waste from the fish provides a food source for the plants; the plants serve as a filter, purifying the water for the fish. It is a process that requires much less water, uses zero pesticides, and increases opportunities for local farming. Plus it’s a great way to get fresh, great tasting greens, herbs, fruits, vegetables, and don’t forget... fish!

Executive Chef Mark Sandoval
Capping off their summer capstone project, students of the Harrah Hotel College’s Festival & Events Management Class helped raise more than $16,000 for the Nevada Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NSPCA).

Under the guidance of assistant professor Todd Uglow, students planned and executed the August 9 “Cause for Paws” event, bringing in over 250 guests to UNLV’s Tam Alumni Center for an evening of food, entertainment, and live auction festivities. Students were responsible for identifying food and beverage sponsors as well as soliciting donations for the silent auction items. Key sponsors included HEXX Chocolate & Confexxions, which brought in a beautiful craft chocolate display, and the folks from SkinnyFats, who treated guests to their signature vegan dishes.

“One big challenge the class had to overcome was driving attendance during a summer session,” said Uglow, explaining that summer sessions are highly condensed and allow students little more than four weeks to plan an entire event. “The students reached out to people through social media and by literally knocking on doors.”

The $16,000 raised through ticket sales and silent auction proceeds goes directly to the NSPCA—a Las Vegas-based, no-kill animal shelter. NSPCA event organizer April Chandler said the evening exceeded expectations: “The morning after the event, I woke up to tons of messages from event attendees sharing their joy and expressing their gratitude for this AMAZING event.”

The NSPCA was not the only beneficiary of the event. Students received the kind of hands-on experience they’ll need for the professional world. “I learned so much through planning and executing the event, said senior Jessica Hillman, who served as one of the event leaders. “I have heard nothing but great things from everyone who attended!”

Our Festival & Events students have organized countless events over the years benefitting such community organizations as Opportunity Village, Par for the Cure, the Family Education and Empowerment Foundation, Miracle Flights for Kids, Three Square, Keep Memory Alive, and the Shade Tree shelter for women.
When kids are allowed to make food themselves, they want to try it,” said UNLV student Alex Amirsoleimani, smiling. “It’s very powerful.”

Amirsoleimani and a team of Harrah Hotel College students have been taking this powerful message to local elementary schools—showing kids not only how to prepare food, but also how to make food safe and more nutritious.

It’s a project spearheaded by professor Christine Bergman, as part of her Nutrition in Food Service (FAB 370) class.

“I have tasked the students with this project for the last four semesters,” said Bergman. “The students wear their chef jackets, introduce themselves as UNLV students, and then go through proper hand washing techniques, knife safety, and nutrition exercises and games. This gets the elementary students excited about the material and gives my students a boost of confidence.”

Thai spring rolls were on the menu during the UNLV students’ spring trip to Triggs Elementary School in North Las Vegas, where third graders piled rice noodles, carrots, cucumbers, mint, and basil leaves inside soft rice wraps. After dipping their creations in sweet and sour sauce, it was time for tasting.

“Some of them had never heard of spring rolls before the class,” said Triggs science teacher Kristin Lilley, who organized the visit with Amirsoleimani and the FAB 370 team: Blake Krowicki, Andrew Shim, Ziyan Wang, Xiaotong Chen, and Caitlin Raber. “When I asked them if they’d make them at home, one student answered ‘I’d add shrimp.
Making Food...
Making a Difference

Harrah Hotel College students are bringing lessons in nutrition, food safety, and service to local elementary schools.

...to mine and keep the vegetables. And sauce. Lots of sauce!"

Although some of the young chefs complained that the rolls were too spicy, most were smiling from ear to ear. “It tastes pretty good,” said one proud Triggs third grader.

“I like that programs like this give young children the knowledge necessary to make healthy choices when snacking at home, but also increases their family connection when they can get involved in the kitchen,” added Lilley. “Making healthy decisions about food beginning at a young age will help propel my students into maintaining a healthy life.”

Bergman says the project brings about enormous practical benefits for the university students as well.

“Through this experience, my students learn training skills, how to work with limited resources, and how to interact with people they don’t know. They’re also tasked with writing a full report of their experience, sharing their results, and then describing what they would do differently next time.”

And then there’s the social responsibility component embraced by Bergman and her students.

“If every kid left high school knowing how to make 5-10 meals, we could change the obesity problem in America,” said Bergman, who receives inspiration from nutrition guru Chef Jamie Oliver as well as the Green Our Planet organization, which promotes community gardens and sustainable farming.

“Knowing where our food comes from is key,” added Bergman, whose passion prompted Amirsoleimani to come up with the idea for each FAB students to grow his/her own tomatoes.

“If elementary school kids are growing their own food, then we should be doing it,” Amirsoleimani said after learning that many local elementary school students, like those at Triggs, are planting and maintaining gardens on school grounds. “This way we can learn about all of the factors that a farmer deals with... all of things that can affect a crop, like animals, the weather, etc.”

Bergman sees a bright future for students who have gained the unique mix of skills provided by participating in projects like these: “Not many people out there know food service, farming, and food distribution,” said Berman. “People like Alex are going to change the conversation when it comes to school nutrition.”

One ingredient Bergman knows all of the students will take with them is the feeling of giving back.

“If every kid left high school knowing how to make 5-10 meals, we could change the obesity problem in America.”

“After facing their anxiety about preparing for and then teaching a class, most of my students report that this activity helped them realize that they can positively impact their community. I think everyone can.”
Thanks to the Harrah Hotel College Boughner Career Services and Professional Golf Management teams, nearly 280 students were placed in internship positions this summer. Over the course of the academic year, that number will increase to approximately 600.

Hear what just a few students had to say about their internship experience:

**Taylor Amstein (Interned with McCormick and Schmicks, Las Vegas, Nevada)**
The most valuable thing that I have learned is how to appreciate each part of the restaurant because everyone works together to make the dining experience what it is. I have only worked front-of-the-house, so I really appreciate the work of the kitchen on a deeper level.

**Ki-Min Park (Interned with Hanna Tour, Gyeonggi-Do, South Korea)**
Before this experience, I lacked skills regarding first-hand customer service. Although the internship venue was small, I had a great deal of opportunities to develop these skills.

**Riley Clark (Interned with Ko Olina Golf Club, Hawaii)**
Ko Olina has taught me unique skill sets in communication, teamwork, and problem solving. The facility gave me numerous opportunities to further my career in a positive way, and I highly recommend Ko Olina as an internship destination.

**Charlotte Edwards (Interned with The Garland, North Hollywood, California)**
The most fun part of the experience was getting to know many of the employees. The Garland was a smaller boutique hotel with 189 employees, so it was easier to recognize faces and remember names. I met many interesting people and built relationships with them.
Alvin Lopez *(Interned with Century Country Club, New York)*
Century provides a unique and autonomous internship experience with great considerations to my future aspirations. It is an internship built on integrity, prosperity, autonomy, and excitement!

Curtis Nicolaysen *(Interned with Enterprise, Las Vegas, Nevada)*
While pursuing my hospitality management degree I had not even considered Enterprise at first. This experience opened my eyes to more options and directions I can take my career in. I truly enjoyed this experience and wish to continue on the path I am on.

Valeriya Nogotkova *(Interned with Cirque du Soleil, Las Vegas, Nevada)*
This experience helped me become a better communicator and allowed me to interact with various types of clients, including c-suite executives and top-performing companies. It gave me the opportunity to network with numerous clients as well as the destination management companies in Las Vegas.

Emelia Santos *(Interned with Opportunity Village, Las Vegas, Nevada)*
I learned the ability to troubleshoot issues as they arise during events. Each solution is different, but the skill is in remaining calm and handling difficult situations with ease.

Merissa Viviano *(Interned with Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, Las Vegas, Nevada)*
I’ve learned sales techniques that I could not have learned in a classroom. I also learned how to use unfamiliar software like Publisher. It was great to participate in site inspections and very exciting to go to various hotels to get a sales representative’s perspective.

Jackson Whitman *(Interned with Marriott International – Gaylord Texas, Dallas, Texas)*
By interning across the country I was able to experience a miniature Voyage* where I learned how I will deal with great changes and additional responsibilities in my life in a more structured setting. My managers were always encouraging and continued to coach me throughout all aspects of the Voyage.

*Voyage is the Marriott’s management program for recent graduates.

Photos: Left Page: Taylor Amstein; Top L-R: Emelia Santos (in bear suit); Charlotte Edwards; Merissa Viviano (on left); Alvin Lopez; Jackson Whitman; Valeriya Nogotkova.
I could not believe I had the opportunity to work with nine of the most amazing leaders I have ever met,” said student Jeremi Sitompul, who was handpicked by the Harrah Hotel College to attend the 7th annual Young Hoteliers Global Summit in Switzerland.

Sitompul, along with classmate Hailey Matthews, represented UNLV at the three-day summit, held each spring at the École hôtelière de Lausanne in Switzerland.

The event brings top students from more than 40 hospitality schools around the world together with leading hospitality firms to network, interview, and participate in panel discussions—an atmosphere Sitompul described as “strangely fantastic.”

Each year student attendees are charged with completing a specific challenge to address a major industry concern. This year’s challenge, presented by Four Seasons, called upon student teams of 10 to design a “hypothetical” career path that would take an individual from university graduate to general manager in less than nine years.

Although Matthews and Sitompul were not on the winning team, they were tremendous assets to their respective groups, according to assistant professor Toni Repetti, who accompanied the students to the summit.

“The students were very professional and brought some great ideas and perspectives to their teams,” said Repetti. “Experiences like these will help our students become leaders in the industry.”

Matthews said the experience opened her eyes.

“Making personal connections and talking with delegates from other cultures taught me something I could never learn in a classroom,” she said. “I learned so much, and I gained connections for a lifetime!”

This year’s Young Hoteliers Summit explored how companies leverage digital technologies to their competitive advantage. Senior vice presidents and vice presidents from Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts, Dorchester Collection, FRHI Hotels International, and CBRE Hotels were among the speakers.
When Jailene Vazquez enrolled at UNLV, she’d already been involved in business competitions as a student at Clark High School. Now a hospitality major at the William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration, Vazquez is using her competition experience as well as her entrepreneurial spirit to take on new challenges.

On May 2, Vazquez’s team won one of the largest cash prize pools available for university competitions in the United States. Vazquez and her teammate, international business major Helena Lagos, represented UNLV at the Donald W. Reynolds 2016 Governor’s Cup Collegiate Business Plan Competition in Reno—becoming the first UNLV team to win second place in the undergraduate division (others have won third place), along with a $15,000 prize.

The team began preparing for the 2016 Governor’s Cup in September 2015 by refining an idea they had developed in 2015—the Remmedy Nudge Water Bottle, a container that holds water, dispenses medication, emits a reminder sound, and can provide texting capability.

Whether a venture focuses on services or on products, the customer experience ultimately determines success or failure. With that principle in mind, Vazquez and Lagos learned as much as they could about their target market segments—early Baby Boomers and later Baby Boomers. That data informed their decisions about product functionality, research, and marketing. The main concept was to help this age segment live an active lifestyle while reminding them to take medications. Then, during the transition from paper to 3D, product specs evolved considerably.

“So much goes into the mechanics,” said Vazquez. “We worked with two students who were majors in architectural design and mechanical engineering; they know a lot about how to manufacture things.”

Collaboration—with faculty, industry experts, and students—has helped Vazquez and Lagos make use of the abundant expertise available at UNLV. Then there’s the paperwork.

“A written contract outlined each person’s duties,” said Vazquez. “I realize now that it’s very important to have documentation of each person’s responsibilities and to lay out expectations. It gives each person more credibility while holding him or her accountable.”

Months of input—including many surprises and some setbacks—helped Vazquez and Lagos refine the product.

“We were so ambitious,” said Vazquez. “And then we learned how to cut down features due to cost and simplify the product so that it would appeal to the largest possible market.”
Painting millennials with a broad brush can be tempting for restaurant owners and marketing professionals seeking to connect with young consumers. But are current digital marketing strategies really working?

Restauranteur Geoff Alexander raised the question while moderating a special panel called Inside the Minds of Millennials during the spring 2016 Multi-Unit Restaurant Technology Conference (MURTEC) in Las Vegas.

“Millennials are the core consumers we want in our stores,” Alexander told a packed room of restaurant operators, c-level executives, and tech vendors—all hoping to get a better handle on the way millennials want to engage with restaurants via technology, digital marketing, mobile devices, social media, etc.

Alexander warmed up the panel of six, made up entirely of Harrah Hotel College students, with broad questions about brand loyalty:

“I am loyal to restaurants if I love the food,” said junior Ashia Shah-Stone. “Also, consistent service is the way to get our brand loyalty.”

Graduate student Shekinah Hoffman had a different take. “In terms of restaurants... I’m not really interested in that,” she said before directing the same question to the audience: “Are any of you loyal to a company?”

When Alexander asked if rewards programs make them more loyal to a brand, senior Miranda Valdez responded: “If every dollar I spend, I get money off a future purchase... that adds up. It’s a nice incentive that I work for.”

Sophomore Yiwen Yiwen, on the other hand, wasn’t entirely sold: “Using the Starbucks app to build up points for free drinks doesn’t motivate me to go to Starbucks. The convenience does.”

During the product refining process, for instance, the teammates discovered that a bottle’s weight greatly affects its usefulness. At first they had wanted to use steel, but then they saw the benefits of using a much lighter, easier-to-carry metal: brushed aluminum.

In addition to helping Vasquez and Lagos during product refinement, the team’s group of mentors and friends played a big role in helping the team anticipate criticisms and prepare to demonstrate product viability for the competition judges. Feedback from the two panels of judges (with six judges each) formed the basis of the team’s grade.

“We were graded on professionalism, meeting deadlines, and quality of work,” she added.

The experience of being “judged” also gave participants a taste of the real world of business.

“Judges are kind of like potential investors,” said Vazquez. “My team needs to bring the greatest value to them because they’re making time for my organization.”

The chance to compete at the tri-state level later that month against teams from Arkansas, Nevada, and Oklahoma—as part of the only team representing undergrads for UNLV—was an additional honor.

Although the Remmedy Nudge project was not victorious at this competition, Vazquez has won something that may prove even more rewarding—election to the position of president for the National Society of Minorities in Hospitality (NSMH) for the 2016-2017 school year.

“NSMH has grown so much over the past year,” said Vazquez. “In 2015-2016, our membership nearly doubled, from 65 members in the previous year to 116 members. We already are the leading organization in hospitality on campus. In 2016-2017 we need to maintain that.”

In May, Dr. Janet Runge of the UNLV Lee Business School (middle) presented Jailene (left) and her business partner Helena Lagos (right) with their award.
Throughout the hour-long session, the panelists continued to offer a mixed bag of likes and dislikes relating to digital interaction. More than half of the panel expressed concerns about mobile pay due to uncertainties over cyber security. They were also split on how they like to order take out: three said they prefer to order online, while the others said they tend to order food over the phone.

The group did find consensus when asked about the role social media plays in influencing their habits when it comes to dining out. The panelists made it clear, however, that not all social media are created equal.

LinkedIn—over Facebook and Twitter—was named as a favored social channel for brand information.

Several panelists were Instagram enthusiasts: “Before I go anywhere, I look on Instagram,” said graduate student Ethan Fishbane. “People post pictures of the food and the atmosphere.”

Yelp was identified as the most popular site for influencing dining decisions.

“I can look up everything I need,” said Valdez. “I’ll review something if I’m really passionate about it!”

Junior Ali Arsalan Samnani shared his Yelp philosophy: “If a place rates two or below, I’m not going there. Three? If depends. If I want to eat at 1:00 a.m., it’s not going to be fine dining.”

Although the group highlighted social media as a big factor in their decision making, the group generally had a lukewarm response to the subject of advertisements on social media.

Valdez summed it up: “If they are offering something totally unique, I’ll pay attention. If it’s just an ordinary ad... not so much.”

Harrah Hotel College associate professor Mehmet Erdem, who arranged the panel, said it was important for conference attendees to hear directly from their target audience. “I think it was a great opportunity for these restauranteurs to learn about the students’ preferences, expectations, and perceptions within the restaurant space. Plus, the diversity and intelligence of our students shows these folks that millennials are in no way homogenous.”

One thing the panelists all agreed on was their affection for the human element in their dining experience. When Alexander approached the idea of self-ordering kiosks at restaurants, the panelists recoiled:

Hoffman: “People have this perception of our generation... that we’re all tech savvy. But I like interaction with people. You lose part of the experience with a machine.”

Samnani: “It’s more of the personal touch I’m interested in.”

Fishbane: “Service is what’s special. By continually putting up blocks between humans, it ruins the experience.”

Shah-Stone: “We’re on our phones so much, we crave interaction.”

The audience sat in anticipation as Alexander approached perhaps the most important question of the day: “What are you looking for when it comes to digital interaction?”

“Every restaurant does not need an app!” Shah-Stone said. “I’m not going to clutter my phone with all of these apps. Send me one email or text message per week.”

“As long as you have a strong website,” added Valdez, “I’ll go to it—one that is easy to use on a laptop or phone.”

One big takeaway from the session was that the millennials tend to gravitate toward brands that are not forcing things on them. What keeps them coming back for more, they say, is a quality product.

Maybe millennials aren’t so different from the rest of us.

More than 700 people attended the spring MURTEC conference held at the Paris Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas. This year’s conference theme, “Dining Goes Digital,” explored crowd sourcing, mobile payments, EMV compliance, mobilizing the point of sale, gamification, etc.
This past spring the Harrah Hotel College, along with the Hospitality Lab in the International Gaming Institute, launched new hospitality innovation courses designed to help students address challenges facing the hospitality industry.

Master’s student Shekinah Hoffman saw the graduate-level Hospitality Innovation (HOA 555) course as an opportunity to explore the entrepreneurial side of gaming.

“HOA 555 is the most unique class I’ve ever taken,” said Hoffman, who went on to say she was glad to be cutting her entrepreneurial teeth in the classroom rather than in the marketplace.

The classroom experience has also acquainted Hoffman with a robust community at UNLV, and in Las Vegas in general, that helps students go on to innovate after they finish their studies.

The classroom experience has also acquainted Hoffman with a robust community at UNLV, and in Las Vegas in general, that helps students go on to innovate after they finish their studies.

Each of the eight groups in Hoffman’s class had its own industry mentor. Hoffman’s group had regular access to a c-level facilities executive at the Las Vegas Sands Corporation.

“I asked industry executives about chokeholds they face at their organizations, and I practiced the art of pitching,” says Hoffman.

She and other students rose to the challenge of generating new ideas to address those bottlenecks. To come up with problem-solving concepts, they tapped into the interdisciplinary diversity among group members.

In addition to two hotel administration majors, Hoffman’s group included students who were passionate about architecture and IT.

On a personal level, too, Hoffman gained valuable perspective—in the form of a more nuanced understanding of her generation.

“I learned so much from other group members,” said Hoffman. “I saw amazing creativity in my (millennial) generation, and I saw beyond the two-dimensional descriptions I’ve heard people use, such as ‘selfish’ and ‘tech-addicted.’”

The millennial-friendly course environment exists partly by design, according to course instructor Robert Rippee, who calls the courses a mash-up of academics, entrepreneurship, and problem solving.

“In hospitality this mix of perspectives offers a huge area of opportunity,” said Rippee. “The big brands are so busy with day-to-day operations that they don’t have the bandwidth to think about what might happen five to ten years from now.”

That’s where Rippee’s students can help. Students bring freshness, according to Rippee, because they tend to be unencumbered by established ways of doing things; they also embrace disruptive innovations, looking to role models such as Steve Jobs, Clayton Christiansen, and others.

Several of Rippee’s students have recently submitted patent applications for new mobile apps, ideas for applying existing technology in innovative ways, and design concepts for millennial-friendly guest rooms.
The final project for students taking the Industry Computer Applications for Hospitality and Tourism course can seem daunting. Students are required to promote a specific technology or application to a real hospitality company, prepare an executive summary report, and then create a high-end presentation for the client.

The experience the students gain from the project is invaluable, according to course instructor Dr. Jungsun (Sunny) Kim. “Companies are always looking for ways to use technology to streamline or improve the customer experience and reduce costs at their properties,” said Kim. “Having students come up with creative ideas in the classroom for real hospitality companies will help them be a step ahead when they enter the job market.”

When it comes to preparation, Dr. Kim leaves no stone unturned. She regularly invites the top student presenters from previous semesters to demonstrate their projects to her current class. Back in March, executive Scot Campbell, who served as vice president and chief architecture officer for Caesars Entertainment, was on hand to provide feedback.

“The quality of the presentations was at the caliber of business presentations that happen in our company all the time,” said Campbell. “I was amazed by the amount of data and the creative solutions presented.”

Partnerships with industry giants like Caesars help keep the Harrah Hotel College program material relevant by allowing students to grapple with the real questions and challenges that are facing the hospitality industry.

“UNLV is leading the way to mature the industries’ next big ideas by encouraging students to not only educate themselves, but also to think outside the box,” said Campbell.

“That kind of thinking will change this industry.”

Feedback from industry experts has a significant impact for students, said Dr. Kim, who welcomed MGM Resorts International IT executive director Rick Heil to a recent class demonstration. “We are so grateful that our students have the opportunity to connect with and be guided by decision-makers in the industry.”

These experiences may very well shape the students’ professional futures—a responsibility Campbell does not take lightly. “I feel like it is my duty to encourage, inspire, and help these students in any way I can.”
Educators Take a Bow

This year, the Harrah Hotel College honored a number of faculty members and staff for their exceptional contributions to students, the university, and the industry.

The “Boyd Distinguished Professor Awards” were presented to Michael Dalbor for contributions in research, Grace Chatfield for excellence in teaching, and Bill Werner for outstanding leadership in the area of service. Additional honors went to Boughner Career Services coordinator Noelle Garcia, who was presented with this year’s CSUN Faculty Award, and professor James Busser, who received the Nevada Regents’ Academic Advisor Award. Another big award winner this year was Barbara Richards, who earned the prestigious title of the UNLV President’s Classified Employee of the Year.

Congratulations educators!

Pat Moreo Heads South for a New Adventure

Beloved Harrah Hotel College professor Pat Moreo recently moved from Las Vegas to assume the role of dean at the College of Hospitality and Tourism Leadership at the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee.

Dr. Moreo enjoyed a long and distinguished career with the college. He was part of the Hotel College’s first graduating class, obtaining a B.S. in Hotel Administration in 1969. Moreo later became a faculty member of the college – serving in a number of roles, including chair of the Department of Food and Beverage Management, leader of the Hospitality Research and Development Center, and the director of the Summer Studies in Switzerland program.

Moreo, who received advanced degrees from both Cornell University and UNLV, was recently honored with the prestigious Howard B. Meek Award at the 2016 International CHRIE Conference in Dallas.

Students know Moreo for his quick wit and engaging storytelling. His colleagues know him as a dedicated educator and a true Rebel!
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<th><strong>by the Numbers</strong></th>
<th><strong>Premier Magazine</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2,300+</strong></td>
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<td>current students</td>
<td>Average new graduates each year</td>
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<td><strong>Approximate percentage from outside Nevada</strong></td>
<td><strong>Average of 150 hospitality executives participate in our annual student mentor program</strong></td>
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<td><strong>50%</strong></td>
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<td><strong>22% of students are international</strong></td>
<td><strong>student internship placements each year</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Over 15,000 alumni, 50% reside outside Las Vegas</strong></td>
<td><strong>Over 100 hospitality organizations actively recruit our students each year</strong></td>
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<td><strong>1 of only 18 PGA accredited Golf Management Programs in the country</strong></td>
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Hospitality Hall Takes Shape

Spring Groundbreaking
In March, more than two hundred guests gathered at the newly-cleared Hospitality Hall construction site for hors d’oeuvres, wine, music, and a formal groundbreaking program, which featured a ceremonial bottle sabering by Southern Glazer’s Wine and Spirits. Addressing an audience of UNLV faculty/staff, Nevada legislators, and donor honorees, dean Stowe Shoemaker described the design of the $59 million facility as “open and collaborative, with open halls and common areas for students to interact with other students, educators, and industry.”

Future Grand Opening
In late 2017, the Harrah Hotel College will invite alumni, donors, and friends to a formal grand opening event to celebrate the completion of Hospitality Hall. Guests will be able to tour the building’s 93,500 square feet of experiential learning spaces, which includes a student-run café, a golf management learning center, and an executive kitchen. Classes are expected to begin in the spring of 2018.

Building Founders, Partners, and Benefactors

The following donors have pledged financial support to Hospitality Hall, supplementing state allocated funds. Their names will be highlighted in designated spaces throughout the building (naming opportunities are still available):

$2.5 Million
Caesars Entertainment
Las Vegas Sands
Konami Gaming, Inc.
MGM Resorts International
Boyd Gaming Corporation
Station Casinos, LLC.
J. Willard & Alice S. Marriott Foundation
Engelstad Family Foundation

$1 Million
Don and Dee Snyder
Southern Glazer’s Wine and Spirits

$250,000
Robert L. Boughner ($300,000)
Cynthia Kiser Murphey
William Paulos
Fall Topping Out
In September, construction crews completed the steel frame for Hospitality Hall. McCarthy Construction marked the occasion with a traditional “topping out” ceremony, during which crew members placed the final steel beam at the top of the four-story structure. Attendees, including UNLV faculty and staff, architects from Carpenter Sellers Del Gatto, and several donors, joined the crew at the construction site for a barbecue lunch.
Why I Give

Marco Benvenuti ’02, Co-Founder and Chief Product and Analytics Officer, Duetto

UNLV has meant a lot to me both professionally and personally. It is where I learned to speak English and where I found my passion for the hospitality industry. The education and support I received there helped propel me in my career and make everything I’ve accomplished at Duetto possible. I’m happy to give back because I’ve gotten so much from the school.

Paula Eylar-Lauzon ’89, ’97 MBA, Senior Vice President, Administration, Boyd Gaming Corporation

Our children are the future, and we have a responsibility to the next generation to invest in their education. I am proud to be a supporter of UNLV’s Hospitality Hall. This state-of-the-art facility is a key investment in our community and in the future leaders of our hospitality industry.

Chuck Lehman ’71, Founder of Fresh & Ready Foods

The hospitality program provided me and my family with a nice lifestyle and now a comfortable retirement. It feels good to help support the future of the industry. That said, I am so excited to watch the growth of our school’s reputation worldwide and witness the professionalism of our students. I couldn’t find a better vehicle for my contributions.

George Maloof ’88, Entrepreneur and Businessman

I give back because I enjoy giving. I believe in UNLV and feel that donating helps the university better compete for athletes, students, and faculty.

William Paulos ’69, Owner, Cannery Casino Resorts

The reason I give is very simple: it make me feel good. The life experiences I had, the education I received, and the opportunities that were afforded to me because of UNLV make me want to give back so others will be afforded the same opportunities. Las Vegas should ALWAYS have the premier hospitality college, and it cannot be done without the help of its alumni. Believe me, it will make you feel good too.

John Peiser ’78, ’07 MHA, Retired Hotel Executive

The Harrah College helped lay the foundation that has given me a wonderful career and life. I believe in paying it forward so those lucky enough to be part of the Harrah Hotel College can enjoy some of the advantages I now possess. By donating, I can insure the college’s future.

Larry Ruvo, Senior Managing Director, Southern Glazer’s Wine and Spirits

The lifeblood of Las Vegas and our great state of Nevada has been tourism, and the heart pumping that lifeblood is comprised of educated, well-informed executives and employees. The Harrah Hotel College has been providing these kinds of exemplary, well-educated team members for decades. I strongly believe in, love, and admire the work being done educating these young students, not only for Nevada, but for the hospitality industry throughout the world. We would not be where we are today as a city or as an industry without the work done by the college.

Robert Van Ness ’83, Executive Vice President, Americas at Preferred Hotel Group

As one progresses in his/her life and career, it is important to take stock of those who fostered your growth over the years. For me, this includes the faculty, friends, and leadership of UNLV. Quite simply, my giving is my thanks to the many who have helped me along the way. Perhaps, my small donation will help pave the way for others who have found UNLV as an entryway to this wonderful industry we call ‘hospitality.’
The Harrah Hotel College is fortunate to have the generous support of alumni, students, parents, friends, corporations, and foundations. These gifts play an integral role in ensuring that our college maintains the highest standard of excellence when preparing our students to become tomorrow's industry leaders. We want to extend a heartfelt thanks to those who gave to the college during the 2015-2016 fiscal year (July 1, 2015, to June 30, 2016).

$1,000,000 +
Las Vegas Sands Corporation

$500,000 - $999,999
Boyd Gaming Corporation
Engelstad Family Foundation
Konami Gaming, Inc.
MGM Resorts International
The J. Willard & Alice S. Marriott Foundation
Station Casinos, LLC

$100,000 - $499,999
Association of Gaming Equipment Manufacturers
Gaming Laboratories International, LLC
Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits
Wynn Resorts

$50,000 - $99,999
Robert Boughner
Kagemasa Kozuki

$20,000 - $49,999
Dotty's International Game Technology
Nevada Council on Problem Gambling

$10,000 - $19,999
Caesars Enterprise Services LLC
Edwards Foundation
Global Experience Specialists Inc.
Hyatt Corporation
Steelman Partners

$5,000 - $9,999
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Minphy Liao
Jihwa Lim '06
Margaret Lindsay & Donald Lindsay
Anthony Llanos '97
Mark Lopata '95
Jun Guang Lu '13
Rommel Santamaria & Mark Lucas '78
Treena Luchetta & Mario Luchetta
Phillip Luchetta '00
Kassia & Travis Lunn '11
Costa Magoulas '99
Ellen & Kevin Mahoney '82
David Malkiewicz '95
Charly Mapes
Andrew Marino
Shane Markuson
Kelli Maruca '95
Robert & Michael Masterson '84
Heather Meyers '13
Thomas McGough '15
Deanna Mendoza '12
Frank Menezes '90
Traci & Nathan Meriwether '16
Shelly Michaels
Ruth Ann Hattori & Jim Mikula '78
Joshua Millan '13
Lauralee & Glenn Miller '78
Jared Mintz '02
Michael Mitran '85
Meredith & Michael Mixer '89
Larry Moldt
Linda Montoya '98
Timothy Morrissey '86
Zackery Mumbower '14
Michael Musselman '93
Linda '79 & Bruce Nelson '78
Lawrence Nethercott '11
John Newton '90
Melissa & David Nightingale '80
Michelle Oh '94
Michael Oliver '02
Susan & David Olson
OMG Sourcing LLC
Brian Orjiako '15
Sherri & Jeffrey Ortwein
Terry & Christopher Pahlmann '93
Nathan Pajutee
William Paladino '87
George Palumbo '71
Richard Pankhurst
Kit & Gordon Parker '01
Renee Parker '13
Zeljana Petric '16
Erika Pineda '01
David Pitgoff '92
Michael '10 & Marie Pius '09
Michel & Kathleen Pontius '99
Dirk Prado '11
Maria & Jerry Pribil '91
Christopher Proctor '92
ProSource
Max Puffer '95
Eric '01 & Amy Puhl '07
Christopher Ranft '00
Carol Rapp
Bruce & Renee Rayes '88
Paul Rechsteiner '06
Residence Inn Marriott
Christina & Darrell Rich '90
Edward Ricks
Denis Rion
Barb & Jerry Roberts
Julie Roh '07
Ryan Romero
Suzanne Rosencrantz '10
Kyle Russo '99
Richard Sabo '82
Ani & Tony Salsaa '03
Alexander Salvo '13
Julie Samuelson '95
Rafael & Jennifer Sanchez '86
Steve Haase & Amy Scerra '04
Garrett Schreyper
Joan Scrivner '92
Susan Sherman '98
Joel & Sherri Shows '83
Kimberly & Scott Sibella '88
Robert Sigal
Michelle Slawson
Travis Small '99
Janet Smith
Jonathan Smith '08
Matthew Smith
Robert Spraggs '02
Jana & Emmett Steed '03
Lisa Stevens
Charles & Stacey Stihles-Reinhard '93
Susan & Robert Stone '77
Daniel Stople & Christine Stone-Stolpe '94
Gita & Ari Stotland '93
Amy & Christopher Sugden '02
Guy Szudera '03
Erika Tanenbaum '06
Zachary Thomas '09
Perry Todd '84
Toolup.com
Ryan Tuttle '84
Kimberly Tyler '03
Amanda Ulrich '09
Miranda Valdez '16
Rachel & Christopher Van Zele '99
Hernan Vera '99
Tanya Vo
Maximilian Von Engelhardt '12
Natalie Wanner
Justin Ward '06
Samantha Weisenberg '13
Kenneth & Nora West '95
Brooks Whitmore '86
David Wilcox '01
Reagan Wilson '14
Megan Wilson
Christopher Wraser
Whitney Wright '13
Thomas Yasuda '79
Sean Young
Susan Young '07
Brian Yu '04
Tyler Zongker

How can I Give?
Whether it’s contributing to Hospitality Hall, the Dean’s Leadership Fund, or student scholarships, there are numerous ways to support the Harrah Hotel College. To learn more about available giving opportunities, and to explore the option that is right for you, contact Alexandra Liebman, Director of Development of the Harrah Hotel College, at alexandra.liebman@unlv.edu or 702-895-3148.

We strive to ensure the accuracy of this listing, which includes those who made a gift to the Harrah College during the 2015-2016 fiscal year. This list is not inclusive of all UNLV giving, and giving levels may represent part of a larger pledge. If there is an error, please contact Alexandra Liebman using the contact information above.
Thomas A. Jingoli ’96 MS - Chief Administration Officer/Senior VP of Konami Gaming, Inc. & Harrah Hotel College Alumnus of the Year.

Undergrad Tom Jingoli and his friends spent the summers off the New Jersey mainland enjoying the sand and the surf at Long Beach Island—that is, until the summer his parents decided it was time to get serious.

“I was to get an internship instead,” said Jingoli. “To appease them, I managed to secure an internship with the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement.”

It was an experience that would change everything for the native born New Jersian.

“I went into that internship just shy of kicking and screaming and came out with a career path that has defined my life. That internship helped shape my work ethic and instilled in me a drive to succeed.”

That drive ultimately led Jingoli to seek a master’s degree at the Harrah Hotel College, where he flourished under the tutelage of globally-recognized gaming expert and academic Shannon Bybee.

“Professor Bybee challenged me to be a great thinker and to widen my scope as a gaming practitioner. It was an experience that I’ll never forget.”

Upon graduation in 1996, Jingoli went to work for Station Casinos and SEGA Gaming before accepting a position at Konami Gaming in 2003, where he served as the director of compliance for four years before being promoted to senior director of compliance and legal administration. By 2010, Jingoli was Konami’s chief compliance officer/senior vice president, and in 2016 he was promoted to chief administration officer/senior vice president, directing all activities spanning Konami’s human resources, compliance, legal, facilities, security, and quality assurance departments.

Despite the demands of work and family life, Jingoli still makes time to give back to the college.

“Tom is a steadfast supporter of the college and our students,” said Harrah Hotel College Dean Shoemaker as he presented Jingoli with the Harrah Hotel College Alumnus of the Year Award back in May. “I also cannot thank Tom enough for serving on the dean’s Global Advisory Board. He always comes to the table with enthusiasm and inspired ideas to help shape the college’s future.”

“The industry is so dynamic, and I love that Konami sees the value in partnering with UNLV. Plus my boss, our CEO Satoshi Sakamoto, is a true leader.”

R. Marsh Starks
Between the lights and the buffets, this was my Shangri La,” said Harrah College Alumna Rikki Tanenbaum, remembering her first visits to Las Vegas as a teen. “I was so drawn to this. It ignited a spark in me.”

Now a successful marketing professional, Tanenbaum is back in the city of lights driving new revenue for the Golden Nugget’s Nevada and Lake Charles, Louisiana properties from her Downtown Las Vegas office.

“I oversee advertising, database marketing, marketing analysis functions, events, Internet and social media strategy for properties—anything that helps acquire new customers, retain customers, and grow existing business.”

Tanenbaum was quick to excel in the world of hospitality marketing after completing her undergraduate education at the University of Pennsylvania. Following in her marketing executive mother’s footsteps, she worked her way up through corporate loyalty marketing and partnership marketing positions for major Las Vegas brands before taking on regional marketing roles for properties in California, Mississippi, and Ohio. As she advanced, Tanenbaum continued to further her education—first as a student of the Harrah Hotel College’s in-house master’s program, and then finishing up with a degree from the Master of Hospitality Administration, Executive Online Program.

“I needed the flexibility of the online program as my career progressed,” said Tanenbaum, who went on to receive an Executive MBA at Duke as well.

After returning to Las Vegas, Tanenbaum embraced the opportunity to reestablish her connection to the community and UNLV. In addition to her membership on the Hotel College alumni board, Tanenbaum serves as an industry mentor for students of the college. “I probably benefitted just as much as the student I recently mentored, who happened to be Ph.D. student,” she said. “I offered her some insight in the real world and how her work would potentially be applicable in the business setting. She kept me more attached to the research. It was a nice surprise.”

When not giving back to UNLV, Tanenbaum devotes much of her time to a project closest to her heart, the Animal Foundation, working as part of the team on Mission Possible 2020 to enable the shelter to be able to save all healthy and treatable animals in the Valley, and also serving as a board member.

“I love working in such a dynamic business. Figuring out where the industry is heading, and how to prepare for it, provides me with professional purpose and motivates me to get better.”
Early on in his career, Chris Finelli set his sights on mastering the skills necessary for success. Upon first meeting him, however, it becomes clear that Finelli’s most important skill comes quite naturally.

“I’m a people person,” smiles the native born Southern Californian. “I was always taught to be likeable. In the sales arena, that’s critical.”

Finelli puts his people skills to good use every day as regional vice president of sales for Hyatt, managing more than 40 directors of strategic accounts and overseeing teams that span throughout North America, Canada, and South America. He joined Hyatt’s team 12 years ago, serving in sales positions at properties in Los Angeles, in San Diego, and Chicago.

Now working at the Hyatt corporate headquarter office in Chicago, Finelli is busy driving business to 627 hotels in 52 countries, yet somehow he remains vividly in tune with his time as a student at the Harrah Hotel College:

“You’re moving away from home; you’re scared, experiencing all of the emotions as a new student,” he reflected. “It made me better. It made me stronger.”

Finelli’s intense work ethic and desire to connect with others fueled his success as a young hospitality professional.

“I waited tables, valeted cars, worked as a sales intern at Caesars,” he said. “I value these experiences so much because they allowed me to understand different facets about the industry and made me realize how important it is to have a connection with your team. It is critical to success at all levels.”

Today this determined professional, devoted husband and father, and self-proclaimed “people person” says he is truly grateful for the educational opportunities he received at UNLV.

“The people… the city… the school… everything really prepared me for the industry.”
“W e’re fast, we’re first class, and we’re fabulous,” said Denise Hunter, describing her company, Destinations Link Hospitality, which is a creative boutique marketing firm representing over 850 hotels and DMC’s domestically and internationally.

“We match companies with ideal, often exotic destinations for their corporate meetings and incentives,” explained Hunter from her New York headquarters. “It’s not only about assisting companies and associations with the sourcing and site selection process, we facilitate event planning and organize unique incentive programs for our clients.”

One gets the feeling that Hunter, who flashes her signature smile often, has been fabulous from the beginning.

At the age of 18, after being accepted at Cornell, Michigan State, and UNLV, Hunter crossed paths with Milton Vallen, the brother of Harrah Hotel College founding dean Jerry Vallen. “He convinced me to give UNLV’s Hotel School a try,” said Hunter. “I selected UNLV because it gave me the best foundation in the hospitality industry for my career path.”

Hunter’s instincts were right. “It was excellent!” she said. “I loved the fact that I could work while I went to school, but I also loved being involved in student clubs, doing tailgates, fundraisers, and the mentorship program. I really established myself as a leader at UNLV.”

Hunter’s time at UNLV served to intensify her love for marketing as well; and following graduation, she went on to serve in numerous marketing roles, including the director of marketing for several major hotel brands in North America.

“My passion is working side-by-side with my clients & helping them bring their visions to light. “Today I am the president and CEO of DLH with a history of bringing pleasure to our clients globally. Traveling the world to find the best places for our clients has brought me great meaning and satisfaction in my life. I am always grateful for the education that I received at UNLV.”
The greatest buildings start with a single block.

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*If we’ve given to you, this is a wonderful way to give back.*

For more information, call or visit us online.
*Maggie Hausbeck*
*Associate Director of Alumni Relations and Development*
702.895.1052 • margaret.hausbeck@unlv.edu

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Be part of history.
Help build the future.
Make your mark.
*This map is not intended to be comprehensive in showing location of alumni, but in showing areas of largest impact around the country.
Thousands of Harrah Hotel College alumni are making their way across the United States, changing the face of the hospitality industry. Whether they are working in hotel operations, food and beverage, gaming, or marketing, our graduates are using their college-honed theoretical and practical knowledge to redefine the national standard for excellence in service. And their influence extends well beyond the U.S. to destination markets throughout the world, including Europe, South America, Asia, and the South Pacific.

Total Alumni: 15,211*
(Domestic: 13,886)
(International: 1,325)

Top Locations:

Nevada 6,907
California 2,222
Singapore 818
Texas 434
Florida 378
New York 348

* As of July 2016

Be Counted... Join the Network
Contact our director of alumni relations to connect with Rebels in your area and around the world.
Maggie Hausbeck
margaret.hausbeck@unlv.edu
702.895.1052
1971  
Eugene Grace ’71 was president of Grace Management, Inc., a national company specializing in senior housing with service environments, for 32 years before selling the company. He is semi-retired and currently serves as board advisor to a private equity group and as a qualified expert witness for cases involving senior housing. Eugene and his wife, Mari Joe, divide their time between homes in Vail, CO, and Santa Rosa, CA. He tells current students that “a college degree only opens doors that would not be open otherwise. Your personal actions, character and personality will determine your true success.”

1972  
Ken Free ’72 recently returned to Las Vegas after 42 years. He began his career working for major hotel companies with his last ‘chain hotel’ position at Hilton Worldwide Headquarters in Beverly Hills. He was a senior executive in the Corporate Properties Division and is credited with a key role in developing what is now known as Hilton Grand Vacations. In the ’90s, Ken founded Straightline Hospitality, Inc., focused on hotel and resort real estate development and branding in 18 countries.

1973  
Gary Brown ’73 is an adjunct instructor at Bryant & Stratton College in Hampton, VA. He teaches students “Introduction to Hospitality Management” and serves as a tutor and library assistant. He enjoys travel, wood-working and classic cars, owning a ’61 Triumph TR-3 and a 1991 Acura NSX.

1974  
Van Nickerson ’74 is a hospitality industry consultant residing outside Los Angeles. He is working with fellow Rebels to spearhead a major theme park project in Mississippi. He is also a professional Latin percussion instrumentalist.

1978  
Gary Goodson ’78 worked under the direction of the chief engineer at the Las Vegas Hilton for two years before moving to Coos Bay, Oregon in 1980. Since then, Gary has been co-owner of the Pancake Mill Restaurant and Pie Shoppe with his wife Beverly. Gary recounts a meeting with Dean Vallen when he first visited UNLV in 1976: “Dr. Vallen was very busy that day but took the time to show me around. He made me feel important and very welcome. I was his guest in the truest sense of the word.”

1979  
Gary Vallen ’79 is a great skier and a horrible golfer. Professionally, he continues his 29th year as a professor at Northern Arizona University’s School of Hotel and Restaurant Management. Dr. Vallen has owned an industry consulting practice and serves as an expert witness on various hospitality-related cases. He recently completed work on the 10th edition of “Check-In, Check-Out,” a textbook he shares with his father, founding dean of the Harrah Hotel College, Dr. Jerome Vallen.

Robert Sorrell ’79 is retired and enjoying the rewards of his hard work. His pride and joy are his two sons, one of whom is a certified drug counselor and another who is working to become a professional golfer after recently earning a Junior PGA rating.

1980  
David Nightingale ’80 is currently general manager of the Peninsula Golf & Country Club in San Mateo, California. He previously served as general manager of the St. Francis Yacht Club and Sharon Heights Country Club, among other prestigious postings. He is married and a proud father to three children. His middle child, Derek Nightingale ’14, works for Marriott in San Francisco.

1982  
Willane Winchester ’82 is a memorialist and managing member of Memorials Worldwide LLC, a family run business offering memorials at spiritual, cultural and historic sites around the world.

1984  
Marina Jezzini ’84 is a Las Vegas real estate broker currently with Re/Max Benchmark. She was recently honored with the Re/Max Hall of Fame award and Top Nevada Premier Agent award from Zillow.com. Her 14-year-old son, Andre, is an up and coming UNLV Rebel.

Kathleen Kulesza ’85 is a professional speaker and mind/body transformation coach. She supports women executives as they “flip the switch” and to commit to making healthier choices: eating well, moving more and acknowledging their wants and desires. Her own experience as a busy marketing executive inspired her to make a difference.

1986  
Helen Lamothe ’86 is a partner at Golding + Lamothe, a boutique litigation law firm in Los Angeles.

1987  
Johnathan Bayer ’87 is a middle school English teacher. After working for 12 years in restaurant management, Jonathan made the switch to education. He earned his master’s degree in education with an emphasis in curriculum.

Barry Vaccaro ’87 has worked in the Las Vegas hotel industry for 29 years. He has held various positions at the Sahara, Luxor and Excalibur and currently works at the Eastside Cannery Hotel and Casino. As a student, he worked as student equipment manager for Coach Tarkanian and the Runnin’ Rebels and he’s most proud of his daughter, who graduates from UNLV in December.

1991  
Dennis Gradillas ’91 relocated to Pleasanton, CA to further his work with American Baptist Homes of the West (ABHOW). As vice president—regional operations manager, Dennis is also working toward his Master of Arts in Gerontology. Prior to joining ABHOW five years ago, Dennis worked at various hotels and casinos in Las Vegas and served as an adjunct professor for the Harrah Hotel College. He is a proud past president of the UNLV Hotel Chapter Alumni Board and served as a board member from 2003 to 2012.

Hydi Verduzco ’91 co-owns Durango’s Premier Sushi in southwest Colorado. After managing various restaurants, she was named the state’s 2012 Outstanding Restaurant Professional. She is married to fellow Harrah Hotel College graduate Sergio Verduzco ’92 and they raise their four sons as part of the industry.

Steve Zanella ’91 is president of core properties Las Vegas for MGM Resorts International. He provides leadership to all the Las Vegas core properties, leads the development of Park MGM and NoMad at Monte Carlo and also leads the strategic direction for slot operations across the company.

1992  
Richard Killian ’92 worked in the private country club business before moving into real estate in 2003. He currently operates Scott Real Estate, Inc. in Dallas/Fort Worth. His advice for new graduates: “Create a database of friends and methods to stay in contact. These contacts could be extremely helpful in your career later in life.”

Glenn Garrison ’92 received the Award for Meritorious Civilian Service after serving in the Pentagon as chief, Total Force Program, Strategy and Design Branch. He currently serves as USAF chief.
Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Policy.

1993

David Porter ’93 received the 2015 Aloft Hotels General Manager of the Year award from Starwoods Hotel and Resorts, just his latest industry accolade. A resident of Oregon, he also serves as a board member for Travel Portland. His young daughter loves to play “lobby” when visiting hotels.

Robin Slipock ’93 and her husband, Brian Slipock ’92, own Jackson’s Bar and Grill in Las Vegas. They are huge Rebel fans and proud parents to Dina, a senior at the Adelson School.

1994

Nancy Banner ’94 is owner and chef at The Holistic Kitchen in Santa Fe, NM where she creates recipes that demonstrate her passion to help individuals struggling with dietary adjustments. She is a proud member of the American Culinary Federation and the American Personal and Private Chefs Association.

1995

Dustin Barningham ’95 is the general manager and head grower at Cannabis Collective in Morgan Hills, CA. His hobbies include fishing, boating, gardening, and building cars.

Craig Tolchin ’95 resides in Denver with his wife and two dogs. He is the team lead integrations at Amadeus Hospitality. Celebrating his 15th year with the company, Craig leads a worldwide team which implements integrations between Amadeus Sales & Catering solutions and hotel Property Management Systems.

1996

Michael Dube ’96 transitioned from a hotel general manager to hotel brokerage and is now vice president at HREC’s headquarters in Greenwood Village, Colorado. He is a proud single dad to son, Ryan, and daughter, Keira.

Rachel Ego ’96 is celebrating her 20th year in professional private country club management. She is currently general manager of The Club at Rolling Hills in Golden, CO. Her advice to young Rebels: “Once graduated, you have learned just enough to be dangerous! Go out and learn by doing and trying.”

1997

Brian Schorgl ’97 has owned and operated O’Neill’s Restaurant and Bar in Leawood, Kansas for 16 years. He and his wife have three children: Kaitlin, Francie and Jack.

Mark Benjamin ’97 resides in the Finger Lakes region of New York. He is co-founder and treasurer of FlowerPetal Community Relations. He is Director of Seneca Meadows, Inc., immediate past chairman of the board, Seneca County Chamber of Commerce, and author of “Go Rebels! Go! Fight! Win!” He counts his decision to attend UNLV as one of the top five choices he’s made in life.

David Vondrasek ’97 is owner/winemaker for his own label, Artisan Uprising, and the distiller for a start-up distillery called Azeo in Paso Robles, CA.

1998

Jacob Montoya ’98 was named the environmental service (EVS) manager of Santa Ana Star Casino in Pueblo, NM.

1999

Hui-Chia Jen ’99 is the general manager of Westgate Flamingo Bay Resort in Las Vegas. Jessica joined Westgate Resorts in 2007 as the regional controller to assist the company build its first project on the Strip - PH Towers by Westgate. After the project was acquired by another company in 2012, Jessica transitioned her role to resort operations in addition to her financial responsibilities.

Bety Kusuma ’99 is senior accounting associate at DAWN. She is married and became a mom in 2005.

2000

Adam Lopez ’00 is the technical senior project manager at VizExplorer; with twin five-year-old boys, his best advice for graduates is to “work hard, play harder, follow your heart and the money will follow!”

2001

Sabrina Orque ’01 founded an HR consulting firm, SOLV HR, for small to midsize businesses in 2013. Her advice to students: “connect with as many of your peers in your concentration as you can. You never know where they will be in five years and the opportunities that may present itself.”

2002

Ililanna Murray ’02 recently returned to Las Vegas after spending 15 years in Brooklyn, New York. While in New York, she worked most recently for Citigroup where she served as the VP lead analyst for the Equity Compensation Unit in Global Citi Shared Services. As an HR pro, she also worked for Adecco Staffing, Cantor Fitzgerald, Scient and Elevator News Network. Her advice for new grads? “Seek out a mentor and always have a 5 year plan. Always look to know more about the world around you…”

2003

Brett Hugheft ’03 was promoted to regional manager, West Coast, for Oakwood Worldwide’s Property Management division. Oakwood is an industry-leading corporate housing provider and residential property management company. He oversees Oakwood’s eight west coast properties and the continued growth of its portfolio resulting from a $4 billion partnership with Singapore-based Mapletree.

Patricia McAtee ’03 is a domestic violence facilitator, substance abuse counselor, addictions counselor and child & family therapist.

2004

Benjamin Mazal ’04 is manager at the city of Lafayette, Colorado Parks, Open Space & Golf. He is a proud father to his daughter, Isabel, age nine.

Bryan Thornhill ’04 is a proud father of son, Trent, two years old, and his six-year-old pug, Stella. Bryan began in education nine years ago and is a regional principal for opportunities for learning in South Central Los Angeles. As a high school math teacher, he developed a passion for helping students and families in under-served communities.

Michelle Ellis ’04 was appointed the general manager of the Visalia Convention Center in January 2016. She directs all aspect of the convention center’s operations and works with the city of Visalia to provide direction to grow the success of the convention center. Prior to relocating with her husband and two children, Sydney, six, and Parks, 24 months, she served as the associate director at the Three Rivers Convention Center, Toyota Center and the Toyota Arena in Kennewick, Washington.

2005

Michael Essig ’93, ’05 was promoted to senior director of IT for the Choctaw Nation’s newly created Commerce Division. He oversees IT for 21 casino locations, 13 travel plazas, and a new grocery store enterprise.

2006

Linda Bernstein ’06 has a combined 25 years of experience in human resource management; more than 20 in casino and gaming, and most recently in food service. She is currently the human resources director at Fifth Avenue Restaurant Group and a contributing columnist in the Las Vegas Food & Beverage Professional magazine with “HR Insights”. After serving local organizations
like the Southern Nevada American Heart Association, the Leukemia Lymphoma Society, and Opportunity Village, her advice for graduates is “get involved! Volunteer in your community, learn how the city works and how people live, and you will be a smarter, more rounded individual.”

Robert Taylor ’06 is the assistant controller for Davidson Hotels & Resorts. He resides in Ohio with his wife and three children. His hobbies range from historical and genealogical research to poetry, art, symphony, space exploration, big data quantitative analysis, and sports of all kinds.

Wai (Vida) Chow ’87, ’06 is the director of talent management at Hyatt Hotels and Resorts Asia Pacific. She strives to bring pride and joy in everything she does, and her passions include yoga, fashion and style, and “funfunfun!” Her hobbies include everything she does, and bring pride and joy in her career. She is the director of talent management at Hyatt.

Andrew “Ace” Elliott ’10 and Shawna Elliot ’10, ’13, are both graduates of the UNLV PGA Management Program. Andrew currently works as the assistant golf professional at Las Vegas’ prestigious Wynn Golf Club. Shawna specializes in golf instruction for players of all ages and skill levels.

Joe Rasic ’92, ’10 owns Cypess Point Restaurants, LLC. He is married and the proud father to sons Ryan and Benjamin. Joe counts food, wine, and community involvement as his favorite past-times.

David Smith ’10 was recruited by Marriott upon graduation to open the EDITION Walkiki in Honolulu but soon after founded a private tour company, DONE Hawaii Tours. He credits his classes, from cost control to advance accounting, as contributing to his company’s success and steady growth but notes he wouldn’t have come as far as he had without his organization behavior class work.

Miranda Kitterlin-Lynch ’10 is a professor at the the Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Administration at Florida International University. She is married and just had her first child, a daughter named Mary Jane.

Brian Benitz ’11 was recently named director of sales & marketing for OB Sports Golf Management headquartered in Scottsdale, AZ. He represents 16 courses and, after five years with the company, he plans to retire with them as well.

Juan Leonis ’11 is director of housekeeping at The Fairmont San Francisco. He was recently honored as the 2015 Americas Leader of the Year and includes the Hotel College staff as contributors to his success in the company and in his career.

Megan Hutton ’11 was recently promoted to general manager of Guy Fieri’s El Burro Borracho, his second restaurant in Las Vegas. Megan is currently pursuing her master’s in Hotel Administration from UNLV.

Trevor Hewitt ’11 is co-owner of Pizza Rock, named Best Pizza by Las Vegas Weekly two years in a row. Trevor and his wife, Megan, are expecting their first baby early next year.

David Wedley ’11 is the director of UNLV’s Student-Athlete Academic Services. He serves as academic advisor for football, men’s basketball and softball.

Stacy Shelman ’11 turned her college internship into a full-time employment as the special event coordinator for sales & catering at Hard Rock Hotel & Casino. She later became the entertainment coordinator at the Joint at Hard Rock before moving to the South Point as event manager for the arena. She currently runs the group sales department of an 8,000 seat venue in Kansas City, MO, called Starlight Theatre. She wants current students to “...have fun with the social activities, but also focus on your career future and start networking as soon as possible.”

Alexander Salvo ’13 is a casino host at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Tampa, Florida.

Josh Millan ’13 recently joined the MGM Resorts International team as the director of labor analytics and serves as a mentor in the Hotel College Mentor program.

Michael Rossoleo ’04, ’13 has worked with Marriott International for 15 years. He was recently promoted to director of revenue management at the Wailea Beach Marriott Resort & Spa. The hotel is undergoing a $90 million total transformation to become one of the premier resorts on Maui and a flagship resort in the Marriott portfolio.

Jessica Briggs ’14 is event coordinator for Downtown Project where she runs events in 11 different venues generating over a million dollars in sales in 2015. She calls UNLV the “best hotel college in the country” and names her dog, video games, and co-ed softball as her hobbies.

Daniel Chait ’14 is president/CEO of True Competitors, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to connect children with professional athletes by providing safe and personalized environments within children’s hospitals across the United States.

Robert “Andy” Bomberger ’14 is the catering sales manager for the Whitney Peak Hotel in Downtown Reno, NV. Andy is a Reno-born Rebel and he counts skiing, beaching, learning, and eating among his hobbies.

Laurel Hill ’15 is part of Marriott International’s Voyage leadership development program at the Irvine, CA Marriott. While she initially asked to be part of Voyage’s sales program, she switched to housekeeping because the program was seeking someone who was fluent in Spanish and she had expertise in the area thanks to her UNLV internship with MGM Resorts International. In her current role, she is involved with an innovative next-generation housekeeping system and in-room recycling program that allows for enhanced communication with special guests, better guest service, and higher departmental productivity.

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