Changing Course

A PROGRESSIVE NEW CURRICULUM PROMISES MORE CHOICES FOR STUDENTS AND MORE TALENT FOR AN INDUSTRY EMBRACING CHANGE

ALSO

01 AHEAD OF THE GAME

02 RICHES TO RAGS AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

03 AND THE SURVEY SAYS ...
In This Issue

5 From the Dean
8 College News
36 Take It From Our Alumni
42 Beyond the Classroom
44 On the Job: Interns Report
55 Donor Honor Roll

FEATURE
Changing Course
Keeping Tradition Alive

IN GOOD TASTE
Serving Up Excellence

CHECKING IN
Facing the Future of Technology
From the Dean

The winds of change are blowing strong in both the hospitality industry and academia. Whether you call it an evolution or a revolution, the hospitality industry is definitely going through one. Once considered almost exclusively the hotel/restaurant business, the industry has exploded into multiple sectors such as integrated resorts, theme parks, entertainment, destination marketing organizations (DMOs), meeting-incentive-conference-exhibitions (MICE), sports and events, and even museums. The Harrah College of Hospitality has made it our mission to remain in step with the industry by emulating their commitment to reinvention. We do this by serving not only as educators, but also as surveyors of trends and champions of opportunities. If you’ve been following the college, you know that we’ve recently undergone a wholesale transformation—changing the name of our college and moving into a new, state-of-the-art academic building. What you may not be aware of is that we’ve recently completed a full-scale redesign of our hospitality curriculum, which is launching in the Fall 2020 Semester (see “Changing Course,” Page 16).

This is truly a watershed moment for the college, but the process wasn’t easy. We worked closely with industry leaders over several years to identify the specific professional competencies that the industry now seeks in employees, today as well as those they believe will be crucial for the future. Our faculty then worked tirelessly to shape a curriculum that would deliver these highly-coveted knowledge, skills, and dispositions to the student. Furthermore, the college built flexibility into the new curriculum to give students more choices relative to their passions, and faculty more room to adjust course offerings as the industry continues to evolve. These are necessary measures at a time when being viable and valuable means staying relevant and responsive. We owe it to our students to increase their marketability, and we owe it to the industry to provide a workforce that not only can make an immediate organizational impact, but also have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to move up the chain of command.

Make no mistake: The winds of change in the hospitality industry are blowing strong. And as the industry continues to evolve, so too will the William F. Harrah College of Hospitality.
Horton Smith Award
CHRIS CAIN
The Southwest PGA honored Dr. Chris Cain as its 2019 winner of the Horton Smith Award, recognizing a PGA professional who serves as a model educator.

Recent Honors
When they’re not busy doing research, teaching students, and serving on committees, Harrah College of Hospitality faculty are being recognized as leaders in the industry.

Best Paper Award
BILLY BAI
Professor Billy Bai’s co-authored paper, “Virtual Reality in Hotel Commercials: An Experimental Study of Advertising Effectiveness,” received the Best Paper Award at the July 2019 ICHRIE Conference in New Orleans.

Golf Professional of the Year
KENDALL MURPHY
Instructor Kendall Murphy was named Golf Professional of the Year (2019) by the Southern Nevada chapter of the PGA.

Research Assistantship Grant
AMANDA BELARMINO AND CASS SHUM
Assistant professors Amanda Belarmino and Cass Shum received UNLV’s Top Tier Doctoral Graduate Research Assistantship Grant, which provides funding for a doctoral research assistant for up to three years.

Beverage Lab Gets a Makeover
The Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits Beverage Academy in Hospitality Hall received an anticipated upgrade in summer 2019. Used for teaching and hosting campus and community events, the space has been fitted with a custom stationary counter, two mobile bars, two EuroCave wine cellars (with capacity to hold more than 165 bottles), cabinetry with display shelving, and enhanced lighting. Special thanks to our donor Southern Glazer’s Wine & Spirits, architect Carpenter Sellers Del Gatto, and installer McCarthy Building Companies.

Career and Alumni Services Unite!
After 12 years of focusing on internships and career readiness for hospitality students, the college’s Boughner Career Center has evolved to encompass alumni relations. The change aligns with a university-level shift that merged career and alumni services functions to enhance engagement across the board. The Bob Boughner Center for Career & Alumni Services is charged with providing connections for students and graduates, promoting internship and recruitment opportunities over our wide alumni network, and supporting the college’s alumni family.

NHLA Women in Lodging Member of the Year (2019)
TONI REPETTI
Hospitality College Assistant Professor Dr. Toni Repetti received the 2019 Women in Lodging Member of the Year Award from the Nevada Hotel & Lodging Association (NHLA). The award, presented at the NHLA Gala Dinner & Awards ceremony October 17, 2019, recognizes a member of the NHLA Women in Lodging division who has contributed substantially to the growth, productivity, and visibility of Women in Lodging.

Horton Smith Award
CHRIS CAIN
The Southwest PGA honored Dr. Chris Cain as its 2019 winner of the Horton Smith Award, recognizing a PGA professional who serves as a model educator.

Best Paper Award
BILLY BAI
Professor Billy Bai’s co-authored paper, “Virtual Reality in Hotel Commercials: An Experimental Study of Advertising Effectiveness,” received the Best Paper Award at the July 2019 ICHRIE Conference in New Orleans.

Golf Professional of the Year
KENDALL MURPHY
Instructor Kendall Murphy was named Golf Professional of the Year (2019) by the Southern Nevada chapter of the PGA.

Research Assistantship Grant
AMANDA BELARMINO AND CASS SHUM
Assistant professors Amanda Belarmino and Cass Shum received UNLV’s Top Tier Doctoral Graduate Research Assistantship Grant, which provides funding for a doctoral research assistant for up to three years.
A head of the Game

Looking toward a progressive future, the PGA of America partners with the Hospitality College’s Sands Center for Professional Development to launch online continuing education program

by Matt Jacob

Ask any business owner, big or small, and they’ll tell you some version of the following: Not every business is destined to succeed, but those that refuse to evolve and adapt with the times are doomed to failure. This universal truth applies to everything from the mom- and-pop shop that opened last week to the established organization whose history stretches back to Woodrow Wilson’s first presidential term.

The Professional Golfers’ Association of America certainly slots in the latter category. Founded in 1916, the PGA of America was directly responsible for growing the game and business of golf from coast to coast throughout the 20th century. But as cultural dynamics began to shift in the new millennium, the highly successful organization suddenly found itself in the figurative rough, its ball caddy to help guide him out of such a precarious predicament.

The PGA of America believed this type of continuing education was vital for its executive members because golf’s core customer base is getting older, so philosophical changes are needed if the organization is going to lure younger consumers whose desires and habits differ from those of older generations. Also, just as resort-casinos around the turn of the century began shifting their revenue focus away from gaming and toward elements like dining, shopping, and nightclubs, the golf industry is looking for ways to maximize its non-golf revenue potential through food, beverage, events, and elevated customer-service experiences.

So the idea was to provide the PGA’s 24,000 members with the opportunity to enroll in an online program designed to broaden their skill set, improve their job performance, and put them on an upwardly mobile career path. “We feel this program will further position [our members] for success in their business and career,” says Dawes Marlatt, the PGA’s senior director for educational and career. “We feel that UNLV’s Golf Management program made perfect sense, as the two entities have a longstanding relationship.”

Since 2002, UNLV has been home to one of just 18 PGA Golf Management University Programs, which educate and train tomorrow’s golf professionals. The fact that UNLV’s Golf Management program is the only one in which students major in hospitality also appealed to the PGA of America’s leadership team.

“We have a leading hospitality management program at UNLV,” says Chris Cain, director of UNLV’s PGA Golf Management University Program. “We’ve been doing this for several decades, so we had the expertise, we had the industry connections, and we had a mechanism to make this work—to actually deliver a product.”

Cain served on the PGA’s national education committee for six years and thus was aware that the organization’s curriculum was shifting with the times. Therefore, he was the ideal point person for researching and devising a continuing-education program that would best suit the PGA’s needs. “I knew the [golf] market was demanding a different type of operator, one who was really good at managing golf but also knew some other stuff,” he says. “And that ‘other stuff’—that gap—was hospitality. So the PGA of America changed the whole curriculum for its entire program. Now, for the first time in 103 years, there are three paths to earning PGA membership: teaching and coaching, golf operations, and executive management. And that executive management is where we fit in.”

The certificate program that’s offered through the Sands Center is open to all PGA executives who have at least five years of work experience and a desire to pursue a career in executive leadership or general management in the golf industry. Those who enroll in the program are required to complete multiple online courses and application exercises, as well as a culminating experience. All of the material relates specifically to various hospitality management disciplines.

“The thought behind the program was, ‘What can we do to train our members—
SPRING 2020

“The program is going to be the differentiator for PGA of America members who are interested in executive management.”
- Dennis Marlatt, PGA of America

An industry man through and through, he found the opportunity to teach intriguing.

T o say Al Izzo is well known is a gross understatement. Even when his legions of former students don’t immediately recognize him, it doesn’t take long for the lightbulb to go on.

“Coming from [the restaurant] industry, the three-course load—which proved to be four, with a few office hours and a bit of committee assignments—sounded like a 20-hour week. I wound up working closer to 60 hours.”

But it was a labor of love for Izzo, who was instrumental in laying the fledgling college’s foundation—bringing in early donors, helping to create administrative standards, securing internships for students, and hosting fundraisers. He even partnered with colleague and fellow Professor Pat Moreo to write a food column titled “Under Five,” letting students know where to eat for less than $5.

“Captain Al” led numerous international educational expeditions throughout his career. Looking back, I realized he believed in his students more than we believed in ourselves. Al saw the potential and provided so many of us not only with hospitality knowledge but also with the confidence to move forward in our careers. Thank you, Al!

-Bobbie Barnes ’93

**Al’s Class Notes**

Friends, students, and colleagues comment on Izzo’s career, retirement, and impact on their lives.

**BACK IN THE ‘90s,** we were a much smaller college, and as such, students had the opportunity to know faculty very well. Al was the professor you went to when you wanted candid feedback. Never one to sugarcoat his advice, he was both quick to compliment as well as provide a no-so-gentle nudge in the right direction! Looking back, I realized he believed in his students more than we believed in ourselves. Al saw the potential and provided so many of us not only with hospitality knowledge but also with the confidence to move forward in our careers. Thank you, Al!

-Al’s Class Notes >

An industry man through and through, he found the opportunity to teach intriguing.

- John Farish ’70

**AL ALWAYS HAD A KIND WORD and plenty of time for us doctoral students. He is a true fountain of knowledge and always brought the operator’s perspective to his discussions. Congratulations on a wonderfully influential career and a well-earned retirement.**

**Captain Al Sets Sail into Retirement**

When it comes to saying goodbye to UNLV legend Al Izzo, Hospitality College graduates aren’t going quietly into the night

by Angela Ramsey

**“Captain Al” led numerous international educational expeditions throughout his career.**

**PHOTO BY R. MARSH STARKS**

**“The program is going to be the differentiator for PGA of America members who are interested in executive management.”**
- Dennis Marlatt, PGA of America

**Al’s Class Notes**

Friends, students, and colleagues comment on Izzo’s career, retirement, and impact on their lives.

**BACK IN THE ‘90s,** we were a much smaller college, and as such, students had the opportunity to know faculty very well. Al was the professor you went to when you wanted candid feedback. Never one to sugarcoat his advice, he was both quick to compliment as well as provide a no-so-gentle nudge in the right direction! Looking back, I realized he believed in his students more than we believed in ourselves. Al saw the potential and provided so many of us not only with hospitality knowledge but also with the confidence to move forward in our careers. Thank you, Al!

-Bobbie Barnes ’93

**Al’s Class Notes >**

An industry man through and through, he found the opportunity to teach intriguing.

- John Farish ’70

**AL ALWAYS HAD A KIND WORD and plenty of time for us doctoral students. He is a true fountain of knowledge and always brought the operator’s perspective to his discussions. Congratulations on a wonderfully influential career and a well-earned retirement.**

**PHOTO BY R. MARSH STARKS**
In Memoriam
Patti Shock

The hospitality community says goodbye to a meetings-and-events trailblazer and decorated scholar

Hospitability education pioneer and former Hospitality College faculty member Patti Shock passed away in November 2019 at the age of 79.

Shock was a fixture at the Harrah College of Hospitality for 25 years (1988-2013), serving in various leadership roles, such as chair of the Tourism and Convention Administration Department. Prior to her tenure at UNLV, she spent 10 years at Georgia State University.

Often credited with bringing the meetings and events specialty into the foreground of academia, Shock helped shape the hospitality curriculum at numerous institutions across the U.S. Her impact as an educator, author, and consultant is evidenced by the many milestones in her education, including: Lifetime Achievement Award by the Las Vegas Chapter of the National Association of Catering Executives (2010); Distinguished Service Award by the International Catering Executives (2010); and Educator of the Year Award by the Professional Convention Management Association (1996).

Shock continued to be a force in hospitality education in recent years, serving as an academic consultant for The International School of Hospitality and an adjunct professor for Florida International University. When she wasn’t dedicating time to advancing the discipline of meetings and events, she was pouring her energy into helping others—a generosity of spirit that impacted generations of students and colleagues.

"Patti hired me 18 years ago," said Dr. Billy Bai, Hospitality College professor and associate dean of research. "As our department chair, she was always very supportive and good-hearted—doing everything she could to provide us with the resources we needed to advance. She was a great person and will be missed by all who knew her."

Shock helped shape the hospitality curriculum at numerous institutions across the U.S.

Career
I spent 27 years in upstate New York working at Cornell University. My last two years at Cornell, I was the associate dean for infrastructure and technology for the newly created SC Johnson College of Business.

Why UNLV? UNLV’s commitment to hospitality education is what initially drew me here. I was excited by the construction of Hospitality Hall, the renaming of the Hospitality College, and the current changes to the college’s curriculum.

Something surprising about Las Vegas
I was pleased to see UNLV’s drive to becoming a Top Tier research institution and how much diversity we have here. I’ve also been impressed by the sense of pride Las Vegas has for their community. Particularly on the heels of the Oct. 1 tragedy and the Golden Knights success, the town really came together.

Why the hospitality industry?
My father was a food service salesman, so I’ve been around the industry almost my whole life. Later, I got my bachelor’s degree in food science and nutrition from Colorado State University and my master’s in hotel administration from Cornell. I am passionate about hospitality education and how it can change the lives of students.

Ideal summer vacation
My wife and I love adventure vacations. Last year, we hiked 120 miles through Portugal and Spain on the Camino de Santiago. The year before that, we did an eco-tourism trip through Costa Rica that started in Panama and ended in Santiago. The year before that, we did an “eco-tourism” trip through Costa Rica. The year before that, we did an "eco-tourism" trip through Costa Rica.

A time you were daring
When my wife and I were engaged, we decided to do a three-month program in Italy. We spent the fall in Rome, and we were getting married in March, so my in-laws planned our wedding. This was before cell phones and email, so they would mail us letters across the Atlantic asking which flowers or cake flavors we wanted. We had the best experience of our lives, and we came home to a great wedding, too!

See page 52 for more of Al’s Class Notes
Marla Royne Stafford
Executive Associate Dean
of Academic Affairs

From the South to the Strip, Marla Royne Stafford’s path in academia has been guided by her passion for research and her mission to change the lives of students.

by Caitlyn Lopez

Marla Royne Stafford recently trekked across the country to plant new roots at UNLV. Her inspiration? The opportunity to work with some great minds and help build academic programs for the burgeoning Hospitality College.

Stafford is no stranger to working at the highest levels of college administration. This Chicago transplant took on her new role as executive associate dean of academic affairs for the College of Hospitality after serving as both department chair and interim dean at the University of Memphis’ Fogelman College of Business and Economics. Stafford’s experience leading faculty—along with her extensive research background in marketing, advertising, and services—makes her a perfect fit for the Hospitality College.

Your role at the Hospitality College
As the executive associate dean of academic affairs, I will serve as the college’s chief academic officer. That means I will be leading faculty with new initiatives, growing and promoting academic programs, working to build our research, and helping students as they move forward in their studies.

Why UNLV?
The opportunity was very exciting. The Hospitality College is one of the top programs in the world, and it’s in Las Vegas, which makes it very unique. I’m excited to help further the college’s mission and be part of the team that will continue to raise its profile.

Your inspiration to get into academics
A few faculty members at Rollins College in Florida, where I got my MBA, recommended that I get my Ph.D. They thought it would be a great fit for me, so I left my corporate job at Tupperware Worldwide and got my Ph.D. in marketing. It completely changed my career path into academia.

Something people would be surprised to learn about you
I started college when I was 16 and studied theater at a university in Illinois. Then at 17, I transferred to the University of Arizona and studied speech communication.

Your research passion
I have always enjoyed advertising research, but these days I’m passionate about consumer well-being in regard to health care and environmental issues. Dean Stowe Shoemaker and I have talked about the health care industry and how it relates to hospitality. We think there is a lot of opportunity in this area.

Given your background, how do you fit in with the Hospitality College?
I have done a lot of research work in services—everything from the quality of services to the advertising of services—and I’ve used restaurants and hotels in that research. My background is in marketing, advertising, and services, and I think that transitions nicely into the hospitality arena.

Make your mark by adding your name to the Nicholas Paulos Alumni & Friends paver garden at the new Hospitality Hall.

Help build the Future.

To order your personalized paver today, visit unlv.edu/hospitality/paver

PHOTO BY JOSH HAWKINS
When Richard Sypert came to UNLV, he searched for a degree program that would allow him to pursue his passion in sports events management. Following a brief spell in the Business School, Sypert found a permanent home in UNLV’s Harrah College of Hospitality. The Las Vegas native knew what he wanted to do wasn’t necessarily conventional, but hospitality checked many of his boxes.

Hospitality has become an industry of improvisation. With its new curriculum, the Hospitality College has found a way to bend along with it.

by Angela Ramsey
“I felt like the hospitality program could complement more of what I wanted to do, because there’s an emphasis on management as well as serving other people,” says Sypert, who is currently a sophomore. “That’s what stood out to me.”

Fellow UNLV student Cassandra Karsten found herself in a similar situation—gravitating from the business program to the Hospitality College to set herself up for a career in nonprofits. “The focus of this college is people,” says Karsten, now a senior. “We are taught how to treat customers so they’ll feel respected and want to be part of the team.”

With business principals at its foundation and service at its heart, the Hospitality College is attracting more and more students like Sypert and Karsten whose interests lie outside of the traditional hotel/restaurant sectors. Hospitality has become one of the fastest growing industries because it’s not limited to one type of service—indeed, hospitality hopefuls now cast a wide net into fields such as travel, entertainment, health care, sports ... the list goes on.

But even the most open-minded students and programs have to live within the bounds of a university system, where core requirements and prerequisites reign supreme. It hasn’t been easy for students like Sypert (who hopes to someday direct major tennis tournaments) and Karsten (who looks toward a future working with foster children) to find room in their required class schedule—not to mention their wallets—to explore all aspects of their budding passions.

It has likewise been a challenge for the Harrah College to stay fluid enough to accommodate an industry so highly adaptive by nature. Innovations and trends are moving the needle at hyper speed, and the industry is seeking a workforce that is well-equipped to steer their organizations through fluctuating times.

“Industry decision makers know what they want in future employees,” says Dr. Stowe Shoemaker, Dean of the Hospitality College. “They want people who thrive in an increasingly dynamic environment but who also come prepared with a specific set of soft and hard skills.”

Recognizing the new needs of both industry and its future professionals, it was clear the college needed to move its own needle: Students like Sypert and Karsten wanted more choice and more relevance; the industry wanted a highly trained, yet more nimble, workforce. And the College of Hospitality was determined to give everyone what they wanted.

If it ain’t broke, why fix it?

In December 2017, the Hospitality College launched what many in academia consider to be a mountain-moving effort of redesigning a curriculum. It was a bold move for a top-ranked program known for its tried-and-true academic formula. But faculty members knew the industry would soon be outpacing the college, and responsiveness would prove key to student success as well as program longevity. They were also convinced that introducing a few new courses wasn’t the solution; to truly evolve, wholesale structural change was required.

“We started with a blank page, knowing we wanted analytics—the understanding of financials. They also wanted students to understand guest services and be able to manage the service experience ... so critical thinking and problem-solving skills were big on the list.”

The committee agreed that certain identified competencies would be baked into the learning objectives for all new core courses. Students would now have to demonstrate strong communication and critical-thinking skills across the board, no matter which course they were taking. In addition, they would be required to sharpen their analytical skills through new core selections, such as Hospitality Profit Optimization.

“Several things stood out,” Sammons says. “Our industry contacts definitely wanted analytics—the understanding of
Under the new curriculum structure, proficiency in several computer programs, such as Microsoft Excel, will also now be required. Students are expected to demonstrate mastery of these computer programs within the first two weeks of class as part of a certification process.

This helps students by front-loading any technical learning or “refreshers” needed to succeed in each course while allowing instructors to focus on course content rather than teaching computer skills. For a full year, the ad hoc curriculum committee created, reviewed, rearranged, and consolidated the college’s core courses so that the appropriate content would land in the path of all students. That year of blood, sweat, and tears finally paid off when the committee presented the college’s faculty with a shiny, new curriculum in October 2018; after a vote of the entire faculty, 79 percent approved it.

**On the subject of choice**

With university approval still pending, the work was far from over. But with a majority vote from the faculty, the college had the green light to start refining courses under the new curriculum structure.

Perhaps the most notable shift in the new curriculum comes in the form of its core-to-electives formula. While beefing up desired competencies, the number of required core courses was actually trimmed from 58 to 52 credits. This allows students to take up to 30 credits in elective courses, giving them more room to form specializations.

“Prior to this, we were really lockstep,” explains Dr. Bobbie Barnes, Hospitality College assistant professor in residence and ad hoc committee member. “Now, we’ve reduced the amount of core requirements so students can construct a career path that more closely aligns with their passions.”

Under the new structure, students will have the option to choose up to two concentrations in hospitality sectors, including food, beverage, events/gaming, integrated resorts, and PGA golf management—an appealing option for students like Sypert, who would have jumped at the chance to gain a wider skill base.

“Tennis tournaments are multifaceted,” adds Shoemaker: “We’re really preparing our students for their first, second, third, and fourth jobs. Whatever sector they’re in, whatever new trend they’re facing, they can draw from the solid foundation they got here at the Hospitality College and move up in their organization.”

“Tennis tournaments are multifaceted.”

Barnes says. “With each layer, we had to evaluate it, justify it. It’s painful, but the extra layers of approval only serve to make the product better for the students.”

It’s a product the college was determined to share with a larger audience. Coinciding with the full 2020 launch of the new-and-improved curriculum, the college will begin offering select courses online. A full-scale online degree program will soon follow.

“We want to make sure our program is not only better but also more accessible,” Shoemaker says. “If students can’t come to us, we want to come to them. That’s how we’re going to connect students with the career of their dreams. That’s how we’re going to keep changing lives.”

**SPRING 2020**

PHOTO BY LONNIE TIMMONS III

**“We’ve reduced the amount of core requirements so students can construct a career path that more closely aligns with their passions.”**

- Bobbie Barnes, assistant professor in residence
For nearly 35 years, the Harrah College of Hospitality and Lee Business School were friendly rivals housed under the same roof in UNLV’s Beam Hall. In 2009, an unlikely duo—Business alum James Ratigan, ’78 and Hospitality Rebel John Peiser, ’78—turned that competitive spirit into an opportunity to bring alumni together. Thus, the Dean’s Cup was born. Dozens of proud students, faculty, and alumni come together once a year to represent Team Hospitality or Team Business in the Dean’s Cup. Although the Cup’s format has changed over its 10-year history—participants have enjoyed miniature golf, board games, and now bowling—the event has stayed true to the founders’ vision of boosting Rebel pride and building lifelong connections.

How did the idea for the Dean’s Cup get started?
John Peiser: Jim and I knew each other from serving on the UNLV Alumni Association’s Legacy Board. He represented the Lee Business School, and I represented the then-Hotel College. The colleges were friendly rivals for years in Beam Hall.

Jim Ratigan: We wanted to create a signature event that increased both alumni membership and engagement for the colleges, so we came up with a miniature golf competition modeled after the Ryder Cup. We wanted to make it so anyone could play regardless of skill level.

How has the competition changed over the years?
Peiser: In 2011, we switched from golf to a board-game night on campus. However, it was difficult to identify a winner. We tried bowling the following year, and that worked a lot better.

Ratigan: The alumni directors for the colleges also expanded the event to include alumni, students, and faculty and staff, which was a fantastic idea. It’s great to see everyone interacting together.

What’s your fondest memory from past Dean’s Cup battles?
Peiser: I tried to use our golf advantage the first year and enlisted some PGA golf management students to play with us. Unfortunately, we still lost to Business, but we have redeemed ourselves a few times since then.

Ratigan: John and I went to the trophy store, and I picked one that was within our $50 budget, but it ended up being only about 8 inches tall. We thought the trophy should be a statement piece, so we purchased a much larger one that would [entice] people to compete.

What do you envision for the future?
Peiser: I hope to keep the tradition alive. Jim and I had a small dream that has blossomed into a great event, and we attribute that to the deans, staff, and everyone else involved.

Ratigan: I would love to see the event expanded to include other colleges and units on campus so that it becomes a true Dean’s Cup. We have shown how it’s done and how it’s successful. It would be great to involve everyone at UNLV.
As smartly dressed Americans glide between the showroom and casino, back rooms swirl with the cigar smoke of Cuban officials and American racketeers, pockets lined with casino profits.

Havana, circa 1957.

If you weren’t in the hospitality business or sugarcane, you weren’t going to survive in Cuba,” he says. In the 1940s and 1950s, Cuba was the No. 1 tourist destination in the Caribbean, and 95 percent of tourists were Americans. But the casino business, run by Americans, was corrupt, and all the money was going back to the States and organized crime. This led to the repression and disillusionment of the Cuban people, which in turn left the door wide open for Castro, who promptly banished what he dubbed the “colonial” American presence. It was a dramatic, if not epic, split between the countries that endures to this day. It’s easy to see why Cuba’s historical dependence on tourism is begrudged by many on the island. But if Cubans were ambivalent about tourism to begin with, communism only complicated the matter.

If Cubans were ambivalent about tourism to begin with, communism only complicated the matter.

Still, of Cuba’s 5 million visitors a year, Americans can travel to Cuba if they’re willing to jump through a few hoops, which often didn’t work, in stark contrast to competitors like Jamaica. Cuba seemed hopelessly locked in time. “All those stories about 1957 Chevys in Cuba are true,” he says. “The island went for many, many years without seeing much in the way of new products or new construction.”

Henthorne points out that things have improved in Cuba in recent years with the help of foreign investors like Spain. Tourists still see an assortment of jalopies on the road, but elevators will work most of the time. Still, of Cuba’s 5 million visitors a year, Americans remain conspicuously absent, despite a brief thaw in relations between Cuba and the U.S. under the Obama administration. It’s an artifact, Henthorne says, of the “bizarre grudge match” that has endured for six decades. Americans can travel to Cuba if they’re willing to jump through a few hoops, which include getting a license under one of 12 legal categories, like humanitarianism or journalism. You won’t find tourism on the list, though—an irony not lost on Henthorne, who continues pounding the pavement in Cuba to prepare tourism executives there for the inevitability of Americans’ return.

The story of Cuba’s tourism industry is a tale of starts and stops over the past half-century, and one that associate dean of graduate and international programs Tony Henthorne wanted to tell.

“Cuba is the largest country in the Caribbean, and it’s the closest country to U.S. territory, yet it is the most unknown,” Henthorne says. His recent book Tourism in Cuba: Casinos, Castros, and Challenges—a culmination of decades of work he’s done in the Caribbean as a scholar, tourism consultant, and speaker—chronicles the island’s complicated relationship with tourism against the backdrop of corruption, political upheaval, and isolationism. But more than anything, Henthorne’s book tells a story of survival.

“During the so-called ‘Special Period,’ Cuba lost funding from the Soviet Union, Cubans were desperate for cash, literally staring in the streets,” Henthorne explains. “They had to come up with ways to make money. While Cubans hated tourism, they ultimately decided that international tourism, which was the money machine back in the day, would be the way to make money again.”

Cubans’ love-hate relationship with tourism intrigued Henthorne as a young professor at the University of Southern Mississippi, prompting him to volunteer for a fact-finding mission in 1994 to determine the viability of a study-abroad program on the island. The program, he hoped, would expose students to Cuba’s two-tiered system, in which workers in the tourism industry were paid in strong American dollars, while everyone else was paid in local currency. “Professional people were leaving their careers as doctors, architects, lawyers, and teachers to work in cocktail lounges in big tourist hotels,” Henthorne says. “It was a business environment unlike any other in the world and a great laboratory to study in.”

Still, Henthorne was vexed by the obstacles that stood in the way of a full-blown tourism renaissance in Cuba. The country had fallen into disrepair under Castro. Basic services, like electricity, were unreliable. Hot water and elevators often didn’t work, in stark contrast to the tourism industry that endured to this day, though—an irony not lost on Henthorne, who continues pounding the pavement in Cuba to prepare tourism executives there for the inevitability of Americans’ return.

Henthorne traces the tumultuous history of Cuba’s tourism industry by Angela Ramsey

Aging cars and embargoed goods like rum and cigars (shown above with Henthorne) have become symbols of Cuba’s isolation.

Havana, circa 1957.

The Hotel Riviera rattles and chugs as smartly dressed Americans glide between the showroom and casino. Back rooms swirl with the cigar smoke of Cuban officials and American racketeers, pockets lined with casino profits.

Fast-forward a couple of years, and a uniform-clad revolutionary named Fidel Castro stands in the same hotel, vowing to end gambling and American interventionism—a goal he would quickly make real, along with the nationalization of all Cuban hotel-casinos. Soviet backing would allow Cuban tourism to survive over the next few decades, but the collapse of the USSR in 1991 and the strangulation of a decadent Castro regime would ultimately thrust Cuba into economic ruin.

The story of Cuba’s tourism industry is a tale of starts and stops over the past half-century, and one that associate dean of graduate and international programs Tony Henthorne wanted to tell.

“Cuba is the largest country in the Caribbean, and it’s the closest country to U.S. territory, yet it is the most unknown,” Henthorne says. His recent book Tourism in Cuba: Casinos, Castros, and Challenges—a culmination of decades of work he’s done in the Caribbean as a scholar, tourism consultant, and speaker—chronicles the island’s complicated relationship with tourism against the backdrop of corruption, political upheaval, and isolationism. But more than anything, Henthorne’s book tells a story of survival.

“During the so-called ‘Special Period,’ Henthorne says. But the casino business, run by Americans, was corrupt, and all the money was going back to the States and organized crime. This led to the repression and disillusionment of the Cuban people, which in turn left the door wide open for Castro, who promptly banished what he dubbed the “colonial” American presence. It was a dramatic, if not epic, split between the countries that endures to this day. It’s easy to see why Cuba’s historical dependence on tourism is begrudged by many on the island. But if Cubans were ambivalent about tourism to begin with, communism only complicated the matter.

“During the so-called ‘Special Period,’
When Chef Mark Sandoval was hired as the College of Hospitality’s executive chef in 2016, he was charged with developing new and meaningful hands-on opportunities for students hungry for experience.

One of Sandoval’s first moves was to launch Rebel Grounds, a cozy campus café where students would get the chance to design and execute menus, train and manage staff, and serve customers.

The next step was to build a first-rate catering program, supported by a highly trained student staff.

The next step was to build a first-rate catering program, supported by a highly trained student staff.

Step three … world domination? With Chef Sandoval, you can’t rule it out.

“Whenever I walk around campus, I’m always asking, Why are we not doing this? How can our students get involved?” Sandoval says. “They’re already receiving the best education in the classroom. We just want to take what they’re learning and give it some real-life context.”

Hospitality College student Kenzie Collins thought her real-life context would be in the realm of casino management. But when she got a taste for events under Sandoval’s guidance, the senior was captivated by the excitement of creating great guest experiences.

“I love that it’s not a static desk job. It’s a different experience every day,” Collins explains.

Eager to learn all things events, the Reno native decided to concentrate her degree in meetings & events and joined the college’s burgeoning catering team. The culinary novice hit the ground running, working alongside Sandoval and his core team of about five caterers (and numerous student volunteers) on private dinner parties, sporting events, and formal banquets.

Collins relished the chance to take what she’d learned in class and apply it to the real world:

“I love meeting and interacting with the clients,” she says. “Learning to cook was also a bonus.”

Turning classroom theory into experiential learning is the founding philosophy of the Hospitality College’s catering program. In addition to event management, students learn how to run a business, including managing inventories, implementing cost control, and understanding budgets. It’s a realistic exercise given that the catering program is self-sustaining.

“We invest the money back into things that benefit the students, whether that’s replacing old prep tables, hiring more workers, or purchasing state-of-the-art kitchen equipment,” Sandoval says. “The catering program is run with students in mind first.”

Turns out Sandoval may very well get his wish of world domination: In 2019,
the catering team hosted more than 150 events, including retirement parties, council meetings, and tailgates. Also, a second Rebel Grounds location is planned for the new Black Fire Innovation building on UNLV’s Tech Park campus.

Sandoval was also called upon to serve as an adviser in the design and permit process of the kitchen in the new UNLV Fertitta Football Complex, opening the door to a partnership with athletics. Plans are underway to launch an extension of the college’s catering program in the Fertitta Complex’s kitchen, which would serve student-athletes breakfast and lunch throughout the week. This new service load will call for the hiring of an additional chef and student caterers.

“This partnership is exciting because it’s essentially students helping students,” Sandoval says. “With the anticipated growth of the program, we hope to eventually serve all UNLV athletes breakfast, lunch, and dinner five days a week.”

The Hospitality College catering team has also caught the attention of the off-campus community. For instance, the team is now the preferred vendor for the Liberace Mansion, a 14,400-square-foot event venue once home to the iconic Las Vegas performer.

“Our clients love to see the students working. It’s a unique aspect we’re able to offer,” says Ivan Serna, the mansion’s managing director. “Although they may be students, trust me, they have the experience and the knowledge. They always go the extra mile.”

That’s not a surprise, considering service excellence is a value Sandoval instills in the catering team at every stage. He coaches students before, during, and after events, and ensures they receive both front- and back-of-house training. This, he says, makes for a happy customer.

“We don’t settle for mediocre; we always make time to provide students with opportunities to learn how to do something properly,” Sandoval says. “At the end of the day, we’re here to provide food that’s delicious. That’s why our customers keep coming back.”
Face the Future of Technology

Graduate student Wenrong Wang harnesses his gaming knowledge to lead an interdisciplinary study on the use of facial recognition in casinos

by Caitlyn Lopez

Hollywood has long been a pioneer when it comes to exploring the future of technology. We saw the Terminator assess threats by scanning his surroundings, Robocop identify villains by running an image through a police database, and Captain Kirk access confidential data via a retinal scan.

But this type of technology isn’t the stuff of science fiction any longer. Thanks to readily accessible facial recognition software, we all can unlock our smartphones and tag friends on social media, all with a quick scan of the face. And lighting (casinos often contain flashing lights), and image-capture limitations (individuals passing through common areas are rarely static long enough to adequately capture).

Wang says one guest speaker, a security director for a local casino, told the research group that his property had to abandon facial recognition software years ago because it wasn’t producing consistent results. “The overall purpose of the technology is to reduce security’s workload, but if it’s not accurate or working as it should, then it can actually do the opposite,” Wang says.

“Older properties often suffer because they weren’t constructed with this technology in mind. It’s also expensive to maintain the database and purchase high-quality cameras.”

As they got deeper into their research and closer to writing their final paper, Wang and his colleagues discovered that security isn’t the only factor driving the use of facial recognition in casinos. It’s also common in airports, retail stores, and even ATMs are using this technology to launch a facial recognition program in casinos. Plaguing the process, generally, are such challenges as size (casino floors are sprawling, high-traffic areas); dynamic perspectives, “ says Herold, who recruited Wang to lead the group because of his advocacy for the technology.

Under Herold’s guidance, the group combed through literature, visited a Strip property, watched industry-related videos, and spoke with casino professionals. As the information-gathering process progressed, the team came to recognize the technical difficulties associated with launching a facial recognition program in casinos. Plaguing the process, generally, are such challenges as size (casino floors are sprawling, high-traffic areas); dynamic

it doesn’t end there. Airports, retail stores, and even ATMs are using this technology to scour the facial features of visitors in hopes of weeding out criminals. It’s the same reason security-conscious gaming execs are investigating the viability of implementing facial recognition in their casinos.

“It’s like picking out the bad guy,” says Hospitality College graduate student Wenrong Wang, who participated in a recent UNLV research project focused on using facial recognition technology in the casino space. “If you have a crowd of 200 people, the technology should be able to point out who shouldn’t be there.”

In Spring 2019, Wang and three UNLV criminal justice undergraduate students set out to examine both the merits and challenges of employing facial recognition software in the casino environment. The interdisciplinary project was facilitated by Dr. Tamara Herold, a UNLV criminal justice professor who happens to be an expert in crowd dynamics.

“Interdisciplinary studies are unique because each person brings their own perspectives,” says Herold, who recruited Wang to lead the group because of his professional and academic background in gaming. “Combining disciplines enhances the knowledge and might even change the direction of research.”

Under Herold’s guidance, the group combed through literature, visited a Strip property, watched industry-related videos, and spoke with casino professionals. As the information-gathering process progressed, the team came to recognize the technical difficulties associated with launching a facial recognition program in casinos. Plaguing the process, generally, are such challenges as size (casino floors are sprawling, high-traffic areas); dynamic

Photo by Josh Hawkins

Grad student Wenrong Wang mentored UNLV undergrads working on a facial recognition study in 2019.

“As they got deeper into their research and closer to writing their final paper, Wang and his colleagues discovered that security isn’t the only factor driving the use of facial recognition in casinos. It’s also common in airports, retail stores, and even ATMs are using this technology to

“Interdisciplinary studies are unique because each person brings their own perspectives,” says Herold, who recruited Wang to lead the group because of his professional and academic background in gaming. “Combining disciplines enhances the knowledge and might even change the direction of research.”

Under Herold’s guidance, the group combed through literature, visited a Strip property, watched industry-related videos, and spoke with casino professionals. As the information-gathering process progressed, the team came to recognize the technical difficulties associated with launching a facial recognition program in casinos. Plaguing the process, generally, are such challenges as size (casino floors are sprawling, high-traffic areas); dynamic
Class, study, work, repeat. Such is the grind of the typical undergrad hospitality management student. Voluntarily taking on additional tasks—let alone a complex, time-consuming research project—is an act of sheer audacity.

A breakthrough research project landed hospitality undergrad Jasmine Nemati a top-tier journal credit and the experience of a lifetime.

by Angela Ramsey
“My parents taught me that my only obstacle in life is me.”

-Hospitality College student Jasmine Nemati

Enter Harrah College of Hospitality student Jasmine Nemati, whose interest in research sprang not from boldness but from curiosity. The more time she spent studying, working, and interning, the more questions she had about the inner workings of the hospitality industry—and the more she was willing to work to find answers.

The Team
The 21-year-old’s curiosity was piqued in 2018 during her internship at a major Strip property. She wondered, along with key leaders in the organization, if a particular food and beverage promotion was an effective revenue producer for the casino. Knowing she would need the help of an experienced researcher, Nemati approached one of her favorite instructors, Hospitality College professor Tony Lucas.

“Dr. Lucas is an amazing statistician,” Nemati says. “Since I’ve always been interested in statistics in terms of casinos, I knew this project would be an incredible learning opportunity and he would be a great mentor.”

Nemati says. “Since I’ve always been early on. “My parents taught me that my only obstacle in life is me, “ says Nemati. “I can pursue any dream; all it takes is a bright mind to succeed.”

Refusing to back down from a challenge is a lesson the Las Vegas native learned early on. “My parents taught me that my only obstacle in life is me,” says Nemati. “I can pursue any dream; all it takes is a bright mind and dedication.”

Lucas was understandably wary given the complexity of the project but was swayed by Nemati’s earnest desire to enhance her knowledge. “You don’t get a lot of people who are interested in this depth of analysis,” says Lucas. “We’re talking time series regression. It’s pretty brutal. But Jasmine is different. I tried to talk her out of it, but she wouldn’t back down.”

Nemati’s determination so impressed Lucas that when the original study fell through, he offered the undergrad a different research opportunity. The Project
The new study focused on a type of casino promotion program that is used to entice players to spend more on electronic gaming devices like slots. It’s a marketing strategy known as free-play.

“Customers receive dollar incentives on their player cards based on how much they play,” Nemati explains, “Free-play was initially launched in off-Strip casinos with lots of repeat customers, but now it is part of most every casino loyalty program.”

A ubiquitous practice because it works in driving revenue to the casino? So it would seem. Lucas wanted to test this assumption using scientific methods. Once Nemati was able to source the performance data through her internship connections, and Lucas was able to build the statistical model, the two embarked on a four-month-long discovery process analyzing 365 days of player behavior at a top Strip casino.

The Truth Is in the Math
Contrary to a widely held hypothesis, the data revealed that players in fact do not consistently reinvest their incentive money back into the casino. The data was insightful but also provided new questions—and embraced even greater challenges.

The findings, now published in the article “Free Play Impact by Customer Segment” in the International Journal of Hospitality Management, were not a surprise to Lucas, whose work is known for challenging conventional wisdom in the area of casino marketing.

“Customers just aren’t behaving the way marketers say they are behaving, which makes the considerable cost of casino loyalty programs difficult to justify,” says Lucas, who likens a casino to a complex web of “simultaneous forces.”

The Truth Is in the Math
Contrary to a widely held hypothesis, the data revealed that players in fact do not consistently reinvest their incentive money back into the casino. They are wagering the initial full amount—a built-in requirement—but are quick to cash out once that requirement is met, Nemati says the results suggest that rather than being loyal to a particular property, players may instead be loyal to their players card—perhaps even multiple players cards.

The findings, now published in the article “Free Play Impact by Customer Segment” in the International Journal of Hospitality Management, were not a surprise to Lucas, whose work is known for challenging conventional wisdom in the area of casino marketing.

Nemati says. “Since I’ve always been early on. “My parents taught me that my only obstacle in life is me, “ says Nemati. “I can pursue any dream; all it takes is a bright mind and dedication.”

"The opportunity to witness Dr. Lucas building this model," says Nemati, "and then teach me how to do the study... even having my name on this study... I feel so very privileged and grateful."

Beyond the many benefits to Nemati and other students, university-led research is an asset to the gaming industry, which Lucas says is going to have to move beyond business-as-usual marketing tactics in order to survive.

"As gaming spreads across the globe, everybody is going to be fighting for the same customer," Lucas points out, "so we better start figuring out what works and what doesn’t work. I want to tear down the politics of marketing and make it more about science. This is how university/industry cooperative efforts can be a win-win. This is how we can help."

Now a college graduate, Nemati continues to look for ways that she can help the hospitality industry contend with an uncertain future. With a major research project under belt, she is now prepared to take on even bigger challenges—and embrace even greater challenges.

Recent Hospitality College graduate Jasmine Nemati looks forward to continuing her education in statistics.

"The opportunity to witness Dr. Lucas building this model," says Nemati, "and then teach me how to do the study... even having my name on this study... I feel so very privileged and grateful."

Beyond the many benefits to Nemati and other students, university-led research is an asset to the gaming industry, which Lucas says is going to have to move beyond business-as-usual marketing tactics in order to survive.

"As gaming spreads across the globe, everybody is going to be fighting for the same customer," Lucas points out, "so we better start figuring out what works and what doesn’t work. I want to tear down the politics of marketing and make it more about science. This is how university/industry cooperative efforts can be a win-win. This is how we can help."

Now a college graduate, Nemati continues to look for ways that she can help the hospitality industry contend with an uncertain future. With a major research project under belt, she is now prepared to take on even bigger challenges—and embrace even greater challenges.
Kim Gradisher ’07
Executive Director, the Tyler Robinson Foundation

COMING FROM A LONG LINE of community servants, it’s easy to see why Kim Gradisher has devoted her life to helping others. Whether volunteering for important causes or going about everyday work tasks, Gradisher demonstrates daily how giving runs in her blood. The Wisconsin native moved West on a quest for warmer weather and an education at UNLV. Gradisher, who began working for nonprofits during college, continued to embody an altruistic spirit while heading up the Tyler Robinson Foundation, and the Arthritis Foundation. Now, more than a decade after earning her degree, Gradisher has devoted her life to helping others. Whether volunteering for important causes or going about everyday work tasks, Gradisher demonstrates daily how giving runs in her blood.

Pears of Wisdom

Understand that nonprofits are a way of life. “You need to have a work-life balance, which can be difficult working in nonprofits. I’ve found ways to incorporate my daily life into my career. There are ways that I can include my family in the events and outreach work I do. If you understand that nonprofit work is a way of life, it’s not much of a challenge to create that balance.”

Be passionate about your cause. “It’s important for me to get up in the morning and know I’m doing something good. I feel blessed to make a difference in the world and help families touched by pediatric cancer. They are worth getting up for every day.”

Make sure your degree program works for you. “I really enjoyed my time at UNLV. The fact it’s a commuter college allowed me the flexibility to work full time and study full time. The Hospitality College was right for me because it gave me a broad range of skills that helped me build my career.”

Get your foot in the door as early as possible. “Be proactive. If you have no experience, start volunteering and become acquainted with the organization. Learn the ins and outs as a volunteer. Build up your resume while taking classes that pertain to your career interests.”

Pete Arceo ’96
General Manager, San Manuel Casino

INSPIRATION HAS ALWAYS BEEN a key driver for Peter Arceo, who began working with the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians in 2003. It’s what motivated Arceo to leave college in Southern California to attend UNLV’s Hospitality College, and what led to his professional ascension from card dealer to casino management. Arceo credits some “great people” in his early career for empowering him to reach his full potential in their organization. He now hopes to empower others.

Pears of Wisdom

Supplement your education with hands-on experience. “My mentors put me in positions where I had to make decisions. Luckily, UNLV provided me with the background that allowed me to take my education and put it to practical use. Take what you’ve learned in school and add it to the work environment. That will allow you to grow.”

Stay open-minded about possibilities. “If you have an opportunity, keep your mind open—even if it requires you to accept a position that’s different from your first option. Give yourself a wider view of the business as you work toward your goal.”

Don’t be afraid to get creative. “Whether it’s a tribal or traditional casino environment, complacency is the biggest threat to business. Challenge yourself to think differently. How can we create a better environment to generate more revenue but also provide our guests a great experience? It’s about empowering people to be creative and try new things.”

Business should also be about helping others. “I get excited because I not only work for an organization that drives business success but also one that gives back to the community. This means that the results of our success are not only seen in the casino but also in the communities we operate in. It’s about empowering people, not just giving them jobs.”

Don’t be afraid to get creative. “Whether it’s a tribal or traditional casino environment, complacency is the biggest threat to business. Challenge yourself to think differently. How can we create a better environment to generate more revenue but also provide our guests a great experience? It’s about empowering people to be creative and try new things.”

Rebels make great team members. “San Manuel’s leadership team happens to be filled with a lot of former Rebels. We have great chemistry, and when you’re looking at leaders and forming a great team, chemistry means a lot. We come from a common background, we were educated in a similar environment, and we respect each other. We’re gelting.”

Lexy Coley ’02, ’06 MS/MBA
General Manager, Omni Dallas Hotel at Park West

GENUINE HOSPITALITY MATTERS at the Omni Dallas at Park West, where UNLV Hospitality College graduate Lexy Coley has served as general manager since July 2019. Coley developed an interest in the hospitality industry at an early age during family vacations to places like Las Vegas, where she marveled at how every employee—from the front-desk agent to the room attendant—“looked after them.” Coley’s passion for service brought her to UNLV, where she studied hospitality management at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Since then, she’s never looked back.

Pears of Wisdom

The hotel business is ripe with opportunities. “One of the things that drew me to the hotel industry is that there are always positions available in the market. Plus, the hospitality industry is everywhere. If you want to move, your career can move with you.”

There’s never a dull moment. “There’s always something fun about hospitality. And you can always discover something that can improve the guest experience. Finding those little things, whether it be in service or processes, is what motivates me.”

Know your strategy. “In this business, service is a must because the quality of service really impacts whether or not a guest comes back. But making sure that you have a clear strategy is also important. You need to know who you are targeting and what niche you are going for.”

Peter Arceo photo courtesy San Manuel Casino, Lexy Coley photo by Evan Luecke

PHOTO BY LONNIE TIMMONS III

LEXY COLEY PHOTO BY EVAN LUECKE

PETER ARCEO PHOTO COURTESY SAN MANUEL CASINO

SPRING 2020 36

SPRING 2020 37
And the Survey Says ...

When UNLV Athletics Director Desiree Reed-Francois was looking for help on how best to set ticket pricing for the inaugural football season at new Allegiant Stadium, she turned to the Hospitality College. That led to the creation of a comprehensive survey, the results of which stand to have a lasting effect.

by Matt Jacob

It’s not every day that one is handed the keys to a $2 billion stadium and told, “It’s all yours to use for several Saturdays each fall!” Yet Desiree Reed-Francois finds herself in that very position, as the UNLV Director of Athletics leads her football program’s transition from its longtime home of Sam Boyd Stadium in east Henderson to brand-new Allegiant Stadium in the shadows of the Las Vegas Strip.

Oh, sure, the Las Vegas Raiders will be the primary tenant of the state-of-the-art jewel that’s currently sprouting skyward just west of Interstate 15 and Russell Road. But in striking a deal with the State of Nevada that paved the way for the stadium’s construction—and, ultimately, the NFL franchise’s relocation from the primary tenant of the state-of-the-art jewel that’s currently sprouting skyward just west of Interstate 15 and Russell Road—Desiree Reed-Francois says, “Your verbiage has to be crystal clear but in a manner that’s neutral. If not, you’re affecting the outcome of the survey.”

What she wanted was to find a perfect balance. She ultimately got there, but not before seeking assistance from a world-renowned pricing expert, one whose office just happens to be located but a few football fields away from that of Reed-Francois.

In late August 2019, after examining data compiled from a comprehensive survey of Rebel football fans and targeted alumni, the UNLV athletics department officially unveiled season ticket pricing for next year’s inaugural season at Allegiant Stadium. Sure, she wanted to maximize revenue, but she didn’t want to set prices so high that it would turn fans away. Nor did she want to alienate the segment of Rebel fans whose discretionary income is limited.

She knows her Reed-Francois—who arrived at UNLV in June 2017, just three months before stadium construction began—faced a bit of a quandary as it pertained to establishing a ticket-pricing structure for the new stadium. She learned from her own experience:

“How the conversation originally started was Stowe came and talked to our athletic department about creating fan memories and about improving customer service, she says. “From that came a series of additional conversations, and when I started learning more about Stowe, I discovered he’s one of the world’s leading pricing experts. So I asked him for his help in creating a pricing survey for us.”

That request was met with an enthusiastic, “Yes!”

“I felt that it was incredibly important that I help our home institution,” Shoemaker says. “I love UNLV, and it’s important to create great experiences for Rebel fans—and there’s nothing better than having a full stadium. Plus, I have high respect for Desiree and what the athletic department is trying to do. So the question was, ‘How could I use my expertise in pricing to help the university?’

One of Shoemaker’s first moves was to loop in a former student who not only had an interest in research, but who was an internship short of completing her undergraduate degree in hospitality management—a degree she first began pursuing at UNLV in 1997 before pressing the pause button to embark on a career in the sports world.

“It was perfect timing because I needed an internship, and essentially this survey was my internship,” says Andrea Roa, who spent a decade around the turn of the century working in broadcast operations and game entertainment for Major League Baseball. “I got to work one-on-one with athletics and one-on-one with Dean Shoemaker and his team to help craft the survey.”

That survey ended up being multifaceted because Reed-Francois’ goal was multifaceted: Besides learning what Rebel football fans would be willing to pay for a seat at Allegiant Stadium, she wanted to find out what those fans valued in a game-day experience—everything from parking, tailgating, and the process of entering the stadium to food and beverage offerings and in-game entertainment.

“We wanted to find out what was important to our fans, what they were looking for,” she says. “So we looked at this survey as more than just setting prices. This is a $2 billion stadium, so we want to be thoughtful, strategic, and methodical in everything we do as it relates to this new era. And for us to be responsive, we needed to listen.”

And for UNLV, one of the new era’s tenants, the survey did just that: It helped establish a ticket-pricing structure for the first season at Allegiant Stadium; what they would be willing to pay for a VIP seat compared with a seat in the upper deck; what they thought was a fair price for parking; and which in-stadium amenities they valued (and didn’t value). They were also queried about their overall entertainment spending habits, and their likes and dislikes related to those experiences. They were even asked to rate their overall experience at the games just because they want to loop in a former student who not only had an interest in research, but who was an internship short of completing her undergraduate degree in hospitality management—a degree she first began pursuing at UNLV in 1997 before pressing the pause button to embark on a career in the sports world.

“We wanted to find out what was important to our fans ...”

Desiree Reed Francois, UNLV Athletics Director

Says Shoemaker bluntly: “Surveys are complex beasts.”

Eventually, with the dean’s assistance, Roa was able to tame the beast, whittling an initial 100-question survey down to a more manageable 56 questions. In July, the survey was emailed to more than 60,000 individuals, most of whom had previously purchased tickets to a football game or were alumni who had a known affinity for athletics.

Besides basic demographic information, survey recipients were asked where they would prefer to sit in the new stadium; what they would be willing to pay for a VIP seat compared with a seat in the upper deck; what they thought was a fair price for parking; and which in-stadium amenities they valued (and didn’t value). They were also queried about their overall entertainment spending habits, and their likes and dislikes related to those experiences. They were even asked to rate the importance of the on-field product.

For instance, how many people are going to the games just because they want...
to drink beer in an environment that's fun versus how many want to make sure they have the best sightlines because they don't want to miss a moment of the action," Roa says. "At the end of the day, we really wanted to understand behavior and what drives those behaviors."

Advises Reed-Francois: "This is a very competitive entertainment town. So finding out who our customer is, what they expect, and what they want was critically important. This survey helped us identify all that."

Thanks in part to a juicy carrot—those who completed the survey were automatically entered into a drawing for a chance to win passes to an Allegiant Stadium luxury suite for one of next year's UNLV football games—the response rate was strong enough to generate a 350-page report.

"This project fits in perfectly with what the Hospitality College is trying to do in terms of its research ..."

- Dean Stoner Shoemaker

That report helped Reed-Francois determine what to charge for season tickets for the Rebels' seven home games during the 2020 season. But it also taught her much more. "We've been surveying our fans since fall 2017," she says. "But this survey took it to a different level. It broadened the scope of the answers and the data we received, and Stowe also helped us make sense of that data. Because it's one thing to have a lot of information, but how do we actualize and operationalize the data we collected? And with Stowe's help, we were able to do that."

While acknowledging that the survey was difficult to craft and that it "was constantly on my mind" for months, Roa says the hard work was worth it—and not just because it satisfied the internship credits she needed to finally finish off that bachelor's degree, which she received in May. As much as anything, she says it positions the UNLV athletics department to get the most out of its new home.

"When you get that nice, new Ferrari, you need to know how to drive it," Roa says. "And that's what Desiree sees and understands: Yes, we have that shiny new toy, but we really need to know how to use it. That's probably one of the reasons [she] wanted to do this survey and do it well. Because what's the use of having a brand-new stadium ... if you're not effectively utilizing it in the long run?"

As much as this survey was about helping the athletic department, it turns out a second UNLV entity also stands to reap some important benefits: the Hospitality College. That's because Shoemaker says the survey yielded "a tremendous amount of rich data" that he intends to turn into a publishable academic article to further one of the college's main missions.

"This project fits in perfectly with what the Hospitality College is trying to do in terms of its research, which we want to be relevant, rigorous, and have a wide reach," he says. "In other words, it's not just research written for other academics; it's research that's written for others who can use it to help improve their business and their fan experiences."

The new stadium is scheduled to open in the summer of 2020.
BANFI SCHOLASTIC TOUR, Italy
A College of Hospitality student is selected each summer to join food and beverage students from around the world on a seven-day educational tour of Italy. Presented (and generously funded) by the Castello Banfi winery in Montalcino, Italy, the tour exposes students to all facets of the winemaking industry, including grape cultivation, wine production, and food pairings.

“As college students, a lot of what we learn is conceptual, but this experience gave me the opportunity to see the concepts in practice. I saw the grape vines, the picking and sorting process, the barrel-making process, and the aging and bottling process. The trip is one I will remember forever, and the Banfi team made that happen. I can’t thank them enough for the opportunity of a lifetime!”

Kristina Dean (‘19), 2019 Banfi scholar

YOUNG HOTELIERS SUMMIT, Switzerland
Thanks to donations that support student development, the Hospitality College funds two qualifying students each March to attend the Young Hoteliers Summit (YHS) alongside student delegates from more than 40 of the world’s leading hospitality institutions. By attending YHS, students learn from industry experts, get the opportunity to network with fellow aspiring hoteliers, and compete against other institutions in a realistic industry challenge.

“Getting to attend YHS was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Being able to meet other highly competitive college students from around the globe made me want to push myself for much more in life. It was everything I asked for and more. From the networking to the beautiful country of Switzerland, I truly had a blast at YHS.”

Beau McKelvey (‘19), 2019 YHS participant

TRINCHERO WINE TOUR SCHOLARSHIP, Napa Valley
Under a scholarship program established by Trinchero Family Estates, a select group of Harrah College of Hospitality students qualify each January to participate in Trinchero’s Napa Valley Wine Education program. The gracious Trinchero team provides students with tours of their wineries, in-depth tutorials about the winemaking process, gourmet meals, and a three-night stay at their historic Sutter Home.

“This trip allowed me to really experience my field before I graduated. It also set me apart as a candidate for several jobs and internships! I want to say a huge thank you to everyone at Trinchero for providing me with such an amazing experience and allowing me to meet and make friends with students who have similar interests and passions.”

Delainey Rowland (‘19), 2019 Trinchero scholar

“This trip allowed me to really experience my field before I graduated.”

- student Delainey Rowland
The most surprising thing I learned from Paws Up was how unified and cooperative all the departments must be to ensure each guest is provided with the best service. Each department is in constant communication with the others so that everyone is on the same page concerning things like special celebrations, allergies, and past stays.

Miranda Huizing  
The Resort at Paws Up  
Greenough, Montana

“I learned the things that change your life/career are usually obtained when you push the limits of your comfort zone. If I never studied in Vietnam, I would not have learned the different perspectives of the coaches that I worked with, from Egypt to China, Vietnam to France. I wouldn’t have experienced the global influence and insights if I stayed in the U.S. for my internship.”

Cole Christensen  
Ernie Els Golf Academy  
Hanoi, Vietnam

“The hands-on training I’ve acquired has been very valuable. I am learning how to deal with real-life problems as opposed to hypothetical examples. It has definitely surprised me how many hospitality classes have come in handy and prepared me for this training.”

Nina Peischl  
Pinstripes  
Oak Brook, Illinois

“I learned so much about luxury travel needs and expectations. Service is never sacrificed for guests, and the extent to which the ladies and gentlemen of The Ritz-Carlton commit themselves to providing the finest personalized service continuously amazes me.”

Jennifer Jaimes  
The Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe  
Truckee, California

As part of the Harrah College of Hospitality’s required internship program, the college’s career services and PGA Golf Management offices placed 260 students into internship positions during summer 2019. That number increased to nearly 600 over the course of the 2019 Fall Semester.

Our summer interns worked in fields ranging from gaming to golf, and traveled to six international locales, including China, Guam, and Taiwan. Here’s what some students had to say about their internship experiences.
Semester grades and exams weren’t the primary focus of Dr. Finley Cotrone’s Hotel Operations & Management and Dr. Tony Henthorne’s Marketing 2019 Fall Semester classes. Student success hinged on producing deliverables for two out-of-state companies developing innovative tourist destinations.

In both cases, the companies wanted to draw from the students’ raw, objective talent and eagerness for results. These college/industry collaborations underscore how students can add value to actual industry projects while giving their resumes a major boost.

Project Background
Alumnus Jim Mikula is part of a development team that is transforming a hospital in rural Texas into an artisanal hot springs resort. In early December 2019, students presented Mikula with their results.

Participants say …
“They weren’t just students to me; they were my task force.”
– Jim Mikula ’78

Project: Mineral Springs Resort
Location: Gonzales County, Texas
Instructor: Finley Cotrone
Partner: Alumnus Jim Mikula ’78

‘This project taught us to start with big ideas and not to limit ourselves. It’s important for students to participate in real projects because we need to practice implementing concepts we learn in class. Many students finish college with great knowledge but don’t know how it applies in a real workplace setting.”
– Sonia Vasquez-Quinotero, senior / Hotel Operations & Management course

“Mineral Springs Resort served as a center for healing and wellness for nearly 65 years. We built in the 1940s as a sanctuary for polio patients, the hospital and adjoining hot springs served as a center for healing and wellness for nearly 65 years.”
– Sonia Vasquez-Quinotero, senior / Hotel Operations & Management course

Deliverables
Missions, visions, value statement, operations and service standards, formal presentation

Skills Developed
Effective communication in a task force; translating research into an action plan; strategic thinking

Project Background
Instructor: Tony Henthorne
Partner: The St. Joe Company

‘Real projects like WindMark have moving parts that respond to the business environment in real time. With this project, we got to examine actual data and have live clients we can direct questions to. With imagined projects we often overlook challenges, which limits our learning potential.”
– Menh Diep, graduate student / Marketing Services course

Project: WindMark Beach-Downtown Project
Location: Northwest Florida Coast
Instructor: Tony Henthorne
Partner: The St. Joe Company

In both cases, the companies wanted the help of Dr. Finley Cotrone’s class to research spa/hot springs trends and develop operating and service standards for the property. In early December 2019, students presented Mikula with their results.

Participants say …
“Real projects like WindMark have moving parts that respond to the business environment in real time. With this project, we got to examine actual data and have live clients we can direct questions to. With imagined projects we often overlook challenges, which limits our learning potential.”
– Menh Diep, graduate student / Marketing Services course

Deliverables
Marketing plan, formal presentation to company executives

Skills Developed
Understanding of market research; consumer behavior; promotion strategies; market segmentation; effective communication

Project Background
Instructor: Tony Henthorne
Partner: St. Joe Senior Marketing Manager

“This project taught us to start with big ideas and not to limit ourselves. It’s important for students to participate in real projects because we need to practice implementing concepts we learn in class. Many students finish college with great knowledge but don’t know how it applies in a real workplace setting.”
– Sonia Vasquez-Quinotero, senior / Hotel Operations & Management course

‘This project taught us to start with big ideas and not to limit ourselves. It’s important for students to participate in real projects because we need to practice implementing concepts we learn in class. Many students finish college with great knowledge but don’t know how it applies in a real workplace setting.”
– Sonia Vasquez-Quinotero, senior / Hotel Operations & Management course

Early in the 2019 Fall semester, St. Joe senior marketing manager Lanier Motes visited Las Vegas to share intricacies of the project with the class; and in October, the company sponsored a trip for students to visit the WindMark community in Florida. In December 2019, company executives came back to campus for formal presentations by the class.

Participants say …
“Real projects like WindMark have moving parts that respond to the business environment in real time. With this project, we got to examine actual data and have live clients we can direct questions to. With imagined projects we often overlook challenges, which limits our learning potential.”
– Menh Diep, graduate student / Marketing Services course

‘Real projects like WindMark have moving parts that respond to the business environment in real time. With this project, we got to examine actual data and have live clients we can direct questions to. With imagined projects we often overlook challenges, which limits our learning potential.”
– Menh Diep, graduate student / Marketing Services course

‘Real projects like WindMark have moving parts that respond to the business environment in real time. With this project, we got to examine actual data and have live clients we can direct questions to. With imagined projects we often overlook challenges, which limits our learning potential.”
– Menh Diep, graduate student / Marketing Services course

Early in the 2019 Fall semester, St. Joe senior marketing manager Lanier Motes visited Las Vegas to share intricacies of the project with the class; and in October, the company sponsored a trip for students to visit the WindMark community in Florida. In December 2019, company executives came back to campus for formal presentations by the class.

Participants say …
“The WindMark Beach community was built in a different part of the region, and the type of marketing required is completely different from our other communities. I think that students from another part of the country can see the area in a whole new way. We’re excited to see a fresh perspective.”
– Lanier Motes, St. Joe Senior Marketing Manager

‘Real projects like WindMark have moving parts that respond to the business environment in real time. With this project, we got to examine actual data and have live clients we can direct questions to. With imagined projects we often overlook challenges, which limits our learning potential.”
– Menh Diep, graduate student / Marketing Services course

‘Real projects like WindMark have moving parts that respond to the business environment in real time. With this project, we got to examine actual data and have live clients we can direct questions to. With imagined projects we often overlook challenges, which limits our learning potential.”
– Menh Diep, graduate student / Marketing Services course

Early in the 2019 Fall semester, St. Joe senior marketing manager Lanier Motes visited Las Vegas to share intricacies of the project with the class; and in October, the company sponsored a trip for students to visit the WindMark community in Florida. In December 2019, company executives came back to campus for formal presentations by the class.

Participants say …
“The WindMark Beach community was built in a different part of the region, and the type of marketing required is completely different from our other communities. I think that students from another part of the country can see the area in a whole new way. We’re excited to see a fresh perspective.”
– Lanier Motes, St. Joe Senior Marketing Manager

‘Real projects like WindMark have moving parts that respond to the business environment in real time. With this project, we got to examine actual data and have live clients we can direct questions to. With imagined projects we often overlook challenges, which limits our learning potential.”
– Menh Diep, graduate student / Marketing Services course

‘Real projects like WindMark have moving parts that respond to the business environment in real time. With this project, we got to examine actual data and have live clients we can direct questions to. With imagined projects we often overlook challenges, which limits our learning potential.”
– Menh Diep, graduate student / Marketing Services course

Early in the 2019 Fall semester, St. Joe senior marketing manager Lanier Motes visited Las Vegas to share intricacies of the project with the class; and in October, the company sponsored a trip for students to visit the WindMark community in Florida. In December 2019, company executives came back to campus for formal presentations by the class.
“I love food and beverage, but I also love to look at the smallest details, which is why I like finance. This scholarship gave me a chance to explore both while letting me focus on school and not so much on the money.”

– Maggie Gee, Taeubel Family Scholarship recipient/Senior, double majoring in Finance and Hospitality Management with an interest in food and beverage

Join us April 27, 2020, to honor Alumna of the Year Colleen Birch and Industry Leader of the Year Bill Hornbuckle at the Vallen Dinner of Distinction at Four Seasons Hotel Las Vegas. For information, email margaret.hausbeck@unlv.edu.

“I am a first-generation college student who came from two immigrant parents. So they are vicariously living the American dream through me. To be able to come home and make them proud, saying ‘I’m going to college debt free’ is super gratifying.”

– Crystal Triguero, Ogletree Deakins Scholarship recipient/Freshman interested in meetings and events management

“I think we all know what it’s like to be saddled with that debt and work full time while we are in school. We wanted to help lessen that stress a little bit... so you [Crystal] can concentrate on why you’re here.”

– Bill McBeath ’86 CEO, The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas

“I love food and beverage, but I also love to look at the smallest details, which is why I like finance.”

– Maggie Gee, Taeubel Family Scholarship recipient/Senior, double majoring in Finance and Hospitality Management with an interest in food and beverage

“I think we all know what it’s like to be saddled with that debt and work full time while we are in school. We wanted to help lessen that stress a little bit... so you [Crystal] can concentrate on why you’re here.”

– Bill McBeath ’86 CEO, The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas

“I am a first-generation college student who came from two immigrant parents. So they are vicariously living the American dream through me. To be able to come home and make them proud, saying ‘I’m going to college debt free’ is super gratifying.”

– Maggie Gee, Taeubel Family Scholarship recipient/Senior, double majoring in Finance and Hospitality Management with an interest in food and beverage

Join us April 27, 2020, to honor Alumna of the Year Colleen Birch and Industry Leader of the Year Bill Hornbuckle at the Vallen Dinner of Distinction at Four Seasons Hotel Las Vegas. For information, email margaret.hausbeck@unlv.edu.

“I love food and beverage, but I also love to look at the smallest details, which is why I like finance.”

– Maggie Gee, Taeubel Family Scholarship recipient/Senior, double majoring in Finance and Hospitality Management with an interest in food and beverage

“I think we all know what it’s like to be saddled with that debt and work full time while we are in school. We wanted to help lessen that stress a little bit... so you [Crystal] can concentrate on why you’re here.”

– Bill McBeath ’86 CEO, The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas

“I am a first-generation college student who came from two immigrant parents. So they are vicariously living the American dream through me. To be able to come home and make them proud, saying ‘I’m going to college debt free’ is super gratifying.”

– Maggie Gee, Taeubel Family Scholarship recipient/Senior, double majoring in Finance and Hospitality Management with an interest in food and beverage

Join us April 27, 2020, to honor Alumna of the Year Colleen Birch and Industry Leader of the Year Bill Hornbuckle at the Vallen Dinner of Distinction at Four Seasons Hotel Las Vegas. For information, email margaret.hausbeck@unlv.edu.

“I love food and beverage, but I also love to look at the smallest details, which is why I like finance.”

– Maggie Gee, Taeubel Family Scholarship recipient/Senior, double majoring in Finance and Hospitality Management with an interest in food and beverage

“I think we all know what it’s like to be saddled with that debt and work full time while we are in school. We wanted to help lessen that stress a little bit... so you [Crystal] can concentrate on why you’re here.”

– Bill McBeath ’86 CEO, The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas

“I am a first-generation college student who came from two immigrant parents. So they are vicariously living the American dream through me. To be able to come home and make them proud, saying ‘I’m going to college debt free’ is super gratifying.”

– Maggie Gee, Taeubel Family Scholarship recipient/Senior, double majoring in Finance and Hospitality Management with an interest in food and beverage

Join us April 27, 2020, to honor Alumna of the Year Colleen Birch and Industry Leader of the Year Bill Hornbuckle at the Vallen Dinner of Distinction at Four Seasons Hotel Las Vegas. For information, email margaret.hausbeck@unlv.edu.

“I love food and beverage, but I also love to look at the smallest details, which is why I like finance.”

– Maggie Gee, Taeubel Family Scholarship recipient/Senior, double majoring in Finance and Hospitality Management with an interest in food and beverage

“I think we all know what it’s like to be saddled with that debt and work full time while we are in school. We wanted to help lessen that stress a little bit... so you [Crystal] can concentrate on why you’re here.”

– Bill McBeath ’86 CEO, The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas

“I am a first-generation college student who came from two immigrant parents. So they are vicariously living the American dream through me. To be able to come home and make them proud, saying ‘I’m going to college debt free’ is super gratifying.”

– Maggie Gee, Taeubel Family Scholarship recipient/Senior, double majoring in Finance and Hospitality Management with an interest in food and beverage

Join us April 27, 2020, to honor Alumna of the Year Colleen Birch and Industry Leader of the Year Bill Hornbuckle at the Vallen Dinner of Distinction at Four Seasons Hotel Las Vegas. For information, email margaret.hausbeck@unlv.edu.
The Secret of His Success

From busboy to COO of one of the largest resort brands in the world, Industry Leader of the Year Bill Hornbuckle ’84 has never forgotten those who helped him get to the top. Now, he’s determined to help others get there too.

THE SECRET OF HIS SUCCESS

he story behind Bill Hornbuckle’s rise to the pinnacle of the hospitality industry is an interesting, even inspiring one. But it’s not complicated: The president and COO of MGM Resorts made it the old-fashioned way—by working his way up.

It was a steady and often unglamorous climb, one that involved years of saying “yes” to changing assignments, undesirable shifts, and incremental promotions. “I was a room service attendant and a busboy at the old MGM. My first real job—where I ended up in a suit—was as an assistant hotel manager at the Flamingo Hilton working six days a week.”

The hospitality bug struck Hornbuckle at an early age—18 to be exact, when he got his first industry gig as a bartender in his home state of Connecticut, where at the time the legal drinking age was 18. He says he enjoyed the fast pace of the scene in Connecticut “wasn’t really happening. “With a few community college credits under his belt, Hornbuckle was chosen as the Hospitality College’s 2019 Industry Leader of the Year.

Among his numerous community-wide philanthropic efforts, Hornbuckle and his wife, Wendy, established an endowed scholarship fund in 2004 to provide much-needed financial support to Nevada-based students pursuing a hospitality degree at UNLV.

It was a logical decision for the UNLV alum and 40-year veteran of the hotel-gaming industry. But Hornbuckle’s inspiration to create the scholarship stemmed from something even more personal. “I was poor when I was in Catholic high school,” Hornbuckle recalls. “And I didn’t know it but my parents weren’t paying tuition. They couldn’t afford it. But the school kept me on for three-and-a-half years. Ten years later, I finally found out and said, ‘I couldn’t afford it. But the school kept me on for three-and-a-half years. Ten years later, I finally found out and said, ‘I want to pay it back. ‘The administrator of the school said, ‘Don’t pay it back; do something better. Set up a fund. ‘So I paid for other kids to go to school, and it was meaningful.”

That legacy of giving is both meaningful and powerful for the recipients of the Hornbuckle Family Scholarship at UNLV. Some of the latest scholarship beneficiaries got the opportunity to meet with the MGM exec in November 2019 at his corporate office in the Bellagio. It was a rare opportunity for the students to talk shop with an industry icon and share the impact of the scholarship directly with their donor.

“Bill is a great example of someone who really took what he learned in school and ran with it in the industry,” says Hospitality College Dean Stowe Shoemaker. “Others would have been content to stay where they were, but Bill kept on pushing.”

It’s a success story that doesn’t surprise Cindy Kiser Murphey, a fellow Hospitality College grad (’80, ’95 MS) who is the president and COO of New York-New York. “When Bill has a vision, he holds onto it, works incredibly hard to make it come to life, and inevitably makes it better,” says Kiser Murphey.

Hornbuckle’s history of pushing the envelope may partially explain his skyrocket to success, but it’s his commitment to helping others (particularly students) that truly sets him apart. That commitment is one of the reasons Hornbuckle was chosen as the Hospitality College’s 2019 Industry Leader of the Year.

Before their visit ended, Hornbuckle thanked the students, wished them well, and left them with one last piece of advice: “The only thing that I would ask of you is that you remember this. Someday when you are in the position to do so, give back to someone else.”

-Angela Ramsey

By Angela Ramsey

Frank Luis, freshman.

Hornbuckle (2nd from left) talks shop with scholarships recipients: (L-R) Darian Fisher, sophomore; Meagan Taylor, sophomore; and Frank Luis, freshman.

Four weeks later, Hornbuckle and his two friends were driving out to Vegas—a destination they almost didn’t make. “I had paid $100 for a station wagon,” Hornbuckle recalls. “The car died before we got out of Connecticut. A friend’s dad loaned us his van … so that’s how we got to Vegas.”

Fast-forward a few years and Hornbuckle was a UNLV graduate and well on his way to becoming one of the college’s greatest success stories, ascending through the ranks at Mirage Resorts, Caesars Palace, and then MGM.

“Bill is a great example of someone who really took what he learned in school and ran with it in the industry,” says Hospitality College Dean Stowe Shoemaker. “Others would have been content to stay where they were, but Bill kept on pushing.”

It’s a success story that doesn’t surprise Cindy Kiser Murphey, a fellow Hospitality College grad (’80, ’95 MS) who is the president and COO of New York-New York. “When Bill has a vision, he holds onto it, works incredibly hard to make it come to life, and inevitably makes it better,” says Kiser Murphey.

Hornbuckle’s history of pushing the envelope may partially explain his skyrocket to success, but it’s his commitment to helping others (particularly students) that truly sets him apart. That commitment is one of the reasons Hornbuckle was chosen as the Hospitality College’s 2019 Industry Leader of the Year.

Among his numerous community-wide philanthropic efforts, Hornbuckle and his wife, Wendy, established an endowed scholarship fund in 2004 to provide much-needed financial support to Nevada-based students pursuing a hospitality degree at UNLV.

It was a logical decision for the UNLV alum and 40-year veteran of the hotel-gaming industry. But Hornbuckle’s inspiration to create the scholarship stemmed from something even more personal. “I was poor when I was in Catholic high school,” Hornbuckle recalls. “And I didn’t know it but my parents weren’t paying tuition. They couldn’t afford it. But the school kept me on for three-and-a-half years. Ten years later, I finally found out and said, ‘I want to pay it back. ‘The administrator of the school said, ‘Don’t pay it back; do something better. Set up a fund. ‘So I paid for other kids to go to school, and it was meaningful.”

That legacy of giving is both meaningful and powerful for the recipients of the Hornbuckle Family Scholarship at UNLV. Some of the latest scholarship beneficiaries got the opportunity to meet with the MGM exec in November 2019 at his corporate office in the Bellagio. It was a rare opportunity for the students to talk shop with an industry icon and share the impact of the scholarship directly with their donor.

“Bill is a great example of someone who really took what he learned in school and ran with it in the industry.”

- Dean Stowe Shoemaker

Before their visit ended, Hornbuckle thanked the students, wished them well, and left them with one last piece of advice: “The only thing that I would ask of you is that you remember this. Someday when you are in the position to do so, give back to someone else.”

-Angela Ramsey

By Angela Ramsey

Frank Luis, freshman.
AL IS A LEGEND. He's one of three UNLV professors whose names I remember with fondness.

- Matthew Abraham '94

PROFESSOR AL IZZOLO WAS A GREAT TEACHER. I learned great things from his teachings, and he really cared about the students. If you worked in food and beverage, you realized he was right about everything he taught. Al once told us about meeting a server with a funny name, like Star Trek. I later took a trip to Oakland and went to a restaurant called Mama's Kitchen. The host called a server over and said, ‘Hey Star Trek, take their order.’ I never laughed so hard in my life. I told my wife, ‘Professor Izzolo was serious about this!’

- Perry Keith Todd '84

I had the pleasure of being one of Al's teaching assistants in 2016. Getting to learn from and teach with Al was a very educational class to learn about the different types of beer.

- Brayton Williams '17

I ENJOYED CHITCHATTING with Al about all kinds of alcohol, the role beverage has in the hospitality industry, and swapping stories about all kinds of alcohol, from Professor Izzolo and industry colleagues.

- Alycia '18

I TOOK A CLASS from Professor Izzolo in 1977. I remember him talking to us about the real world and how it would tempt us to live beyond our means as we grow in our careers. This lesson helped me build a successful 40-year career with Aramark and retire comfortably to enjoy my wonderful family.

- Tom Minor '78

AL WEARS MANY HATS. He's on the board of directors for my condo association and has done a great job of listening to and returning messages for many years now. He owns a few units in our area and walks around from time to time, talking with neighbors and listening to their concerns.

- Regent Sam Lieberman '96

I HAVE SO MANY FAVORITE STORIES OF AL. He wasn't just a great teacher but a better friend. Enjoy retirement! You deserve it!

- Matt Snitzer '77

ONE DAY BETWEEN CLASSES, Uncle Al caught me in the hall and said, ‘Packer, come with me. I got you an internship.’ We went to his office, where he tried to explain in vain the roles of public relations. I took the internship and still work in PR, thanks to him looking out for me. Happy Retirement, Captain. Thank you for being amazing.

- Gary W. Brown '73

AL, I ENJOYED WORKING WITH YOU all those years in the Hotel College. Sandra and I wish you the best in retirement.

- Lyell Metcalf

AL was teaching. So, I said, ‘Great guy. Knows his stuff, and is an easy A.’

- Jim Mikula '78

I MET AL AT THE LOYOLA UNIVERSITY food service, an ARA facility. I was there on an ARA fellowship, and Al was a corporate exec. We found humor to carry us through some stressful situations, like cafeteria food fights! We stayed in touch over the years, and both married lovely understanding ladies. He is a class act, and I wish him well!

- Lisa Kim, assistant professor

I TRAVELED WITH AL TO Australia and Fiji, as well as Europe. He came to be known as ‘Euro Al’ to us at the time. I have never learned so much as I did being immersed in the culture. It was amazing, fun, and had a lasting impact on my life.

- Angela (Szewczyk) Archibald '97

There are too many memories to mention just one, but two things stick out in my mind from days at UNLV: Runnin’ Rebel basketball and Al Izzolo—specifically summer studies in Switzerland.

- Lucia DePretto '92

The first time I met Al, I was walking through the Hotel College to my pre-law class.

- Lyell Metcalf

UNLV legend Al Izzolo and his wife Cora attend the college’s 2019 Valentine Dinner.
GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK

SPRING 2020

GIVING BACK

GIVING BACK
GIVING BACK

Tim Clark
Araceli Cleto ’15
John H. Cline ’73
Justin I. Chatov ’98
Jolanda M. Carlvin ’10
James A. Busser
Clayton J. Clancy
Christian Dior
Chimera Golf Club
Chen-Condron ’00
Cavaricci’s Salon
Catch Las Vegas
Comedy Club
Glorianne R. Bora ’86
Chris Boncek
Sarah P. Chung ’18
Kathleen M.
Boutique Paris
Bernard Chiang ’17
Michael W. Chesley ’88
Harold S. Channell ’86
Rosemary J. Casey
Michael S. Carder
Hien Bui
Bowers Golf Academy
Clayton R. Miale ’98
DeChagas ’06
Daniela C. De Souza ’04
Alexandra R.
DeCluysenaer ’06
Monique Delpech ’16
Kismat Dhaliana ’14
SabelaClub-Delabra
Douglass D. DiMart
Discovery Children’s Museum
Robert B.
Douglas ’15
Gregory L. Dowell ’97

Robyn K. Haddix ’05
Suzanne Halmeon ’10
Christian J.
Halleren ’74
Hard Rock Hotel &
Casino
Brian ’95 and
Angelique Hartwell
Zachary M. Huy ’12
Hagfells at the Mirage
Barbara J. Hertter
Matthew D.
Higgson ’97
Highland Falls Golf
Club
Joseph M.
HI’17
Mark W. Hines ’66
Hokkaido Korean BBQ
Ashley K. Huban
Holtheauss Las Vegas
Michael J.
Hogan ’01
Hotel at the Moon
Hollywood
Brett Hughelt ’93
Margone Hurst ’91
Hyatt Place Las Vegas
Maria L.
Imperialaria In-N-Out
iMaglity
Roy M.
Ishkhanian ’94
Taveta M. Ivanova ’18
Matthew P.
Jaffey ’16
Maria January
Chitrav.
Jayasunderan ’90
Joshua J.
Jensen
Shuai Jiang ’13
Nathaniel R.
Johnson ’04
Matthew J.
Johnson ’14
Brian M.
Jones ’32, ’74
Jeffrey R. Jones ’89
Marcie Jordan
Hyung Jin Kim ’19
Alexander G.
Kadowa ’17
Ceske E.
Kaimpi ’17
Murleen N.
Kanehailua
Andrew Kao ’12
Colleti Kali
Paul J.
Kalli ’89
Kendra Scott LLC
Lisa Kimelheim ’76
Tamara L.
Kirk ’95
Sander P.
Klein ’15
Michael B.
Klein ’08
Stephanie A.
Kloos ’00
Amada Kless ’13
Docho V.
Kolev ’05
Jaffet K.
Koscielny ’92
Joshua B.
Kotchefer ’10
Karla K. Koutel
LA Epic Club Cravings
April Larson
Las Vegas Aces
Las Vegas Lights FC
Las Vegas Marriott
Jonathan M.
Lazanas ’18
Madison L.
Leavett ’10
Shana B.
Liederman ’10
Jenny Lee
Michelle ’17
Lees
Las Vegas Strip Resort
Juan M.
Levis ’11
Gregory ’11 and
Victoria Leston ’22
Zhen Li ’18
Xiaojun Liang ’11
Alexandra and
Joseph Lieberman
Kevin A.
Limb ’15
Robert ’10 and
Holly ’95
Lindsay Little Blue Bus
Anthony J.
Linnell ’17
Vincent R.
Lombardi ’03
Alan ’00 and
Alencia Lopez
Ariel C.
Lopez ’29
Caitlyn and
Fernando Lopez
Alexander P.
Love ’18
RGG LLC
Jan Guang Lu ’13
Mark S.
Lucas ’28
Philip A.
Lucette ’00
USH
Natalia M.
Mack ’72
Stephanie M.
Mack ’10
Kevin D.
Mahoney ’92
Isaac M.
Marchand ’96
Isaac M.
Marchand ’96
Marriott Las Vegas
Samuelsen Marchand ’13
William A.
Mata ’14
Barent ’09 and
Avery C.
McCord
Debra McCracken
Thomas E.
McGuinn ’15
Brett A.
McMeekin ’17
Meet Fresh
Frank R.
Meneses ’90
Kelly M.
Mesina ’31
MGM Grand
Hotel & Casino
Clayton E.
Miake ’96
David A.
Mikoski ’12
Jim R.
Miluta ’78
Brittany Miller
Christopher A.
Miller ’09
Michelle A.
Miller
Stephen M.
Mikowski ’88
Wendy E.
Millap
Michael E.
Minden
Michael E.
Minden
Diamond Jewelers
Jonas M.
Mintz ’02
Suzanne L.
Miramontes ’10
Larry Modell
Min Am Gubi
Jacobs D.
Montoya ’88
Eileen A.
Moore
Stephanie E.
Moore ’13
Simone Moran
Morgans Jewelers
Meatballs Mall
Timothy P.
Morrissey ’92
Peter C.
Morrow
Lynn Mozier
Jill A.
Moss ’12
Mt. Chimney Cricket
Zachary
Mumbower ’14
Judy A.
Nagi
Rachel A.
Neale ’80
Lawrence H.
Nesselrott ’31
Margaret A.
Nesman ’65
Ruth J.
Nguyen ’17
David R.
and
Melissa Nightingale
Jennifer M.
Nitta ’77
Nothing Bundt Cakes
Suzanne M.
Nunn ’88
Benjamin P.
Nunley ’93
Holly O’Brien
Evelyn O’Cearna
Mark O’Cearna
Michael A.
Oliver ’92
Ono Sushi
Sabinia S.
Orque ’02
Robert M.
Ortiz ’67

Catch Las Vegas
Cavalli’s Salon
CDS Consulting
Harwell S.
Chamness ’68
Justin I.
Chavez ’17
Shaadi Chen ’87
Chen P.
Chen-Condonn ’00
Donald E.
Boone ’76
Donald W.
Brooks
Bubbly Gump
Shirly Shao ’18
Kathleen C.
Kanehailua
John H.
Claito ’73
Yasenia Colon ’78
Bradley A.
Conlin ’10
Kathleen M.
Constantino ’10

Kelly S.
Raoon
Chris Bonocek
Elizabeth A.
Bondurant ’88
Laura Book ’76
Donald E.
Boone ’78
Glorianne R.
Bora ’66
Bowser Golf Academy
Brad Garrett’s
Comedy Club
William E.
Bradley ’00

Bright Funds
Mitchell Brook
Paul L.
Brooks
Bubbles Gump
Shirly Shao ’18
Kathleen C.
Kanehailua
John H.
Claito ’73
Yasenia Colon ’78
Bradley A.
Conlin ’10
Kathleen M.
Constantino ’10

How can I give?
When you’re contributing to the College of Hospitality for Excellence, Hospitality Hall, or student scholarships, there are numerous ways to support the Harrah College of Hospitality. To learn more about available giving opportunities, and to explore the option that is right for you, contact Marian Alper at marian.alper@unlv.edu or at 702-895-2819.

Note: This list is not inclusive of all UNLV giving, and giving levels may represent part of a larger pledge. If you see a discrepancy, please contact Marian Alper at marian.alper@unlv.edu or at 702-895-2819.

We strive to ensure the accuracy of this listing, which includes donors who made a gift to the Harrah Hospitality College during the 2018-2019 fiscal year. Note: This list is not inclusive of all UNLV giving, and giving levels may represent part of a larger pledge. If you see a discrepancy, please contact Marian Alper at marian.alper@unlv.edu or at 702-895-2819.

UNLV.EDU/REBELSFOREVER

Rebels Forever is an inclusive program for alumni of UNLV. Every graduate of UNLV is now a Rebels Forever member. The UNLV Alumni Association is happy to welcome each graduate into this new designation as alumni. No dues. Every graduate of UNLV is now a Rebels Forever member. This program promotes inclusivity and philanthropy to each and every graduate of your university. Your alumni association is committed to supporting all graduates, and to fostering a vibrant, lasting relationship between you and UNLV for life.

UNLV.EDU/REBELSFOREVER

SPRING 2020
SPRING 2020
We would like to acknowledge the members of the UNLV Harrah College of Hospitality Alumni Board:

**PRESIDENT**
Charles Beris '73 MS

**VICE PRESIDENT**
Patrik Balint '14 MS/MBA

**SECRETARY**
Andrew Jordan Fischette '10

**TREASURER**
Kelly Messina '90

**BOARD MEMBERS**

- Marcus Threats '87 '99 MBA
- Jennifer Oshiro Rivers '05 '08 M.Ed.
- Charles Valentine '16 MHA
- Eric Eisenberg '95
- Andrew Kao '12
- Andrew Inspigne '11
- Jack Effie '14 MHA
- Karen Achatz '99
- Shauna Lederman '01
- Celine Endy '18

**EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS**

- Tyra Bell-Holland '94
- Sydney Woo '99
- Kevin Sexton '92
- Adam Gordon '04

The hospitality industry is growing. Shouldn’t you?

Advance your career with flexible programs for working professionals.

As the nation’s leader in hospitality education, The UNLV Harrah College of Hospitality created the Sands Center for Professional Development so you can choose your program without putting your life on hold.

- Custom certificate programs
- Industry workshops and tours

Find out what’s right for you and your organization: Call 702.895.4124 or email sandscenter@unlv.edu or visit unlv.edu/sandscenter
GUY FIERI
CLASS of 1990

BE BOLD CURIOUS ORIGINAL A REBEL

unlv.edu/hospitality