

Event Management Concentration is a Big Hit

In the last newsletter, we announced the launch of our new concentration and minor in event management. Students now have the opportunity to tailor their degree with professional electives including *Introduction to Event Management, Festival and Community Event Planning, Wedding and Special Event Management, Introduction to Sport and Event Management and Event Promotion*. We knew it would be popular, but student interest has exceeded expectations with half of all incoming hospitality management freshmen declaring an event management concentration.

The Festival and Community Event Planning Course was busy this semester working with the Outside Foundation on their Page Island Oyster Roast. What an exciting experience to help with an event held on a private island! The students were able to have an experiential learning experience producing a great community event and understand first-hand the challenges of producing an event on a secluded island. And of course, had a lot of fun as well!

It looks like our local area may become a hotspot for amazing events with all of these new event professionals entering the field after graduating from the hospitality management program. Stay tuned!

Introducing Eva Smith, PhD

USCB and the Hospitality Management department welcomes a new faculty member: Dr. Eva Smith! Dr. Smith will be teaching undergraduate courses as part of the degree program and serving as the department chair. She'll be moving to the area and beginning her post this summer. Here's a quick Q&A with Dr. Smith:



Please tell us a little about your education and career

I am a native of Spartanburg, SC and graduated from Wofford College in 1989 with a degree in government. I worked as a catering director at Converse College. I went to USC Columbia and earned a Masters in Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Administration. I started teaching at Spartanburg Community College in 1996, where I started a culinary arts program and taught in the Management program. I was recruited to the University of Tennessee in 2006 and earned a PHD in Hospitality, Retail and Tourism Management with a cognate in Higher Education Administration in 2008. I taught at Brevard College for seven years, Western Carolina for 2 years and then moved back to Spartanburg to care for my ailing mother. I stepped into administration with Stratford University and have most recently been serving as the Assistant Dean of Online Programs in the College of Business at Lander University.

What is your research interest?

My main research interest has been how students make career decisions.

Why did you choose hospitality?

Hospitality is not exclusively a Southern attribute, however, being raised in a Southern home by South-

ern women, it has been a quality instilled in me for most of my life. Serving others, making people feel at home and creating an environment that invites warmth and comfort are all integral parts of the hospitality industry. These are things that make life better.

What are you looking forward to most about joining USCB and the Hospitality Management faculty?

I am most excited about working with both a world class faculty who are experts in their field and working with students who share the same passion for service that I do.

What impact would you like to make in your first year here?

I want to get to know all the working parts of this fantastic program. Moving forward, I hope to become part of the team and help to create an environment in which we all can grow and spread the love of hospitality.

Is there anything you think you'll miss about Greenwood?

Anywhere I have been, I have enjoyed working with wonderful faculty and this is no different in the College of Business at Lander University. I will miss my colleagues yet am excited to connect with my new ones.

What are your first impressions of Hilton Head Island and the campus?

Paradise!!!!

Welcome, Dr. Smith!

FESTIVAL RESEARCH

If you've attended any local festivals so far this year, you've probably seen our student research team. Organized through USCB's Center for Event Management and Hospitality Training, students gather valuable data about festival-goers for the Town, festival organizers and the

chamber of commerce, including demographic information, tourism spending behaviors and customer satisfaction. So far for 2022, the research team collected over 1,500 surveys from the *Taste of Gullah, Darius Rucker Intercollegiate Golf Tournament, Hilton Head Island Seafood Festival,*

Wingfest and Hilton Head Island Wine and Food Festival. The data is analyzed and presented to festival organizers so that they can plan and gain funding for future events. It's also great experience for students interested in tourism and market research.

Alumna Spotlight: Jillian Vannoni

We are so proud of our alumni! Many hospitality management graduates choose to stay in the beautiful Lowcountry and help make our area the best destination for our residents and visitors. Jillian Vannoni fits this description perfectly. She graduated from the program last year, May 2021, and works at Disney's Hilton Head Island Resort:

Please tell us about your position at DVC's Hilton Head Island Resort.

I am currently a Housekeeping Relief Lead, in this role I preform daily inspections on rooms, provide in the moment feedback to cast members and help shape an inclusive environment for the Housekeeping team and the resort.

Why did you choose to stay in the Hilton Head area after graduation?

My job with Disney's Hilton Head Island Resort played a large factor in staying in the Lowcountry. I have always loved the area but getting the opportunity to continue my career with the Walt Disney Company on Hilton Head is an amazing



way to incorporate my southern hospitality learned through USCB and all the best parts of Disney.

What's one of your fondest memories of your time at USCB?

My fondest memory at USCB was getting to be a part of the beautiful Hilton Head campus opening. It was such an exciting time for not only the school but for all of us as students. My friends that attended the campus and I loved getting to utilize the facility. We enjoyed studying on the back porch in the warmer months and even in the colder months loved moving into the booths during winter finals season.

What would you like to do in the future?

It has always been a dream of mine to grow with the Walt Disney Company into the next level of leadership as a Guest Experience Manger. I am very passionate in the role they play of shaping all new hires mindsets and helping them succeed through all the resources Disney has to offer.

Thank you, Jillian, and all our local alumni, for everything you do and all the positive impacts you make for our region.

Eta Sigma Delta Honorary Academic Fraternity Welcomes New Members

On Monday, March 28, 2022, seven new hospitality students were inducted into USCB Department of Hospitality Management's Eta Sigma Delta, an honorary academic fraternity, recognized internationally throughout the world. The students inducted were: Logan Clark, Shelly Hunter, Sydney Greene, Allison Lee, Molly Young, Rakita Rogers, and Brittany Lord.

Students across campus and hospitality faculty attended the event which included Lauren Hutchinson, of the Savanna Bananas, as a keynote speaker. The evening was sponsored by Marriott Vacations who provided food and refreshments.

Eta Sigma Delta is an academic honorary fraternity and part of the International Council of Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (CHRIE). Students are invited to join Eta Sigma Delta who have completed up to 50% of their required coursework, declared hospitality major, maintain a 3.0 GPA or better, and promise to uphold the six points of honor as professionals in the industry. Dr. Nancy Hritz is the USCB Department of Hospitality Management's Academic Advisor for our chapter of Eta Sigma Delta.



Bethany McDonald Awarded 2021 Tourism Student Award

By Carol Weir. Reprinted from the USCB "Be Informed" blog with permission.

Nine students from South Carolina colleges and universities were presented with 2021 Tourism Student Awards for outstanding academic achievement in culinary, hospitality, and tourism studies. USCB senior Bethany McDonald, who is majoring in Hospitality, was one of the winners.

Every year, faculty at each college or university selects one student from their hospitality program for the award. Winners receive a \$1,000 scholarship, provided through the Fred Brinkman Memorial Fund. McDonald, a senior at USCB, is results oriented: She took her vision of a beach recycling program and made it a reality. She secured an internship with the USCB Center for Event Management and Hospitality Training, worked with the Town of Hilton Head Island and enlisted the support of numerous community organizations in her opening of Finnegan's Sharing Shack.

Named after the USCB mascot, the sharing shack allows for guests and residents of Hilton Head Island to recycle and reuse beach items including chairs, toys, umbrellas and even wagons. The Sharing Shack recycled over 700 items during its first few weeks of operation at the end of summer 2021. McDonald is committed to ensuring the sharing shack's continued success. In addition, she served as a Research Assistant conducting hospitality research at various festivals during the fall se-



mester. McDonald's positive attitude and endless energy will continue to support her efforts to change the world.

Sponsored by the South Carolina Travel and Tourism Coalition, the Tourism Student Award recognizes the state's outstanding, full-time students from college and university tourism programs across South Carolina. "You should be proud of your accomplishments, and you should also be proud because you have chosen to pursue careers in an industry that has a profound impact on

our economy and quality of life," said Duane Parrish, South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism Director, during the awards presentation. "As tourism industry professionals, you will help shape the visitor experience for your respective destinations, encouraging travelers to discover new experiences, broaden their horizons, and feel right at home even when they are far from home. There is no finer industry to work in than the tourism and hospitality industry, especially here in South Carolina."

Strategic Management Division Hits the Ground Running

The USCB Center for Strategic Planning has hit the ground running within its first few months of life. Housed under the umbrella of USCB's Center for Event Management and Hospitality Training, the Center offers local businesses support and guidance when developing their plans for growth and change. Tom Henz and Ray Warco are the Center's facilitators. You can [see them interviewed](#) by Robyn Zimmerman on WHHI's *Talk of the Town*. Henz teaches for the Hospitality Management and Business undergraduate programs at USCB. He helped launch a new course this past semester called *Entrepreneurial Thinking and Innovation*. In the course, students are encouraged to be disruptive and to

expect some failures when creating and developing their business plan. The idea that failure is a key component of growth and innovation is central to the process, and he wants to share that with students and industry partners alike. The Center is currently working with a local company to design a company retreat where they will work on their strategic planning processes. A podcast will also launch this month through the Center, produced by Mahogany Hickman, studio manager for USCB, where business leaders from the region will be interviewed on their



business innovations and the stories behind how they were developed. If you'd like more information about the USCB Center for Strategic Planning and their services, please visit their website: www.uscb.edu/csp

Learning Undercover: Secret Shopping for Local Industry

Students in Su Gibson's Quality Evaluation and Management course have been learning what it takes to be service quality experts this semester. Classes met once a week to discuss management practices and theories related to understanding guest expectations and improving the guest experience. Then, the students were deployed to local restaurants and other hospitality businesses as undercover secret shoppers. They completed comprehensive reports which included their evaluations based on set service standards and wrote detailed accounts of their experiences. At the end of the semester, each student presented their findings, ideas and suggestions to managers of the visited businesses.

The relationship between our industry partners and our academic programs like this is symbiotic. The managers enjoy the feedback and ideas from the students each semester, and the students gain valuable insights from seeing course concepts up close in action.

"This class opened my eyes to not only key factors of great service, but also the importance of building a strong relationship with your staff. I started to incorporate the things I learned in class at work after I started my management position at the Westin in February and quickly saw the positive changes. I am so grateful for this class and all that is has prepared me for. It gave me confidence that I am prepared for management," Abby Houser, USCB Graduate May 2022

If you'd like to learn more about the course or take part in the quality management programs this academic year, please contact Su Gibson at



gibsonsl@uscb.edu. More information can also be found on the USCB's Center for Event Management and Hospitality Training website at: <https://www.hhicenter.com/quality>



Favorite Field Trip: Students Visit Daufuskie

The Hotel Restaurant and Travel Law class took a field trip to Daufuskie Island this semester to prepare for their course project. The students' project required them to learn about the history of Daufuskie Island and the Melrose Resort. They had to write about the lifespan of the resort from its development, the successful years, its demise and its current hope for renewal, identifying legal issues faced at each stage. Of course, the field trip to Daufuskie is always the highlight!

Engage with Us

USCB's Center for Event Management and Hospitality Training works in partnership with USCB's Hospitality Management Department to provide students with experiential learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom and to offer beneficial services to local industry partners.

From secret shopping and quality management program development to volunteer management, data collection, case studies and strategic planning, there are many ways to get involved. We are grant-funded, so most services are offered at no cost. Learn more at hhicenter.com/engagement and let's see what we can do to help your business thrive.

You Can Help Us!

Do you know of someone who might be interested in starting or completing their degree? We have in-person and online degree options. Please tell them about us!

Please also share this newsletter and encourage your colleagues and friends to sign up for them at hhicenter.com/sign-up-today. It's a great way to stay connected with the happenings of the department and learn about upcoming events on the Hilton Head Island campus.