

## Island Ambassador Program Carries On

USCB's Center for Event Management and Hospitality Training is excited to be offering the Island Ambassador Program via a virtual interactive classroom through USCB's Blackboard Collaborate Ultra learning management system. This delivery method allows each professional educator the opportunity to engage participants in learning about Island Knowledge, Island Culture and Island Ecology. Hospitality professionals will be able to view the presenter and material, ask questions, and make comments during the real-time class. While class sizes are limited to provide an intimate experience, this format allows a virtual classroom while respecting social distancing measures. It also provides local hospitality professionals continued opportunities to expand their knowledge of our beautiful Island in preparation for providing exceptional guest experiences once normal operations resume.

If you are interested in participating in a class, please reach out to the center's director, Keri Olivetti at [olivetti@uscb.edu](mailto:olivetti@uscb.edu)

“People will forget what you said and what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel.”

- Maya Angelou, Poet and Author

## MESSAGE FROM DEAN CHARLES CALVERT



Billy Watterson, Rep. Bill Herbkersman, and Dean Calvert support Help4Hope on the Hilton Head Island Campus.

Without question, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the hospitality industry. However even amidst social distancing, our Hospitality Management program is finding ways to support our local community.

The Hilton Head Island Campus was delighted to be a designated site for people financially impacted by COVID-19 to pick up Help4Hope gift cards for local restaurants to cover the cost of a meal for a family of four. In collaboration with the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber

of Commerce, the Watterson Family Foundation was able to distribute over 350 gift cards in under two hours. In addition to benefiting the recipients, Help4Hope gives participating restaurants a lifeline to help keep their doors open until they can get back to business as usual.

Our wonderful HHI campus faculty & staff, alongside Sand Shark athletics, were delighted to assist our community partners, especially with Finnegan there to lead the charge! **Fins Up to our Sand Shark community!**



Finnegan distributing Help4Hope gift cards.

## Enlightening Facility Tours for Students

Fieldwork and site visits are key aspects of the Hospitality Management Program each semester. This spring, our students had the opportunity to visit several local hospitality establishments and learn from professionals in the industry about their experiences.

Students in the HRTM 110 Introduction to Hospitality Industry course were given a behind-the-scenes preview of the Frankie Bones restaurant just a few days before it opened in Bluffton. Chef Luke Lyons personally provided an extensive tour, spoke about his career, and answered questions about opening the restaurant. The class also visited Marriott's Barony Beach Club on Hilton Head Island for a walking tour of the sprawling property, led by Jessica Hehman, Director of Operations, and two of the property's managers.

The HRTM 260 Hotel Management class had field visits to the following Hilton Head Island properties: Marriott Monarch at Sea Pines,



Students in the Introduction to Hospitality Industry course tour Marriot's Barony Beach Club.

Ocean Oak Resort by Hilton, and Holiday Inn Express Hilton Head Island. At each property, the students interacted with general managers, directors of sales, talent acquisition specialists and other members of the executive teams. Our students were given extensive front and back-of-the-house tours of each establishment while discussing contemporary issues surrounding hotel and resort management.

# Kitchen Competition Heats Up



*A student team dishes up their entry for one of the themed food competitions in the Quantity Food Production course.*

The food lab at the new campus makes an impressive backdrop to any event, but the most exciting moments came this semester in the form of student competitions as part of Dr. Sean Barth's Quantity Food Production course, specifically the introductory kitchen essentials class that allows groups of four students to compete in six food competitions each semester. The students find and develop their recipe idea with the instructor, assist in the ordering process, and work together to produce their dish for the week. The students are judged by local industry partners, faculty, and staff. The judges consider presentation and overall flavor. The competition is designed to be fun while allowing the students to pick up some basic culinary skills along the way. The whole semester culminates in a final food competition where students prepare a dish from the menu they developed as part of the semester-long restaurant development project.

## Students Volunteer at the Hilton Head Monthly Bridal Show

As attendees cheerfully filed into the Sonesta Resort this February to taste wedding cakes, view portraits, inspect the latest bridal fashion trends, and chat with bridal industry professionals, our students were hard at work as volunteers for Hilton Head Monthly's 13th annual Hilton Head Bridal Show. Students in Dean Calvert's Conference and Management Planning class had the option to volunteer at the show in order to meet one of the fieldwork requirements for the course. Tasks included helping vendors set up tables, bringing in supplies, checking in brides-to-be and their families, walking the main showroom to assist attendees and vendors as needed, as well as breaking down tables and clearing the showroom after the event.

Students assisted with pre-show activities from early in the morning to post-show tasks ending in the evening. It made for a long day, but that's typical in the world of event planning. One of the volunteers, Jessica Muller, spoke enthusiastically about the experience, noting how much fun the attendees seemed to be having and how organized the event felt, even amidst the sometime frenetic pace. "The best parts were definitely networking with different companies and getting a taste of what



*Student volunteers debrief Dean Calvert about their experience supporting the HH Monthly Bridal Show.*

event planning is about." Jessica concluded, "It's interesting to see all the different aspects of an event come together and create a beautiful final product."

# Our Students Take Home the Prize:

## *Current scholarship recipients*

Many of our students receive scholarships to help with tuition and other college expenses. Some of the most-prized scholarships come from hospitality industry groups because of their added benefits, such as exposure to local industry leaders and networking opportunities. One of these scholarships is the Tourism Leadership Council (TLC) scholarship awarded annually. Since its inception, the TLC scholarship has awarded more than \$100,000 to deserving students who are pursuing careers in our thriving tourism community. (Awards typically range from \$500 to \$3000 per student.) This year, USCB senior Jackson Gomes, won the scholarship and was applauded at the 22nd annual Tourism Awards and Scholarship Dinner in March. Jackson credits this honor to his support network. "It was the continuous encouragement and support of my professors and friends that made me recipient of this scholarship." He further explains how this recognition has touched his life. "This scholarship gave me the opportunity to connect with many brilliant scholars, learn from outstanding professors, and above all, pursue my academic ambitions. It has allowed me to be one step closer to my goal and has inspired me to help others by giving back to the community."

Several of our students recently received the John and Valerie Curry Scholarship in association with the Hilton Head Wine and Food Festival. The application process includes several stages. Students submit their resume, a letter about why they've chosen the hospitality industry, and a letter of recommendation. Select students chosen from the pool of applicants are then interviewed by faculty and festival board members. Emily Trammell felt the rigorous application process made receiving the award that much more meaningful. "I spent a lot of time on my essay and application, as well as preparing myself for the interview. Seeing my hard work pay off for something I really wanted was great!" This also afforded Emily the opportunity to finish her last semester without worrying about personal finances, and she also



*Jackson Gomes receives his scholarship award at the Savannah Tourism Leadership Council awards dinner.*

appreciated the value of listing the award on her resume. An additional scholarship recipient, Samantha Moore, concurs, "This is a great opportunity that not only supports our community and students, but fuels your service with a heart of gratitude!"

Some students are awarded the scholarship more than once, like Jessica McDowell, who received it her freshman year and this year. She highly recommends applying for the scholarship to other students, and she particularly enjoys the interaction and experience of working at the festival. *(Fortunately, even amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, several scholarship recipients were still able to assist with the restructured festival this March.)*

### **Hilton Head Wine and Food Festival**

*(John and Valerie Curry Scholarship recipients):*

Samantha Moore • Kate Gregory • Jackson Gomes • Emily Trammell • Anna Goebel • Cristiana Huthmaker • Jessica McDowell • Ashley Engfinger • Marianna Curry • James (Trace) Turner

### **South Carolina Governor's Tourism Student Award recipient:**

Anna Goebel

### **Savannah Tourism Leadership Council Scholarship recipient:**

Jackson Gomes



**Dr. Nancy Hritz**  
*Associate Professor of Hospitality Management*

## Dr. Nancy Hritz Chosen to Judge National Competition

Dr. Nancy Hritz has been selected to serve as a lead judge for U.S. Travel Association's 21st annual Mercury and Destiny Awards which honor marketing excellence for states and destinations. Award recipients will be recognized in August at U.S. Travel's

destination marketing conference, ESTO (Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations).

Lead judges must possess an experienced marketing background and the ability to judge award submissions critically, while also providing knowledgeable feedback. They assemble and manage a team of 4-5 individuals who will help evaluate destination marketing campaigns.

# Faculty Spotlight: IN DEFENSE OF ONLINE LEARNING



**Su Gibson**  
*Hospitality Management  
Instructor*

While educational institutions across the nation are navigating the challenges of transitioning from traditional in-classroom learning to an online format in response to COVID-19, USCB has discovered there is much to be said about the innovative and exciting world of virtual environments and online learning. Quickly converting what were supposed to be in-person courses and experiential learning projects to the web for independent learning under stressful pandemic circumstances is certainly not ideal. However, the fact that it's even possible is a testament to the amazing resources and technologies that have been developed for online learning within the past 10+ years.

There is much discussion within academic circles as to whether online courses can provide the same student learning outcomes. The answer is complicated and involves many variables, such as individual teaching and learning styles, educator and student comfort levels with technology, subject matter adaptability, class size, delivery methods, age of students, and more. In some instances, students and faculty struggle to meaningfully connect and chafe at the differences they notice between in-class and online courses. Others flourish with the flexibility online learning offers and the creativity that can be explored while building stimulating and rich virtual learning environments.

As someone who was initially dubious of teaching online when my former dean suggested it many years ago, I sympathize with faculty and students who are missing being in the classroom. However, I now wholeheartedly enjoy teaching online courses. I believe in the effectiveness of well-designed virtual formats, and I hope this period will give others a glimpse of some of the awesome results that can be achieved with online learning.

UofSC's Palmetto College offers fully online degree-completion programs to students seeking to complete their undergraduate studies in a number of majors. Our department is designated within the UofSC network as the provider for Palmetto College students on track to earn their degree in hospitality management. We recently celebrated our third year of participating in the Palmetto College system.

Palmetto College courses are exceptionally well-organized and consistent, with a standard modular format that helps students acclimate to online learning. The faculty who teach them are supported by lesson planning tools and shared best practices. We're especially lucky, at USCB, to have Lori Vargo as our Director of e-Learning. She is our guide and cheerleader, as well as a hub of information and resources.

As is sometimes the case, success can have its challenges! In fact, because our Palmetto College program has been so successful, we're looking to expand enrollment quicker than ever. As new Palmetto College enrollees typically only have two years left to complete their degree, we are proactively seeking to fill the spots of recent graduates with newly recruited students in order to keep the vibrancy of our program growing with a wide community of learners. For this online environment we don't typically rely on local word-of-mouth endorsements, which is typically the case for our brick and mortar program, but we do have ambassadors in our students who are thriving in hospitality management careers in far-reaching areas of the world, such as Hong Kong, Hawaii, California, and New Zealand.

I'm delighted to now be serving as the advisor for all hospitality management Palmetto College students. Please contact me (GibsonSL@uscb.edu) if you'd like more information and to see what finishing your degree online with the Palmetto College would look like. Admissions are on a continuous basis, and courses begin every eight weeks

## INDUSTRY CORNER:

# Leading in Times of Crisis



**Laurie Savidge**  
*Senior Talent Manager  
for East Region Marriott  
Vacations Worldwide*

We all know that these are unprecedented times in the Hospitality Industry. In my 15+ years in this industry, I have never seen anything like our current fight against COVID-19. If anything, as a lodging manager

I have been fortunate to primarily experience the positive impacts of a thriving economy. Year after year we have had the good fortune in this industry of guests with a propensity to spend and a desire to vacation across the world.

Now everything is different and leaders in the Hospitality Industry are having to lead their teams in a time of crisis. When I look back, leading during times of crises was when I learned some of the greatest lessons of my career. Crises can come in all forms: natural disasters like hurricanes, system failures, no power on the 4th of July (yes this happened at a resort I worked at) and many others. A key lesson I have learned while working for Marriott Vacations Worldwide (MVW) is that truly great leaders calmly balance candor and hope during a crisis. Leaders have a clear plan for the team, stay in constant communication with those they lead and genuinely care about their team's well-being.

There will be many lessons learned in the Hospitality Industry as we continue to navigate this pandemic, and I believe significant changes to how we operate as a result. I look forward to getting to the other side of this global pandemic with my MVW and USCB family stronger than ever, having taken care of those we lead, teach and support daily.