

Alexis Aarons
University of South Carolina
School of Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism Management
Columbia, SC
803-673-2813
Aaronsa@mailbox.sc.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

General Manager Panel Gives University of South Carolina Students Industry Insight

COLUMBIA, SC — On Wednesday, October 14th at 5:30 pm, many University of South Carolina students in the Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism Management program took the opportunity to attend a question and answer session with a panel of general managers from five hotels. Prior to the event, students developed scripts to introduce each panelist as well as specific questions to be asked during the event. Each panelist was given an opportunity to respond to the questions before the open discussion began.

The general manager of a smaller hotel, Abbey Griffiths of the Courtyard Marriott at Haywood in Greenville, SC, cited communicating with her associates as a top priority. She came to her current position after advancing in her job over a period of 18 months. Griffiths is very active in her local community and takes part in Chamber of Commerce events as often as possible.

For Tom Manno of the Westin Hotel in Charlotte, NC, personally interviewing each of his potential employees is important. Over the years he has learned that the best and most successful employees in the hotel industry are friendly, multi-tasking and passionate individuals. Manno treats each day as a chance to build relationships between staff, guests and the community. His advice for interviewees is to “make eye-contact, have a firm handshake, smile, and be aware of your body language.”

During his 36 years in the hotel business, Radu Moldovan of the Spring Hill Suites in North Charleston, SC, has experienced the long hours it takes to open a hotel, but says that it is still one of his favorite aspects of the job. Noting the high turnover rate of employees in the business, Moldovan told students that hard work does pay off.

While working as a controller for four different hotel properties, Shane Williams of the Holiday Inn located in West Columbia, SC, values customer service at every level. He has seen the rise in popularity of trendy hotels and the utilization of the Internet as a powerful marketing tool. Williams suggests that students work in the industry to see if they are passionate about it before attempting to begin their adult careers.

Though Daniel Wilson of the Inn at USC in Columbia, SC, has not been with the property for a long time, he mentioned that the biggest change he has experienced in the industry revolves around the organizational structure and behavior of employees. He made remarks about moving people to positions that may better fit their personalities and the importance of leading by example.

Following the presentation, a reception was hosted at the Inn at USC giving students a chance to interact with the general managers. Students took pictures, exchanged business cards, had an opportunity to ask more questions and enjoyed dinner and refreshments.

The Lodging Lecture Series was developed by Instructor Kiran Shah and Professors Sheryl F. Kline and Brumby McLeod in the School of Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism Management at the University of South Carolina as a way to better prepare students for their futures in the hotel, restaurant and tourism industries, and to introduce them to successful individuals in their general fields of interest.