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Hospitality school helps students start careers



Timothy Lam, executive director at the International School of Hospitality, is shown at the school at 3614 E. Sunset Road in Las Vegas on Tuesday, April 15, 2014. (Bill Hughes/Las Vegas Review-Journal)



By KRISTY TOTTEN
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

What does the pineapple have to do with hospitality?

More than one might think.

Legend has it that in Colonial America, sea captains would spear pineapples outside their homes after returning from the Caribbean. The pineapples were invitations to visit and indicated that the captain was home safe and

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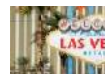
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had food, drink and tales to share.

As the practice grew, inns added depictions of the fruit to their signs and even to bedposts.

Today, it has become a symbol of hospitality and the logo for The International School of Hospitality in Las Vegas.

The 9-year-old college, tucked into an office park on Sunset Road, espouses having students taught by those employed in their respective fields.

The school was founded by former UNLV professors and industry professionals who saw a need for a professional school dedicated to hospitality. Courses are taught by credentialed professionals who work in hospitality.

Students can earn certificates for single courses or a diploma or executive diploma for completing four courses. Certificate courses are completed in five to 12 weeks, while diplomas require about eight months of study. Executive diplomas focus on one area of study, while a diploma includes training in several operations. Both diplomas include observation in the field and work experience.

"Our students come out and can hit the ground running," said academic consultant Patti Shock, who recently retired after 25 years as a UNLV professor of conventions and events. Shock helped develop the first online hospitality course at UNLV and continues to teach as an adjunct professor. Shock was the first head of the catering school at Georgia State University and has written several books on the subject.

The International School of Hospitality is accredited by the Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training and is a member of the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute.

The school offers nine specialties: hospitality leadership; hospitality human resources; concierge; hotel operations; conference management and event planning; meeting and event catering; event design and production; food and beverage; and wedding coordination and design.

"The courses we teach are things people dream about," Shock said, noting wedding planning in particular, which is an uncommon offering for schools.

Both in-person and online classes are offered. Class sizes average about six to eight students. Tuition ranges from \$1,650 for a course to \$9,450 for a diploma.

The school's executive director, Tim Lam, estimates that 60 percent of students are locals. Of the international students, 10 percent to 15 percent remain in Las Vegas after graduation.

Students often have experience working on the Strip but are seeking a career change. Shock said past Cirque du Soleil performers, cocktail waitresses and valets have enrolled in classes.

Student Kenny Chung is a concierge supervisor at The Linq. Chung started his career at Aria doing event planning but wanted to try something different. He took the school's Art of Concierge class and was hired at Caesars Palace, where he worked for two years. He returned to study hotel operations and landed a front desk job at the Mandarin Oriental.

"I did more soul-searching in the world of hospitality," Chung said. "Guest services define me."

So Chung returned to concierge. His goal is to one day become a director of guest services.

"That's the beauty of hospitality," he said. "There are so many departments."

Students come from all over the globe. This semester, the school drew students from Indonesia, the Bahamas, Spain, Panama, Mongolia, Brazil and the Dominican Republic.

At an event in April, students from all over the country were giving presentations about shadowing hotel professionals.

Most were new to the profession, but others, such as Alyson Lyden, were there for professional development. Lyden is director of operations at DiVine Events in Las Vegas. She moved here from New York a year ago and wanted to strengthen her skills and make new contacts.

Brittney Von Elling, who will earn an executive diploma in August, came from Kansas to study at the school with friend Kim Ivie.

"I researched all the schools, and this one had the best fit, so I decided to go for it," she said, adding that she would like to remain in town to work in sports or events management.

Megan Kinkade, originally from Dallas, was a Strip performer for seven years and is studying wedding planning. She hopes to work at a country club or wedding chapel.

"The school is good at motivating you to do what you want to do," Kinkade said. "They're ready to help."

Contact reporter Kristy Totten at ktotten@reviewjournal.com or 702-477-3809. Find her on Twitter: [@kristy_tea](https://twitter.com/kristy_tea).

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Spirits Preserve, Las Vegas

Agriculture, Technology...

Wednesday, May 14, 9:00 am
Las Vegas Springs Preserve Desert..., Las Vegas

The Patriot Run

Saturday, May 24, 8:00 am
The Patriot Run, Las Vegas

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