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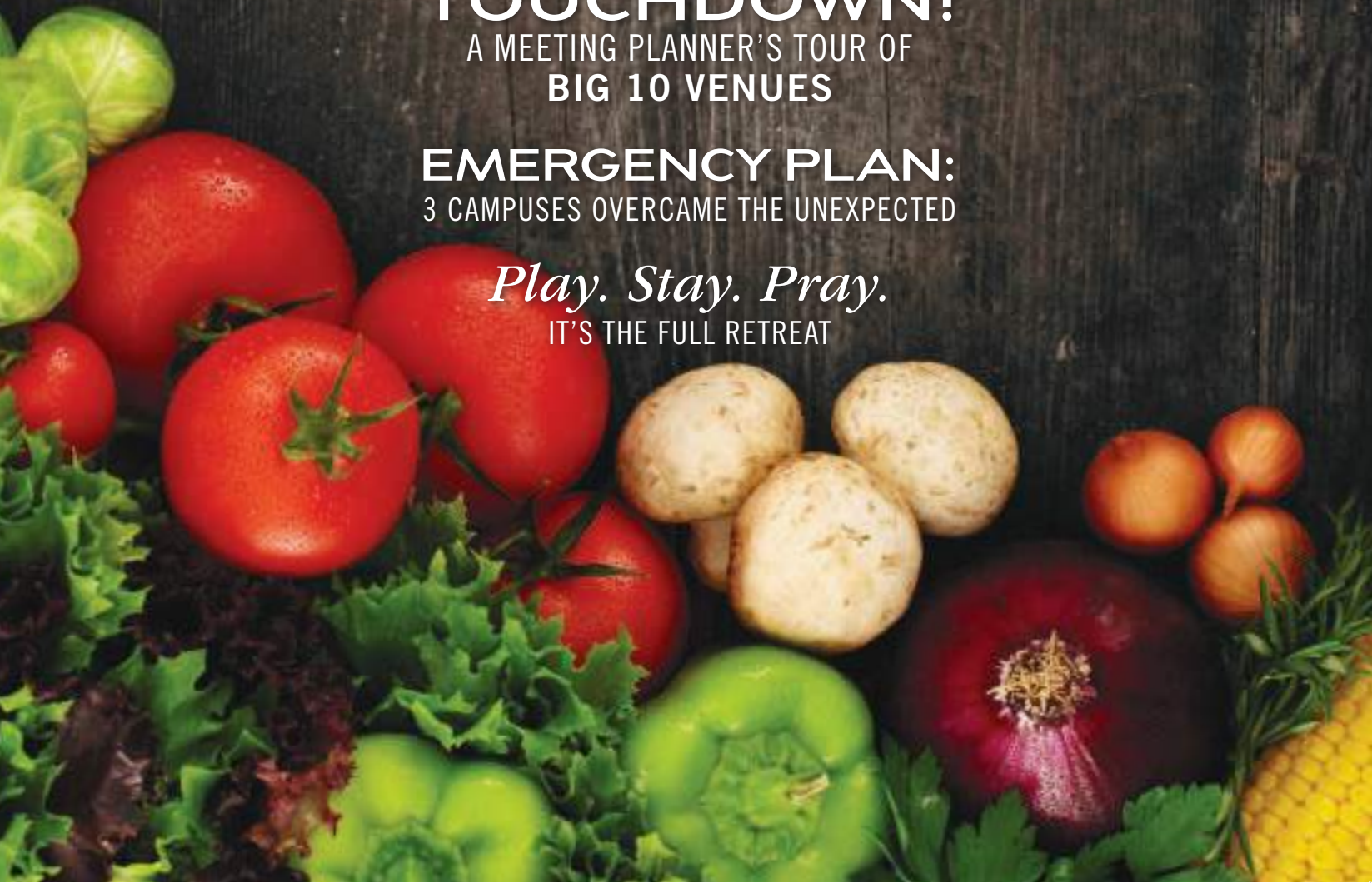
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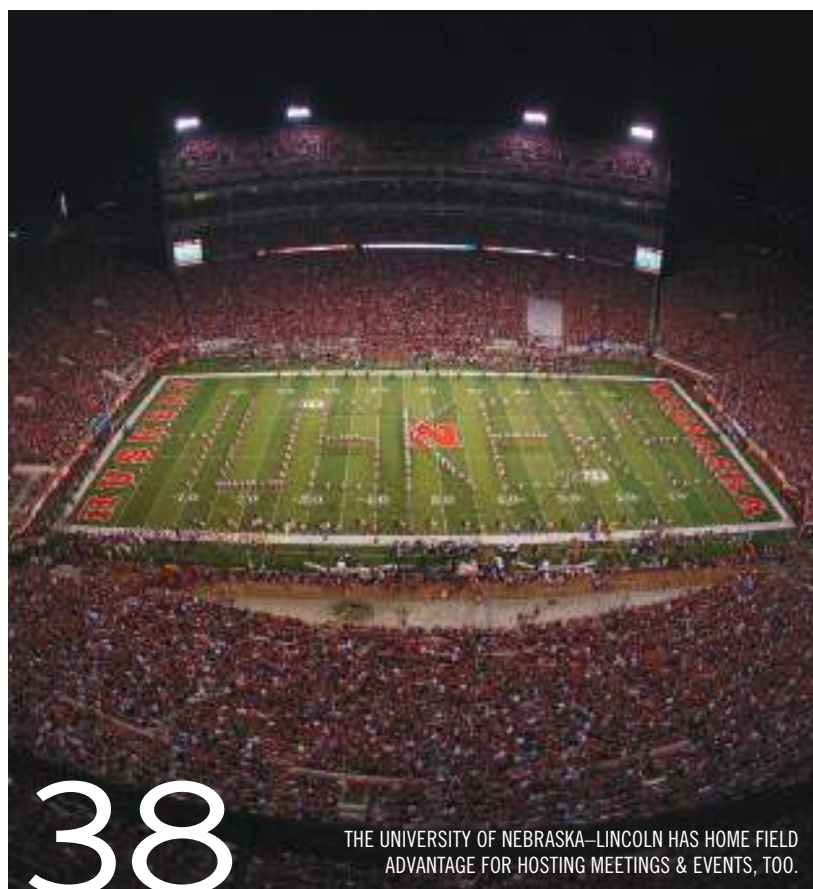
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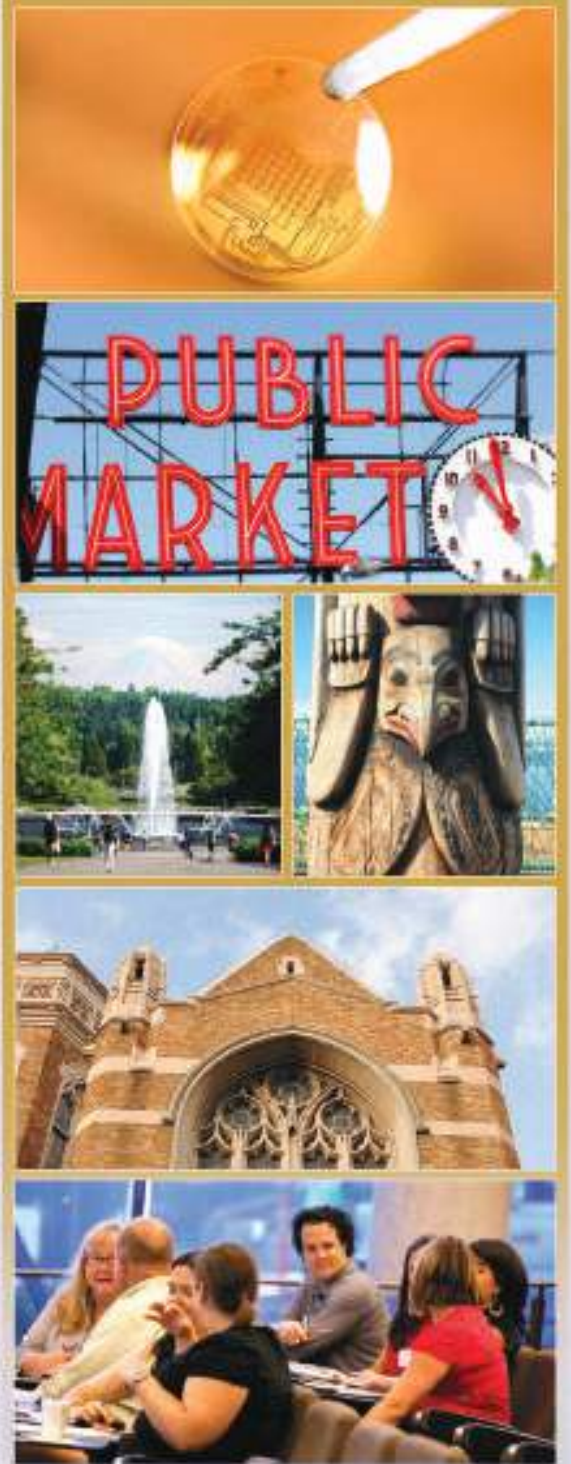
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PUBLISHER'S LETTER



WHEN IT COMES TO EMERGENCIES, it's only human to think of the worst-case scenario. It's why we have anxiety about emergency rooms, purchase emergency insurance coverage and even prepare emergency toolkits with our families for when severe weather hits. As a planner you know you can't always plan for things like natural disasters and health outbreaks, but sometimes—in the best-case scenarios—leaders come forward who are quickly able to think of a Plan B to find the happy ending in the midst of chaos.

That's exactly what we discovered in our cover story, "In Case of Emergency," which details the stories of how three campuses dealt with the unexpected and provided shelter and safety for visiting conference groups. From handling the Boston Marathon Bombing to a tornado in normally quiet Arizona and a norovirus outbreak on the East Coast, each staff pooled their resources together and went above and beyond to make sure their guests felt safe, reassured and could find some semblance of order to complete the mission they had set out to accomplish when booking their meetings and events.

Really, it should come as no surprise that colleges and universities tend to be more than equipped to deal with any of these incidents. They are responsible for housing, feeding and caring for thousands of students on a daily basis, which means they have developed successful communications, security and disaster preparedness plans "just in case." Campuses have clinics and infirmaries on-site; the university my oldest son attends even employs a larger police force than the town he grew up in. Because of this, none of what happened in any of these scenarios threw anyone for a loop. They all dealt with it calmly, quickly, professionally and dare we say heroically.

While there are many inherent bonuses to booking with colleges and universities, perhaps this is one of the most important. Knowing your attendees are safe is paramount, and it's one less thing you will have to worry about when you have a strong, cutting-edge team behind you with well-tested plans to deal with absolutely anything. In this day and age you can never be too prepared—these campuses have taught us just that.

Michele Nichols, Founder
Unique Venues

A photograph of the Yale University Gothic Revival tower at sunset. The tower is a tall, stone structure with four prominent spires at the top. The sky is filled with warm, orange and yellow clouds, and the sun is low on the horizon, casting a golden glow over the scene. In the foreground, the roof of a building with a blue-tiled roof is visible. The text "Create your Yale experience." is overlaid in a white serif font, with "Yale" in a larger, bolder font.

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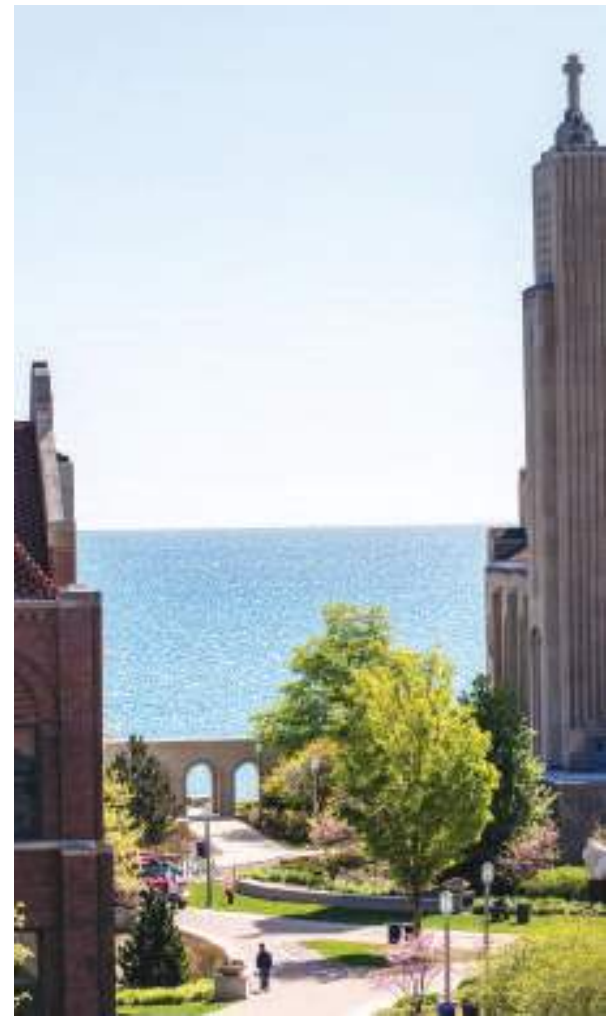


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It all started with “Serial.” Suddenly everyone was hooked on podcasts when WBEZ premiered the debut episode of the real-life crime drama in October 2014. It won a Peabody Award in the spring and was soon confirmed for two more seasons, something unheard of for a syndicated audio program. When podcasts are well done, like “Serial,” they can be just as suspenseful and engaging as television or a documentary—and with its convenient, listen-to-it-anywhere format on any smart device, it becomes radio 2.0 for the new century.

Busy professionals have it hard enough setting aside important time to spend with family, let alone finding two hours to watch a movie. Podcasts circumvent that issue with multi-tasking entertainment you can listen to while occupying your time with another must-do activity like driving, running, hiking or sitting through a long flight. Podcasts can also be informative, allowing you to absorb information while also getting away from your laptop, which is good for your brain and overall health. Here are some of my favorite podcasts for work, life and balance.



Work:

Grammar Girl Quick & Dirty Tips

Here's a fun and easy way to improve your business writing. If you still get stuck on there/they're/their, get increasingly irritated with commas or just want to learn better syntax, this podcast gives you short and easy instruction on all the English grammar rules from accredited editor and technical writer Mignon Fogarty.

Life:

Stuff You Should Know

Ever wonder how individuals see color, why junk food is so irresistible, how the FDA actually protects Americans or how anesthesia can work without actually harming you? Leave it to Josh Clark and Charles Bryant of HowStuffWorks.com to help you figure out all of life's mysteries.

Balance:

WTF With Marc Maron

When you need something a bit more lighthearted than “Serial” turn to comedian Marc Maron. His regular program is like the late night of podcasts featuring hysterical interviews with Ben Stiller, Judd Apatow, Aziz Ansari, Zach Galifianakis, even Conan. In episode 613 he interviewed President Obama in his garage studio. [uv](#)

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Unions at the Union: How to Say 'I Do' to This Unique Setting


Wedded bliss is possible even from the planning stage when you work with the right venue for a dream day scenario. Though a student union on a college campus might not be the first spot you think of for your betrothed clients, it provides a lasting impression thanks to flexible space and economical pricing. Here are three tips that will have you saying, 'I Do.'

TAKE THE COLLEGE TOUR: As a general rule, campuses are all different in terms of layout and the variety of spaces available in a student union, which can be abundant. So you'll want to know all of your options prior to booking—such as choosing an indoor ballroom or perhaps an outdoor patio (or a combination for ceremony and reception). The great thing about student unions is that space is almost always flexible, allowing for an intimate gathering in a smaller room to a lavish, 500-person affair in a ballroom.

GET THE STUDENT RATE: The cost of having a wedding on campus is significantly less than choosing a resort or more traditional option since, here, rental fees are more affordable and you often have your choice of catering vendor. At University of Central Oklahoma we also offer discounts for alumni in keeping with the 'family' tradition, so check with your venue to make sure you take advantage of all cost-saving measures at your disposal.

UNDERSTAND EXPECTATIONS: Working with a college or university to host your wedding can require some give and

take. Though our student union is open year-round for ceremonies and receptions, sometimes that means students can be using other parts of the facility, so scheduling with as much notice as possible gives us a chance to work around that. There are also some schools that can be 'dry' campuses so check their alcohol policy first. The biggest benefit of booking at a student union though can be the inherent flexibility, such as the option to choose your own outside vendors instead of being tied down to a preferred list. We are always striving for customer service and will help out in any way we can, including taste tests if you do choose in-house catering.

The Nigh University Center at the University of Central Oklahoma is a popular choice for a wedding venue with availability year-round and more than 9,000 square feet of flexible space inside the newly renovated Grand Ballroom with tall ceilings, exquisite chandeliers and elaborate window treatments. Other options include more intimate spaces, like the Heritage Room with a fireplace, and an outdoor terrace overlooking the on-site Broncho Lake. 



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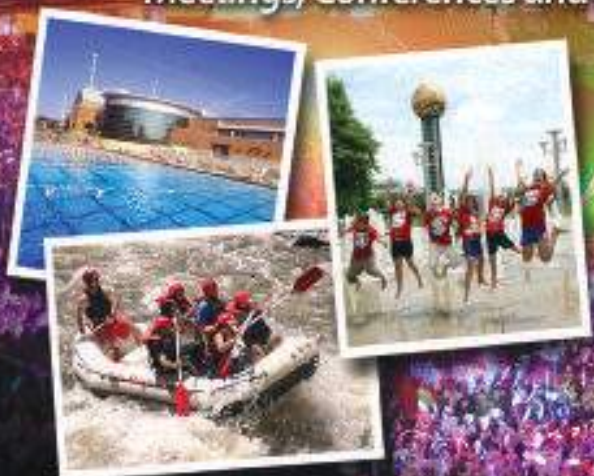
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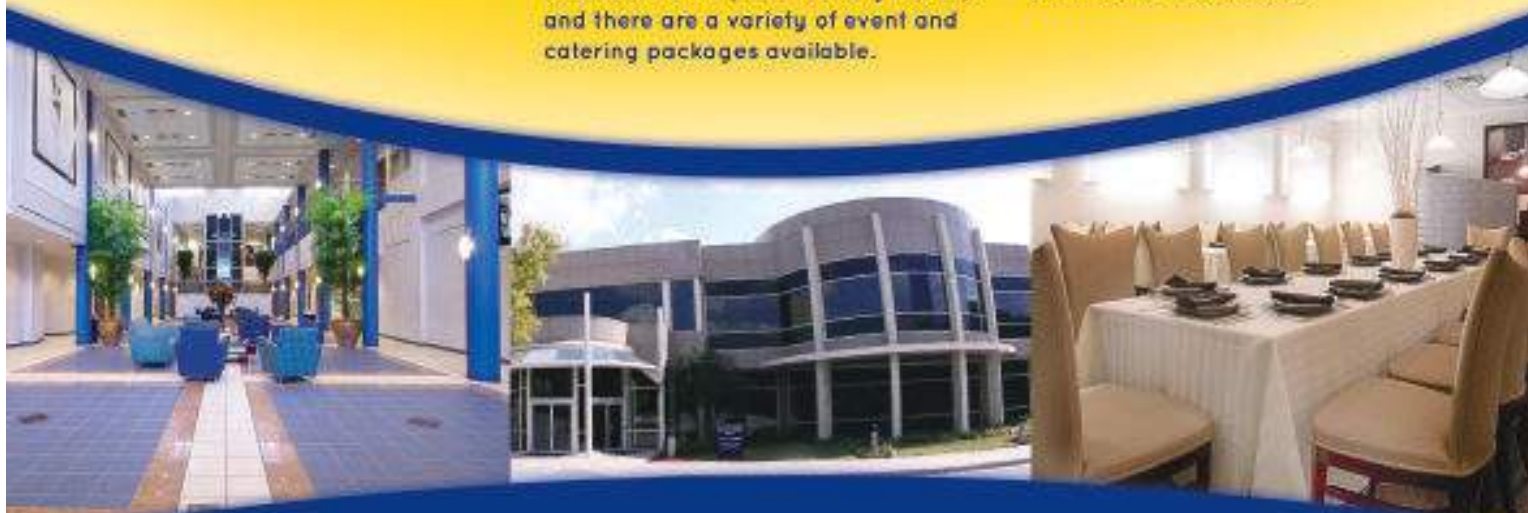
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Braised Oxtail Stew

Courtesy of Saint Peter's University, Jersey City, NJ

The diversity within the kitchen at Saint Peter's University is celebrated in this recipe that recognized cook Lila Solomon during Women's History Month. Solomon drew on her Caribbean heritage when she decided to feature this dish that's perfect to warm up to in the fall months, too.



INGREDIENTS:

- ½ cup all purpose flour
- 1 Tbsp. sweet paprika
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. freshly ground pepper
- 6 lbs. lean oxtails, cut into 1-inch pieces
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 3 cups beef stock
- ¾ cup red wine
- 2 28-oz. cans plum tomatoes
- 1 large onion, diced
- 3 ribs celery, diced
- 8 fresh thyme sprigs
- 3 scallions, chopped
- 2 large carrots, peeled and cut into ½-inch rounds
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped (for garnish)

TO PREPARE:

1. Wash and pat dry the oxtails.
2. Mix together the flour, paprika, salt and pepper. Then dredge the oxtails in the flour mixture, shaking off the excess.
3. In a large skillet, over medium high heat, heat the oil. Working in batches and being careful not to crowd the skillet, brown the oxtails on all sides. Transfer the oxtails to a large dutch oven or soup pot.
4. In the same skillet, add the onions, celery, garlic and thyme and sauté until the onions are tender and begin to brown (about 5 minutes). Stir in the plum tomatoes.
5. Add the red wine to deglaze the pan and stir up all the browned bits on the bottom of the pan. Add this mixture to the oxtail meat in the dutch oven.
6. Add the beef stock and bay leaves to the skillet and bring to a boil for 5 minutes. Add this mixture to the dutch oven.
7. Gently stir all ingredients that are in the dutch oven and simmer, partially covered, for 2½ hours.
8. Add the scallions, carrots and Worcestershire sauce and continue to cook for 30 minutes or until the oxtails are very tender and the meat is falling off the bones.
9. Season to taste with salt and pepper and sprinkle with the fresh parsley to serve. (Serve over white rice if desired.)

Serves approximately 6 

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CLIFF NOTES

happy hour

Southern-Kissed Strawberry Sweet Tea


Courtesy of Springfield College, Springfield, MA

Springfield College prides itself on creating unique, colorful and flavorful menus that incorporate seasonal offerings, such as celebrating the last strawberries of late summer and early fall with this recipe.

INGREDIENTS:

6 cups	washed strawberries
3	family-size tea bags
2.5 cups	sugar
1/2 cup	fresh lemon juice
	zest of 2 oranges

TO PREPARE:

1. Boil 2 gallons of water.
2. Steep all the tea bags for about 15 minutes. Pull the tea bags out, and while the tea is still hot, pour in the sugar.
3. Take the orange zest and whisk into your tea.
4. Allow to sit a couple of hours in the fridge, then blend the lemon juice into the tea.
5. Muddle strawberries in a bowl (or put in a blender).
6. Whisk together in your tea and serve ice cold over crushed ice. *Makes 16 servings.* 

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WHAT'S TRENDING

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

PRAY. PLAY. STAY.

For religious and meditative retreats, campuses provide a trinity of features, accommodations and activities that allow groups a chance to better reflect.

Maybe it's divine intervention or just a sign of the times, but the faith-based meeting and event industry has become one of the largest growing communities in recent years. The Religious Conference Management Association (RCMA) hosted record numbers at their 5th annual Emerge Conference in January with 1,300 attendees that gathered to continue the conversation about how to best meet the needs of their groups. As more planners in this market look for affordable, variable options for religious and meditative retreats, it turns out many are putting their faith in college and university campuses.

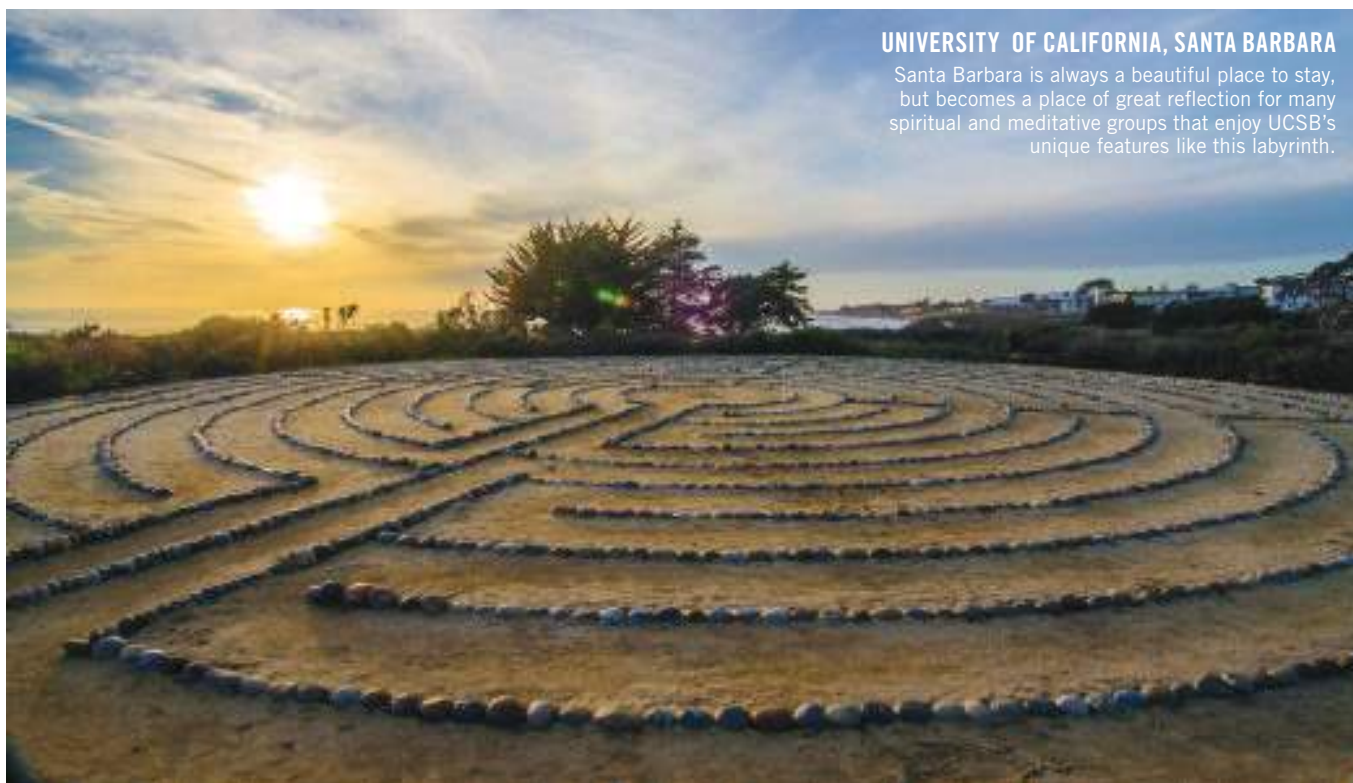
"In recent years we have received more interest in meditation and spiritual groups and people adhering to more of the renewal-type program," says Whitney Morris, CMP, assistant director of conference services at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Planner Nancy Treharne had heard about the university's reputation and reserved spaces for a 10-day retreat for 63 people that included lectures, meditation, movement and group processing. "We greatly appreciated the beautiful natural environment, the quietude and

privacy, the spaciousness of the grounds and even the birdsong," she says of booking UCSB for the first time, noting site choice for these types of functions is "fundamental to the experience of the entire program."

There's also the cost savings that becomes a motivator for largely non-profit groups like these. "Though Santa Barbara is a beautiful place to stay in the summer time, hotels can be very expensive, and so we really can offer a lot at a very affordable price," says Morris, noting the launch of a room and board package that includes lodging, dining, parking, wireless Internet and airport shuttles.

As Morris has found with some of



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

Santa Barbara is always a beautiful place to stay, but becomes a place of great reflection for many spiritual and meditative groups that enjoy UCSB's unique features like this labyrinth.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA - SANTA BARBARA, BISHOP'S UNIVERSITY.



BISHOP'S UNIVERSITY

The Quebec campus has hosted a number of large religious-based conferences that the planning staff manages with a bit of creative thinking.

the 350-person church congregations that have booked with her, religious-based visitors can often be large, all-encompassing groups. That might be overwhelming for more traditional venues, but campus buildings are innately equipped to handle large masses, says Martine Couture, conference coordinator, sales and marketing at Bishop's University in Quebec, Canada.

"We do have everything on-site to accommodate these large numbers, including bedrooms, cafeterias, meeting rooms, chapels and a lot of [outdoor space]" she says. In 2015 alone, Bishop's has hosted five religious-based groups including the 700-person Couples For Christ and a 895-person gathering celebrating the founding of the Christian Cursillo Movement in Quebec, which presented some logistical challenges that Couture's team handled in stride.

"With such a large number of people we had to do things a bit differently," she says. Planner Ginette Robidas reserved one of the university's arenas and then Couture recommended splitting the group into two. While one went to the chapel and an accompanying labyrinth maze, another enjoyed lunch; once finished, the two switched courses so everyone could participate in all activities. "Bishop's was great because



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WHAT'S TRENDING

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

everything was in place so we didn't have to move [all those people] from one site to another for any of the meals or accommodations," admits Robidas who also says the grounds of the campus "allowed people to relax in between the workshops and to walk around safely."

In addition to the unique labyrinth, Bishop's also has an observatory for reflective time and a sports center with outdoor and indoor pools, a dance studio and gymnasium for a continuation of any wellness objectives. "We also work closely with our tourist organization to propose activities and make arrangements," says Couture who agrees with Morris' statement that "these groups come with their own agenda so we are more often than not the logistical coordinators to accommodate all of their needs."

That was certainly the case Dan Kennedy found when hosting an international canon law conference at Washington D.C.'s Catholic University of America where he works as the associate director for conferences and Pryzbyla Management. The university is the only one in the country that has a canon law program and so officials from all over the world converged for the summit, which provided quite the language barrier. "We had a vendor come in that translated all the presentations into English, Italian and Spanish. We had booths set up complete with soundproof walls where translators could work, and then participants wore headsets to pick up the language they needed."

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

The university's Pryzbyla Building is just one venue where large groups can meet and enjoy modern amenities though the campus also has chapels and more traditional options, too.

Special requests like that don't happen often, says Kennedy, but since the university is affiliated with the Catholic Church they do have the advantage to coordinate things like setting up theology professors as speakers or providing meat-free meals during the Lenten season for regulars such as Catholic Charities and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

However it's not a requirement to be Catholic (or even part of a religious group) to meet here, and Kennedy says there are other services available for any faith-based organization that comes to CUA. "When we had the Nostra Aetate Conference, we set up a prayer room because there were entities that identified as Muslim and needed a space for regular reflection," he says as just one example.

Of course the venue's affiliation with the Church does provide some restrictions. Kennedy's team does their research to look up any potential business before confirming their visit. "We look at what a group's mission is, and we have [been unable to host] some groups for anything that would go against

Catholic teachings."

For now though CUA's biggest conference challenge remains space constraints. "Our business is up 40% from last year and so we are still working on where to put everybody," he says lightheartedly with the notion that, like most campuses, CUA is ready and willing to work miracles for the planners who need them. **UV**

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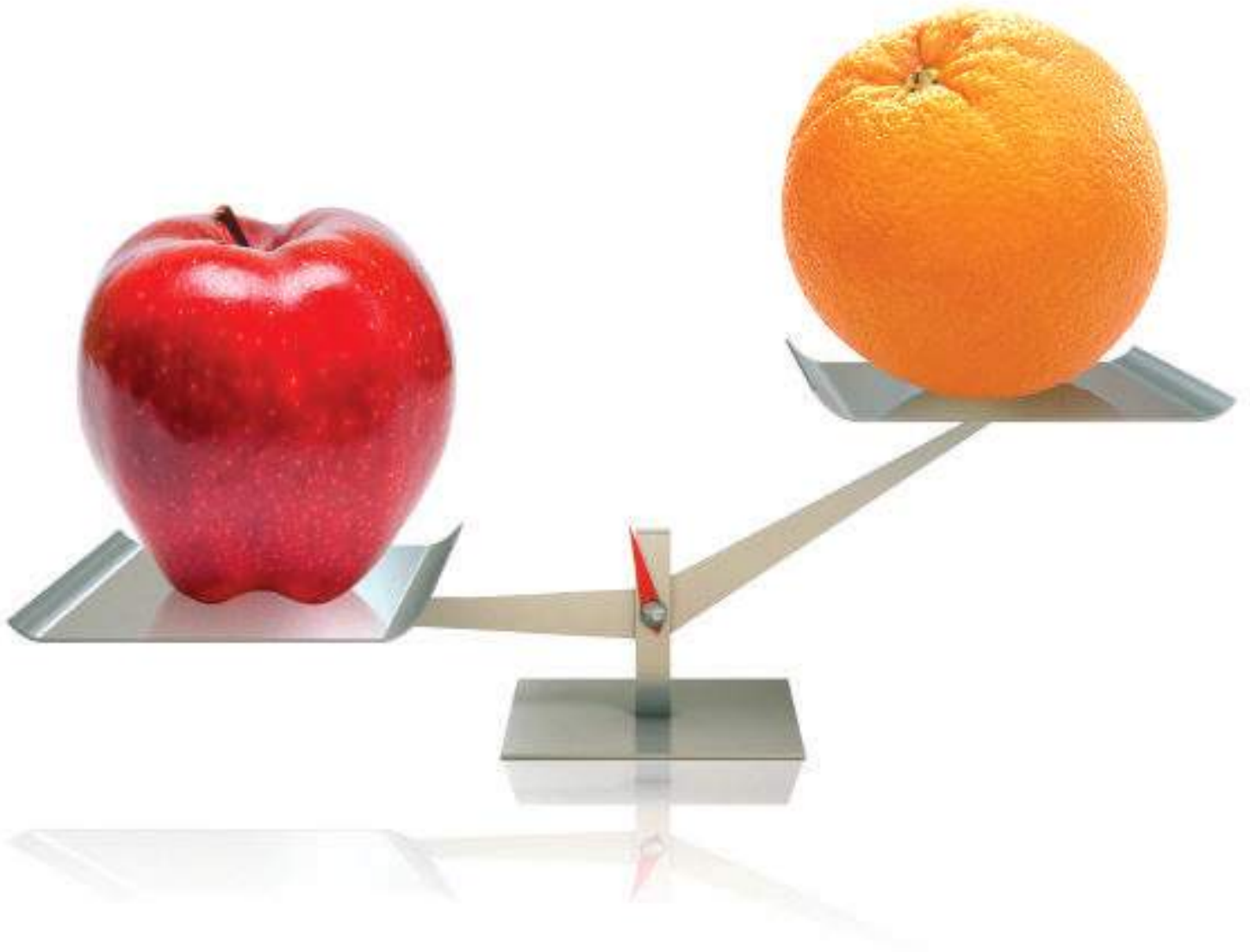
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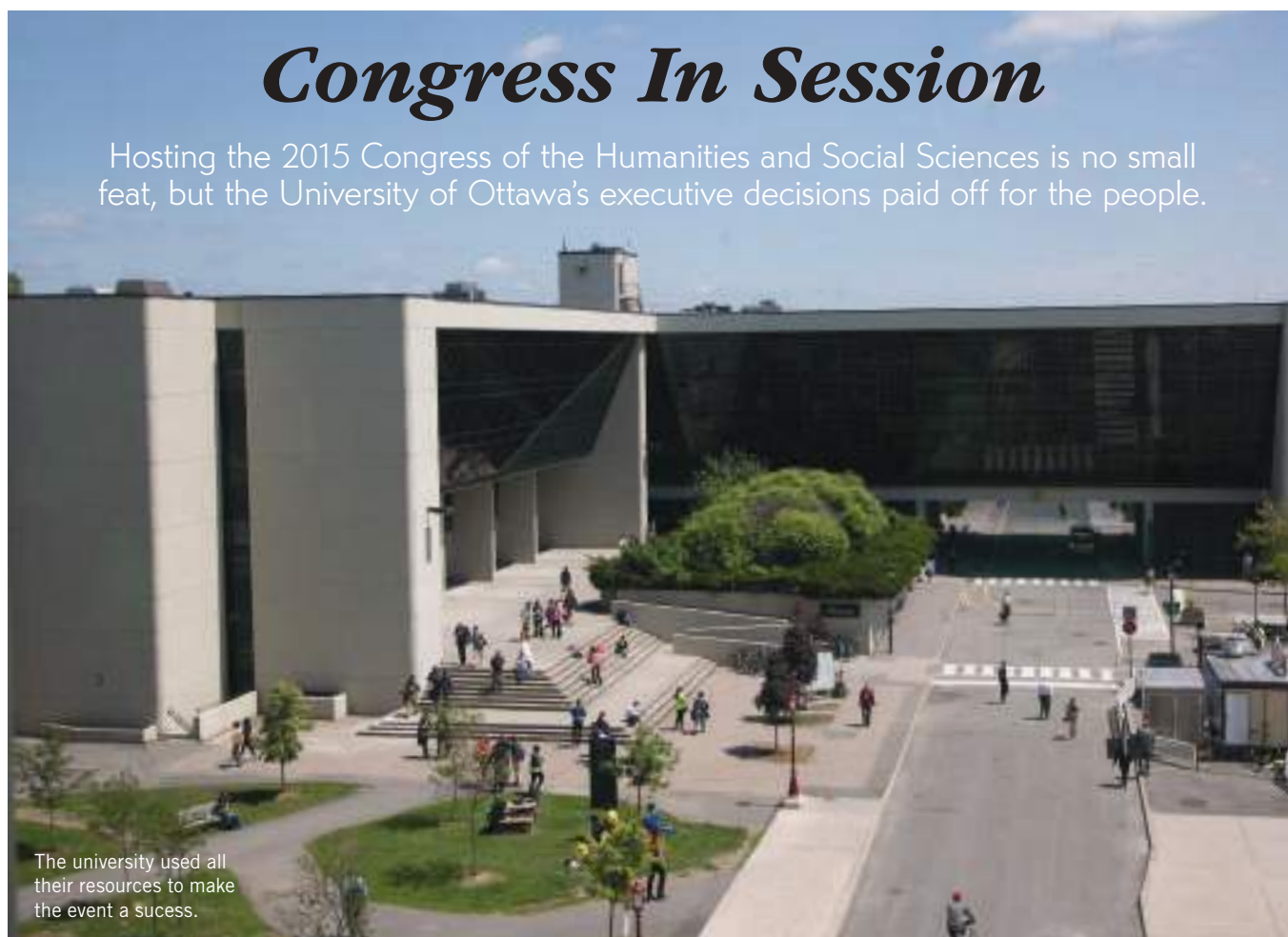
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THE MAIN EVENT

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

Congress In Session

Hosting the 2015 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences is no small feat, but the University of Ottawa's executive decisions paid off for the people.



The university used all their resources to make the event a success.

When the University of Ottawa hosted the 2015 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences in late May and early June, the organizing team found it to be quite the numbers game. Nearly 9,000 delegates from 69 distinct academic associations took part in 2,400 sessions over 7 days—the largest multidisciplinary academic gathering in the country.

“It was a huge logistical puzzle to meet everyone’s needs,” admits Monique Roy-Sole, communications officer for the university’s Office of the Vice President, Research. That was especially true when it came time to figure out room allocation for the 250 spaces needed daily for smart sessions that linked up the country’s leading academics, researchers, policy-makers and practitioners. “It took 500 hours to piece it together, and we used practically every room on campus from amphitheatres to lobbies,” adds Rafaëlle Devine, logistics coordinator for Congress 2015, explaining two important keys to success. “We used our heads and Excel.”

Devine was a special hire by the university in 2014 to help facilitate scenarios exactly like these as the planning sessions picked up speed in the final year. It was back in 2011 when the university had discovered it was awarded the hosting duties

for the 84th annual Congress (held on a different campus each year), and from the get-go things were in motion.

An organizing committee was assembled of about 30 people from each department on campus, such as food services, residences and protection services and facilities, and representatives visited previous conferences in 2012, 2013 and 2014 to see how other universities managed the huge undertaking. Monthly meetings were arranged at first with weekly frequency as the Congress grew closer, which was key “because in every meeting there were deadlines for things to be accomplished,” says Roy-Sole. “Each time we met we could see the progress and make sure everyone was engaged.”

One of the biggest challenges was working around the university’s cafeteria that had been under construction, but Devine says the organizing committee had a workable solution. “We put

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA.

CONGRESS 2015 BY THE NUMBERS

8,900 people registered (not including family members that came along)

69 social science and humanities associations held their respective annual conferences on-site

300 or so volunteers were recruited, many of them students, who put in 60 hours of volunteer work

250 meeting rooms were reserved each day

5,400-plus research papers were presented

500 hours were needed to schedule 2,400 sessions

450 hours were needed to fill catering and audiovisual requirements

770 catering requests were honored and 24,000 total appetizers were served for the three receptions

3,800-plus overnight stays were booked at University of Ottawa residences



For nearly 9,000 registered individuals (above), a popular feature was food and beer tents.

together an oversized beer tent and included four food kiosks inside plus the wine and beer service. We also added two food trucks and a café in the residence commons so participants could eat when they woke up.”

Having the large beer tent also became a lifesaver during each of the three evening receptions. “We had organized an area based on the previous year’s attendance, which varied from 300 to 650 people. But the receptions this year turned out to be very popular with up to 1,000 attendees on one night,” says Devine. When the tent was full after 15 minutes she and her team had to think fast and converted the beer tent into the reception area.

University of Ottawa had some experience in hosting large-scale conferences before, most recently as the site of 2009’s ACFAS, a francophone academic conference, which they applied to organizing the 2015 Congress. One of the main benefits the campus could offer attendees, in fact, was their bilingual operation.

“We are in a unique position because we are a fully bilingual university, which is not always the case with every host,” says Roy-Sole. “So any official documents for Congress, from

a press release to an ad or any publication, all were automatically translated into both English and French. It was a huge amount of work but seemed to be very appreciated.” As were the accessible bus routes, day camps and child minding for the delegates’ children and all the activities such as culinary adventures and tours of the Canadian archives that the team intuitively arranged.

“Organizing an event is usually always the same recipe,” says Devine, “but as it grows larger, you need to bring more patience and add in more time. If you do everything too quickly you’ll miss the details that will be a big deal later on.” **uv**

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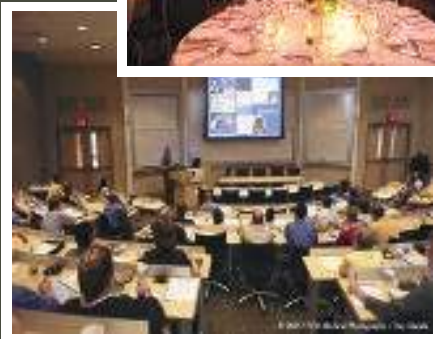
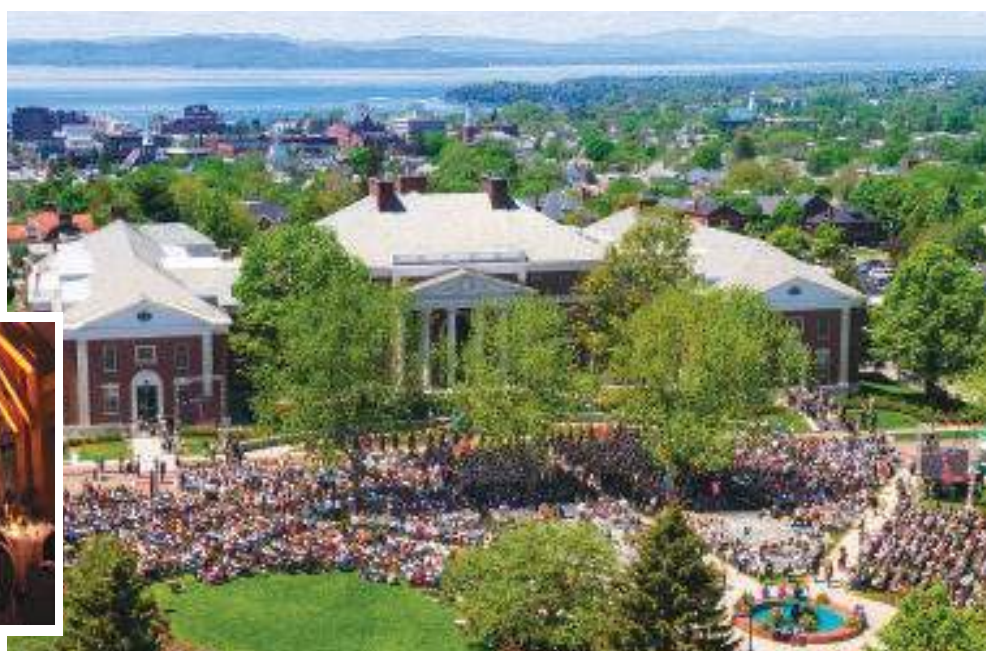
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COLLEGE ROAD TRIP

BY SELENA FRAGASSI



TOUCHDOWN!

Big 10 Conference schools score big points for their meeting and event capabilities, too. Here's your homecoming tour.

As everyone heads back to school this fall, so does *Unique Venues Magazine*. We take a homecoming tour of some of the Big 10 Conference schools that are at the top of their game for meetings and events with award-winning dining, on-site hotels and conference centers, revamped student unions and even some new stadium features for groups. Game on!

University of Nebraska—Lincoln (Lincoln, NE)

Not only is Memorial Stadium one of the most prominent turfs for game day, but UNL's on-site meeting and event spaces are also a draw for big crowds. "We can fit more than 5,000 people into one of our facilities easily," says Jacquie Hirschman-Eller, conference services manager. "Planners like the fact that we have large spaces for them, too."

That certainly is the case with organizers of an annual Thespian Festival

that hosts up to 4,200 for one week with activities in the university's state-of-the-art Lied Center "that is rather unusual because it has large breakout rooms attached to it," says Hirschman-Eller. There's also an arena-sized community center that seats 8,000 with an in-the-round layout and smaller spaces in traditional classrooms as well as venues within the new Innovation Campus, which has a 400-person auditorium.

Bookings are for summer months only and provide overnight accommo-

dations with an option for hotel-style guest housing. Because everything is centrally located right on campus—which is easily accessible in the heart of the Midwest—it's attractive to academic camps and youth and religious groups who enjoy all the sports the Big 10 university has to offer, including an enormous Rec Center with 14 basketball and 3 squash courts and a rock climbing wall that costs just \$5 per person per week. Says Hirschman-Eller, "There's always an adventure."

University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, MI)

Posing for photos on the trademark 'M' logo in the middle of Michigan Stadium or playing a round of hoops in the university's Crisler Arena are just two of

PHOTO COURTESY OF: UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA - LINCOLN.



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA - LINCOLN

Memorial Stadium isn't the only oversized venue at UNL. The campus also has a variety of meeting spaces for up to 5,000 people that allow planners to bring the team together, too.

the unforgettable activities that can be organized by U of M's Conference & Event Services staff. "What we bring to the table is really more historic," admits Director Mary Bartlett. In addition to the iconic sports facilities that date back at least a century, where guests can rent out VIP lounges, "We also have beautiful historic [student] unions combined with high-tech modern buildings and features," she says.

One of the unions, Michigan League, was just voted one of the 50 most beautiful campus wedding venues by College Ranker and another, the Michigan Union, is a nearly 100-year-old classic venue for professional meetings where JFK once gave his Peace Corps speech. Here, the largest ballrooms can host up to 400 for a seated dinner. History

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COLLEGE ROAD TRIP

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The campus' Michigan Union is a 100-year-old professional facility most famous as the spot where President John F. Kennedy gave his Peace Corps speech.

also comes alive in the on-site Museum of Natural History, just one of 12 museums on campus that can provide a unique setting for up to 125 guests. "We've heard about [groups holding] a 'Night At The Museum' theme with scavenger hunts," says Bartlett.

Most venues and the on-site hotel in the Michigan League are year-round operations while residential halls (with up to 10,000 beds) are available in the summer only, and Bartlett says her staff provides full-service to arrange them. "Because we are so large it can be [difficult] to navigate the entire university so we connect all the dots."

University of Illinois Conferences and Special Events (Champaign, IL)

It's not just the sports teams that are competitive at U of I. The campus also touts award-winning dining with more than a page of accolades from just the past few years, says Krystal Grace, assistant director of conferences and special events. "Dining services has changed so much over the last decade. We now have a registered dietitian who works full-time with students, so we have that available. We encourage groups to eat with us during the year to see what we offer." Group meal passes can be arranged, says Grace, who also notes that the surrounding area has a large number of restaurants. "There really is more than corn in Illinois," she jokes.

In fact, the catering department plays a large role in facilitating events at I-Hotel, a new property near the Fighting Illini's stadium with guest



housing, conference rooms and even a Starbucks inside. Grace's team focuses on the number of summer-only spaces available in residential and dining halls, which are a-plenty for groups as small as 25 and up to 1,350. If you have a group larger than that, "we can set up a satellite location with a live feed," says Grace. She points out facility examples such as the Student Dining and Residential Programs Building opened in

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

U of I shows there's more than corn in Illinois with award-winning dining that has won numerous accolades in just the past few years. As such, group meal passes are popular here.

2010 with 100,000 square feet of dining and meeting space and the Illini Union (with attached hotel) that has bowling, billiards and gaming systems for the off-season, too.

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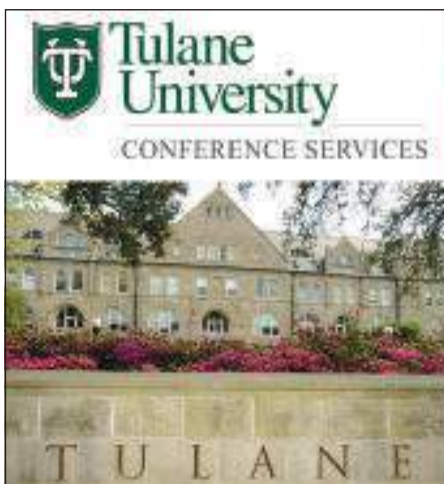
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University of Maryland, College Park (College Park, MD)

As of July 1, 2014, The University of Maryland is the newest addition to the Big 10 Conference, and the campus is making its presence known in a 'big' way. "It's created some opportunities for us," admits Tom Flynn, senior associate director of conference and visitor services. Starting with the former basketball arena, Cole Field House, that will now be the football practice facility. It's currently undergoing renovations "and we're waiting to see the plans for how that facility might be able to be used in the future," says Flynn. Even more exciting is a brand-new, luxury, four-diamond hotel and conference center that will be unveiled by late 2016, the first of its kind on campus. With 296 guest rooms, 43,000 square feet of conference space and a number of restaurants open year-round, "it's really going to change Route 1 around campus," says Flynn.

Currently the Student Union operates as a conference center and can host up

PHOTO COURTESY OF: UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND COLLEGE PARK.



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND COLLEGE PARK

As the newest entrant into the Big 10 Conference UMD is going all out to attract planner fans, too. One option is the scenic Moxley Gardens located near the Riggs Alumni Center.

to 1,000 in the grand ballroom. There's also a ballroom at the Riggs Alumni Center with the nearby Moxley Gardens, and Flynn points out other rentable spaces including the high capacity Byrd Stadium and Xfinity Center where football and basketball are respectively played. "No matter what a planner needs we can find a space for them," says Flynn who recommends a Visitor's Guide of the campus, which is close to Baltimore, Washington, D.C and Annapolis.

University of Minnesota Conference and Event Services (Minneapolis, MN)

The game is always on at the University of Minnesota. In addition to its Golden Gophers home matchups, U of MN also hosted the Vikings the past two summers and looks forward

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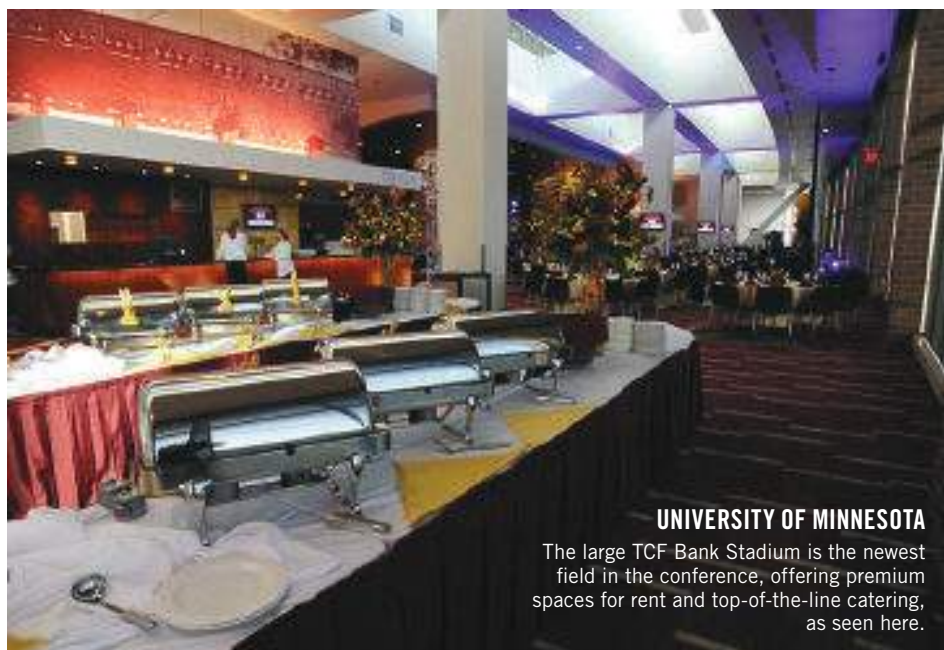
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COLLEGE ROAD TRIP

BY SELENA FRAGASSI



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

The large TCF Bank Stadium is the newest field in the conference, offering premium spaces for rent and top-of-the-line catering, as seen here.



to being the future site of the Superbowl and NCAA's Final Four competition. However, because the university spans over three distinct campuses (one in St. Paul and the other two on opposite sides of the Mississippi River), "it never feels congested when we have a lot of people on-site," says Cari Fealy, director of conference and event services. "We have a lot to offer."

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noting the DQ Clubroom can host up to 800 guests. "They overlook both the field and the downtown skyline and have big fireplaces, bars and flat screen TVs."

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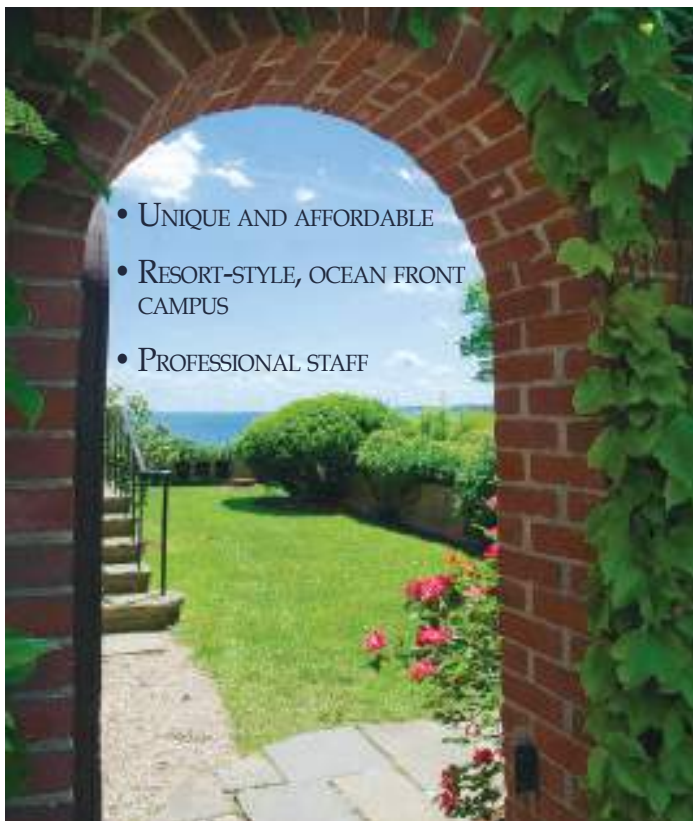


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Natural disasters, health scares and security breaches can happen to any group, anywhere. Here's how three campuses reacted to the unplanned with Plan B to avert crises.

By Selena Fragassi





The 2013 Boston Marathon Bombing hit close to home for an international group convening at Simmons College in the Fenway neighborhood.

HANDLING A BOMBSHELL

While the rest of us were watching the events of the Boston Marathon Bombing unfold on television in April 2013, personnel at nearby Simmons College in the Fenway neighborhood were in the heart of the action. They themselves were racing around to attend to the needs of 100 international Fulbright Scholars that had arrived April 17, just days after the initial bombing on the 15th and right before the manhunt for the two suspects got underway leaving the city in a perpetual lockdown.

"The scholars were coming from such great distances and were already in the country when the bombing occurred," says College Chief of Police Sean Collins of the large group of adult women who had taken part in the four-day academic foreign exchange program sponsored by the U.S. State Department. There was no going back or canceling—"they were already en route."

Instead, Collins went to work like he always does to serve and protect. The

school had been closed on April 15th in observance of the local Patriot's Day holiday, but when Collins got the call at home to inform him of what was going on in the city, he swiftly moved into action. "I immediately got the emergency response team together and we added additional staff for police and security," he recalls, assembling extra units for the school at large as well as the scholars who were staying in pre-arranged accommodations five minutes away at the Inn at Longwood Medical. "It was quite the thing to divide limited resources and provide police at the hotel site."

Though the group's daily lectures, sessions and even meals that were planned on campus were canceled due to the Boston Police Department's shelter in place order that Friday, the college knew it was their duty to keep the women safe and reassured. "We felt a great responsibility," says Director of Conference and Special Events Nicole Vanderpol. "Some of the women had come from countries where there was a lot of violence and we were concerned with how they would deal with what was going on," especially

with deserted streets and a National Guard presence that made Boston look a bit too familiar for some. Counselors had already been in place to assist Simmons' nursing students that had been in medical tents during the marathon, and Vanderpol started tapping into her connections at the Inn at Longwood Medical to "provide some semblance of order."

She worked with the hotel to essentially swap venues. "They were already providing sleeping accommodations, and since the other groups that had previously reserved spaces had canceled due to the lockdown, the hotel had meeting rooms open that accommodated the Fulbright sessions," says Vanderpol, who also asked the property to provide daily meals. "They were incredibly gracious, and they pulled all their resources together since they weren't planning on feeding 100 people." The hotel also pulled in large screen TVs to keep the women entertained until they were able to return to campus and finish out the activities before departing on their original flights on April 21st.

Mary Shapiro, professor of practice in the school of management who worked closely with the scholars, says the non-stop communication between faculty, the school and the visitors was a huge plus and applauds the students who used the opportunity to spend the down time talking and building relationships, so when they came back to school there was a cohesive bonded group. "That allowed us to quickly rebuild the curriculum on the days we lost together," she says, recalling "they put on a variety show and performed for each other." Adds Collins,

"They were even doing karaoke at one point, and one of my guys who was there started singing with them."

Vanderpol credits Collins and his crew's attentiveness and compassion as well as SCERT (Simmons College Emergency Response Team) for successfully handling what could have been a disastrous situation. "The team communicates with each other extremely well and has worked out the process for whatever emergency may arise," she says. "We are relatively small for a college, so

people know each other here—it's a real community. In these situations you get to see the result of that sense of community in a very positive way." Collins agrees: "Everyone knew these 100 women now belonged to us and became part of our community, and we were going to take care of them."

WEATHERING THE WEATHER



The extent of the damage caused by a microburst that tore through Thunderbird's campus is seen here with one of the many uprooted trees.

with various Executive Education groups, and the staff was on a weekend shift. "It was amazing how quickly the team rallied together and everyone came in on their day off and took action," says Davidson noting that the team met hourly during the first 24-hours to come up with a contingency plan that also included delivering flashlights, notecards explaining the situation and bottled water to each guest room. "No one cared about their title. They took a broom and cleaned up, and many of us stayed up overnight to ensure the safety of our guests and to answer any questions."

Thunderbird has an emergency call system to alert staff that was employed in this situation while text messages were used to keep the greater community updated. The initial phone call was sent to Thunderbird Facility Director Sam Giusa who then got in touch with managers and department heads to see who could get to campus to assess it. Because power lines were down at the intersection where Thunderbird sits, "many had to park a half mile away and walk or take golf carts over," he recalls, which was a

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When Mother Nature wants to make a bold appearance, sometimes she comes without warning. That is what the staff of the Thunderbird School of Global Management, affiliated with Arizona State University, found out last September when a rare microburst tore through the middle of campus leaving downed power lines, uprooted trees and extensive damage to both buildings and parked cars.

"We have monsoon season July through September so we expect storms mid-afternoon that go away as quickly as they come, but very rarely do we have a true microburst that comes into a general area and does that much damage in Glendale. It literally came out of nowhere," says Patti Davidson, general manager of the on-site Thunderbird Executive Inn & Conference Center. The storm hit at 2:47 p.m. on a Saturday afternoon when the 134-room facility was 90% occupied

continued from page 51

very similar plan of attack for evacuating hotel guests to a nearby Embassy Suites where Davidson had secured room blocks for those wanting to leave campus. “We used truck-mounted diesel cranes and forklifts to move trees out of the way and created a parade of cars to safely get them to the road,” notes Davidson. “For those that didn’t have cars we called a private transport company.”

Some guests opted to stay on campus, faithful that the power would soon be restored. And thanks to Giusa it was just one day later when a 2.5-ton generator arrived with some fortuitous luck. Giusa

had made a previous order for the machine just two weeks prior, which left a generator staged in the Glendale area. It was onsite by 9 p.m. that evening and Thunderbird had power again overnight, before most of the area. “You’d watch the news channels and Thunderbird was the only thing lit up,” he says noting the college was a beacon for the community that needed water or shelter in the interim.

Davidson and her team kept in constant contact with the Embassy Suites and modified a few services such as dining (ordering pastries to make sure they had breakfast for example) by the

time the groups returned to campus Monday. The staff also had to make sure the grounds were safe, covering and coning numerous large pits where trees had been upturned. Thankfully no one was hurt during it all, which left a good impression on the visitors.

“The groups that come to us tend to be from the energy industry and are extremely safety conscious,” says Elena Chavez, director of operations for the Executive Education Department. “It was a concern of ours if we would live up to their standards, but they were very complimentary. The main thing was that they knew what was going on

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KEEPING SICKNESS AT BAY

When the PR office for the University of Maryland, College Park started getting calls from the media, Pat Perfetto knew something was wrong. “They had found out that two buses full of our conference of high school students had taken a detour to the hospital from a planned field trip to downtown D.C. because kids were getting sick.” The year was 2004 and though the campus didn’t know it yet, they were experiencing an outbreak of norovirus.

“Nowadays we hear about outbreaks quite often, and we know how to handle them, but back in 2004 it was less common. We had never been through it before so we were in learning mode and we responded to it very aggressively,” says Perfetto who was then the director of campus guest services and today is the university’s director of conference and visitor services.

First, Perfetto and his team immediately contacted the client who was already taking charge of the matter on the buses and at the local emergency room. Back on-site the campus fire department and health center personnel had set up a mobile response center as

a first line of defense, which acted as a triage for the returning students where they could be evaluated on the spot and immediately taken to the proper medical facilities if it appeared they were sick. “We didn’t want to waste any time but also know there can be a lot of hysteria with students and wanted to make sure to do the proper testing and evaluations,” he said.

While the health crews were handling patients, UMD’s emergency management team was convened and set up a communication plan with the other groups visiting for the summer session. “We wanted to make sure there was transparency and not speculation so we communicated with everyone so they understood what was going on. We verified they weren’t having any health problems and then asked them to stay in their areas while the affected residence hall was under isolation,” recalls Perfetto noting a campus wide e-mail that was sent out with a list of symptoms to look out for and step-by-step instructions for what to do if a person felt ill. “We have a lot of residences that are separate from each other allowing us to isolate the one

where this group was.”

Then it was all hands on deck. “We called all the housekeeping staff in for containment and cleaning,” says Perfetto, noting it’s a large crew since the school has 12,000 beds. “All were briefed and given the proper tools and went to work quickly to sanitize all the spaces the students may have used. When norovirus strikes, it strikes quickly so it’s important to stop the spread as soon as possible.” A 10% Clorox solution was applied to every inch of the residence hall and buses, he says. “If we could reach it, it got treated.” There was also a separate dining area where the potentially infected students could eat solo.

Thankfully the outbreak, which was thought to be linked to a prior field trip site in Arlington, Virginia, happened in early August when most of the student body was still on break. Out of the 1,000 or so visitors, only 100 were impacted and that was from an initial potentially infected group of about 400 people. “Not only was it contained to one group but within the group too,” says Perfetto, estimating the complete

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and were offered options, which were taken care of for them. The storm was not a minor thing but it was a minor inconvenience to the guests because of how it was handled.”

Today, the campus is mostly back to normal. As for an employee’s vehicle that was damaged in the midst of the storm, he says, “We pulled together as family to come up with money to assist them in getting a new car.”

Family is a good word for it, says Davidson. “There was no hesitation or doubt our team would be there to help, with everyone keeping tabs on each other. Constant communication made a good thing come out of bad situation.”



Thanks to quick thinking by management staff, Thunderbird School of Global Management had powered restored before anyone in the Glendale area.



As University of Maryland found, when norovirus strikes it spreads quickly. Through teamwork, the crew was able to stop the spread and contain it to a small population on campus.

impact to be about two to three days, “but very busy days.”

In the face of a crisis, Peretto considers the teamwork a success in getting back to business as usual. There were a few takeaways the team has used in the 11 years since. “One of which was having the proper protocols in place and distributing information correctly so everyone is on the same page,” he says. That meant alerting staff how to direct any media inquiries to the university’s public infor-

mation officer as well as distributing information packets to be filled out before any youth arrived on campus. It includes medical release forms, emergency contact forms and a reference page for the Department of Mental Health and Hygiene. “We now share this up front with the group planners so in the event something like this happens again they have awareness of protocols, requirements and responsibilities—though hopefully it won’t happen again.” So far, so good. **uv**

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FARMED OUT

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It's not just restaurants that are obsessed with local sourcing. Colleges and universities are setting the table with dishes prepared from their own farms and gardens.

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BY SELENA FRAGASSI



THE "LOCAL" MOVEMENT just might be the food fight of this generation. Restaurants in every metro market have now made "farm-to-table," "sustainable" and "locally-sourced" cuisine standard fare. Huge corporations like McDonald's have felt the pressure to come clean about where their ingredients are sourced from (and have actually changed buying patterns to meet demand) and niche stores like Whole Foods have become the national conglomerate of the seasonal farmer's market. In a world where GMOs and preservatives are taboo words, consumers more than ever are conscious of where their food is coming from; and colleges and universities are on the cusp of some pretty fresh ideas.



Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia was one of the first, launching a unique Farms & Fields project in 2009 to offer a campus dining venue that prepared dishes like paninis, pastas and salads solely with local, sustainable and organic ingredients, mainly from the Dining Services Farm at Kentland. The fields are on-site and run by a farm manager who is a joint hire between the university's dining services and horticultural department. When it started in 2009, the plot was a quarter acre and "it's grown every year since," says Rial Carver, sustainability coordinator for VA Tech's dining services. Today the farm is up to 6 acres and, in 2014, it harvested 40,000 pounds of goods for the program.

"As the farm-to-table movement has grown, we have brought more in and spread out the offerings amongst all dining units," says Carver. By 2010, Farms & Fields and other dining centers began to serve meats, including fresh hams, pork loins, beef rounds, ground beef and select cuts of lamb, from an on-site meat processing center managed by the school's Animal Science department. By 2013, VT Dining started to acquire milk products from the Dairy Science department. "In the 2013-14 school year, 12.9% of our food and beverage budget went towards local food purchases," notes Carver, "and we have a goal of 20% by 2020."

Because VA Tech is a land grant university there are deep-rooted ties to the agricultural age, which helps further its local food mission, but it's not just land grant campuses that are stepping up to the plate.

Loyola University Chicago Retreat and Ecology

Campus in Woodstock, Illinois has also been on board with the sustainable movement since 2012 when previous Chef Scott Cummings kicked off the initiative by offering communal farm-to-table dinners open to the public at the 100-acre property that includes gardens, a greenhouse and room for 200 overnight guests year-round. Cummings left his position last year after winning a season of the reality cooking show, "Hell's Kitchen," but his replacement John Schnupp, director of food programs, has continued the idea and added more flourishes for visiting groups such as wine pairings and cooking classes in a demonstration kitchen that opened last spring.

"As people become more educated in the local food movement, programs like ours are becoming a hot ticket," says Schnupp. It's why Loyola includes an informational component with each farm-to-table dinner with presentations by Schnupp for each course (examples include rack of lamb with mustard shallot sauce and lime chicken, curried corn and roasted pepper tacos). and a tour of the grounds by Farm Manager Emily Zach. She explains how produce like lettuce, tomatoes, potatoes and onions are grown and where other items are sourced from, which Schnupp says is always within a 200-mile radius. "In the summer months, when the garden is in full bloom, 100% of the yield gets utilized for conference services and retreat groups, but in the winter we have to subsidize with area vendors. This year we are hoping we can produce more in our greenhouse, which is now operating all 12 months."

"In the summer months, when the garden is in full bloom, 100% of the yield gets utilized for conference services and retreat groups."



Virginia Tech was one of the first campuses to get on board with the farm-to-table movement, launching the Farm & Fields Project in 2009 that provided a dining venue (pictured at top) that served meals solely made with local and sustainable ingredients. Much of it comes from the school's own Dining Services Farm at Kentland, where employees and students cultivate the crops (above, right). A similar program is found at Loyola University's Retreat and Ecology Campus that also grows produce in its own gardens (at left).

The educational aspect is the key to the appeal of farm-to-table meals, says Alex White, chef manager of Benchmark Restaurant at Niagara College in Niagara On The Lake, Ontario. “There’s a nostalgia to food culture, and learning why certain dishes were made because they were efficient or why we used to dry meats at a time when we didn’t have refrigeration is intriguing,” he says noting it goes back to when butcher shops were a standard. “This idea has been around for a long time, it just got away from people. Now with our informational age people are starting to ask questions again.”

White and his team play off the notion by boosting their farm-to-table program with a return to traditional ways of cooking. Though local sourcing has always been the idea behind the college’s dining services—they are in food and wine country after all—he says, “now we are focusing a lot more on whole animal purchasing.” Doing so is financially viable for the college *and* the farmer and makes the food tastier since his team has total control over how the meat is cut and served. It’s also more creative—with cow meat the team can make ground beef burgers and steaks and then braise other parts for meat pies and empanadas. They also do crown chicken using both breasts and assemble their own

bacon, sausage and pork chops. While a lot of the produce comes from Niagara College’s on-site greenhouse, meats are supplied from farms a few hours away, which White admits can sometimes be challenging for large group needs. “Smaller farms can’t produce the volume for that, but that’s when we start using multiple sources. We are supporting the local economy even more that way,” he says.

For logistical reasons like these, Loyola has a “chef’s choice” menu for groups, though Schnupp does provide a catering guide for specific requests.

VA Tech also does up-to-the-minute menus. “At Farms & Fields the menu changes every day,” says Carver. A blog keeps clientele in the loop of selections like the butternut squash lasagna that gets constant comments and praise. “People wait on bated breath for when it’s in season in the fall,” she says. “It’s nice to know our guests can taste the difference of our fresh ingredients and actually prefer it.” [uv](#)

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: NIAGARA COLLEGE.



Benchmark Restaurant at Niagara College is also on the cutting edge of culinary trends using local ingredients and age-old techniques such as whole animal purchasing to create a variety of creative and tasty meals that are popular with students and conference guests.



"There's a nostalgia to food culture, and learning why certain dishes were made because they were efficient or why we used to dry meats at a time when we didn't have refrigeration is intriguing,"

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INDUSTRY UPDATES

news & awards

BY SELENA FRAGASSI



Colorado State Becomes First University to Shine with Platinum STARS

The campus in Fort Collins, Colorado has long been known as one of the most sustainable universities in the nation thanks to 17 LEED certified buildings, programs offering alternative transportation and an Energy Reserve Fund that pays for energy-efficient upgrades to campus buildings. Those efforts have paid off with a new platinum rating from STARS (Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System). Though STARS regularly evaluates 700 campuses across the globe, CSU is the first to receive the platinum distinction, the highest level possible.

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The Great Outdoors Awaits at Western Carolina University

Blue Ridge Outdoors magazine has named the Cullowhee, North Carolina campus the “number one college for outdoor adventure” in the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic region for the second year in a row. The decision cited the university’s outdoor programming organization, called Base Camp Cullowhee, that employs three full-time staff members and 25 students that organize activities in the nearby “playgrounds” of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Pisgah and Nantahala national forests, which includes whitewater kayaking, sky diving, rock climbing, hiking and a regular river clean up. There’s also an additional 2,100-square-foot indoor rock climbing facility and 7-mile multi-use trail system available to nearly 9,000 annual visitors.

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New Intellectual House Is A Native Part of UW Community

A new building at the University of Washington campus in Seattle has been a long-time coming—more than four decades in the making. Called Intellectual House, the 8,400-square-foot multi-service space was built as a learning and gathering spot for Native American students and faculty and is also available to the greater community. It bears a modern Northwest Coast longhouse design, recalling the style of Duwamish homes that once populated the campus grounds. Inside is a gathering space for 500 people, smaller meeting room and large kitchen while outside is an outdoor patio with fire pit where traditional cooking styles are applied. Soon fundraising will begin for a second building with additional space.

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Happy 50th to Rutgers University Inn & Conference Center!

As the sole conference and lodging center in the New Brunswick, New Jersey area, Rutgers University Inn & Conference Center is the pride and joy of the school. As such, the campus is marking its 50th anniversary in a big way with 50% discounts and free

spa services as well as celebrating its highest guest room occupancy in 2014 with a record 14,000 conference visitors, more than 5,000 overnight guests and 260 events. Recent renovations have even further modernized the 21-acre estate, purchased by Rutgers in 1965 from Sydney Bleecker Candler and his wife, Louise Johnson, an heir to the Johnson & Johnson empire. The 20-room Tudor-style manor now features upgraded guest room televisions, window treatments, carpeting, mattresses, bathroom fixtures and refrigerators while the six-room conference center added new computers and audio-visual equipment. Overnight guests also receive complimentary passes to the nearby Cook/Douglass Recreation Center and have access to the university bus system, which traverses downtown New Brunswick.

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*University of British
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Welcomes New Alumni Centre*

In May, UBC Vancouver opened the doors to its latest building, the Robert H. Lee Alumni Centre. Located in the heart of campus, the modern spaces allow for up to 300 guests in theatre-style seating or in rounds of eight. Included are an executive boardroom, welcome centre, classrooms and multi-purpose meeting rooms for workshops and breakout sessions. As part of a leading research university, there's also an abundance of state-of-the-art technology at the centre including specialty audio, video projection, telecommunication services, digital signage and video/web conferencing. It's now open to the public for bookings. UniqueVenues.ca/UBC



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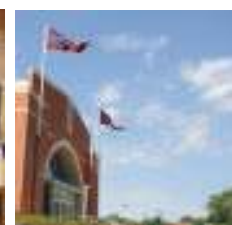


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DEAN'S LIST

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

The Secret Ingredient

Conference and event manager Brent Mann keeps his food background a part of his recipe for customer service—and it's a dish well served every time.

Before Brent Mann took a role as manager of conference and event management at the University of Calgary he was the director of food and beverage service at nearby Mount Royal University. It's here Mann says that he learned how to cook up great customer experiences. "In dining, the main focus is always around exceptional service and it's been my mantra ever since."

His personal passion has now led University of Calgary to become Canada's first certified One-Stop Shop, continuing what he calls the department's 'care factor.' "We've got people who care about the university, care about our department and truly care about the customer experience, and that's made our clients really happy."

Unique Venues: How did you get started in the industry?

Brent Mann: "I was a student at Mount Royal University. I graduated from Recreation and Sport Management in 1996 and then never really left. I landed a job as the coordinator of summer programs after I convinced the Dean of Faculty I was the right person for the job and then worked to develop the Conference Services department before taking the role in food and beverage where I remained until I moved over to the University of Calgary."

UV: What was it about food service that impacted you so much?

BM: "Food is a lot about relationships and it's interesting when you do have positive relationships with people, the impact that can really have. Customer service can sometimes feel like a lost art, so when it came time to rebuild our client service model in the conference department I looked at all of the catering service operations I have worked with and observed, then built a model with our team that shifted our focus to creating personal relationships with customers and clients."

UV: What are some examples of policies you have?

BM: "We have a client promise that the phone is answered every time it rings. Our e-mail has an automated response thanking the client for their inquiry and informing them we will get back to them within three hours, and generally when we do, we already have most of the event mapped out for them. Once you book with us, you also have an 'event partner' for life who will know your preferences and keep in personal contact. It's that idea of relationship building again. We live in the Google age and we don't want any potential customer to go to the next venue on the list."

UV: Do you have any advice for planners who might be interested in booking an upcoming event on a campus?

BM: "I think sometimes there are preconceived notions about what a university events department can do, but it's more than just booking rooms. I would put our team and our planners up against any of the event planning organizations within the city of Calgary. They have a lot of incredible expertise and are ready to get to work." **uv**



BRENT MANN
Manager of Conference and
Event Management at the
University Of Calgary

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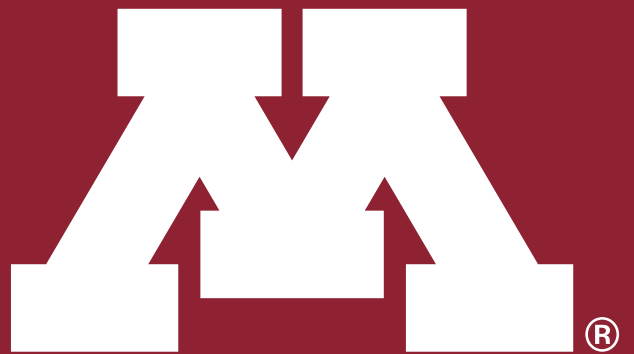
Helping you Connect

The Event Services team at the University of Redlands is ready to take on your next conference, meeting or special event. Our experienced staff will guide through every step of the process, ensuring your needs are met and your expectations exceeded.





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