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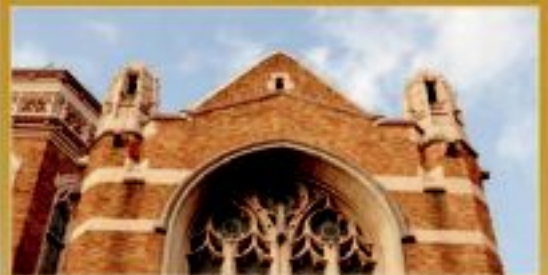
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UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND STUDENTS

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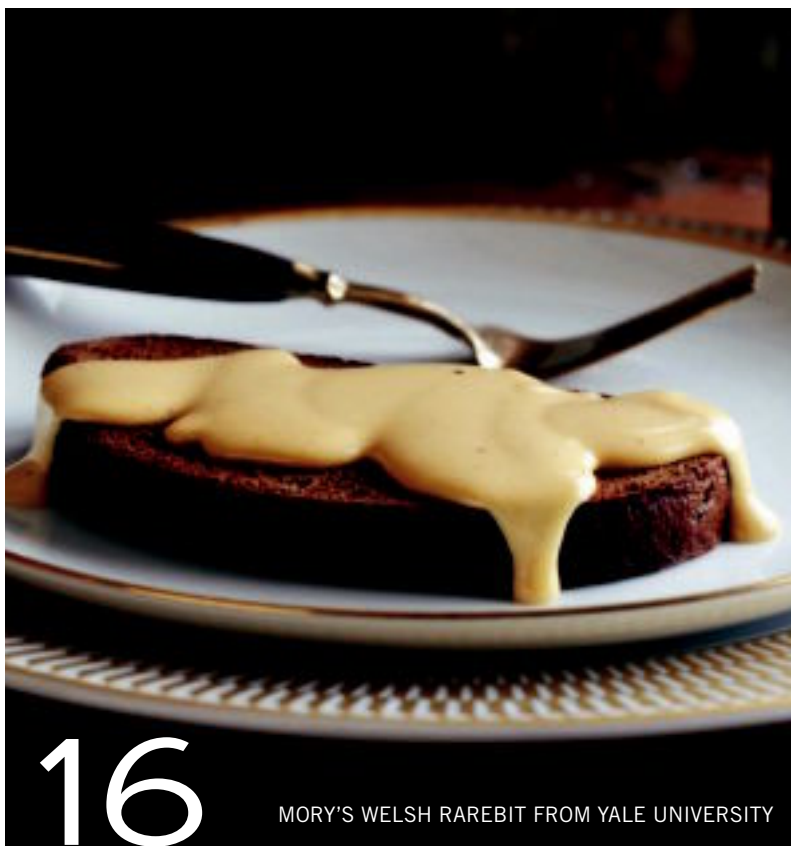
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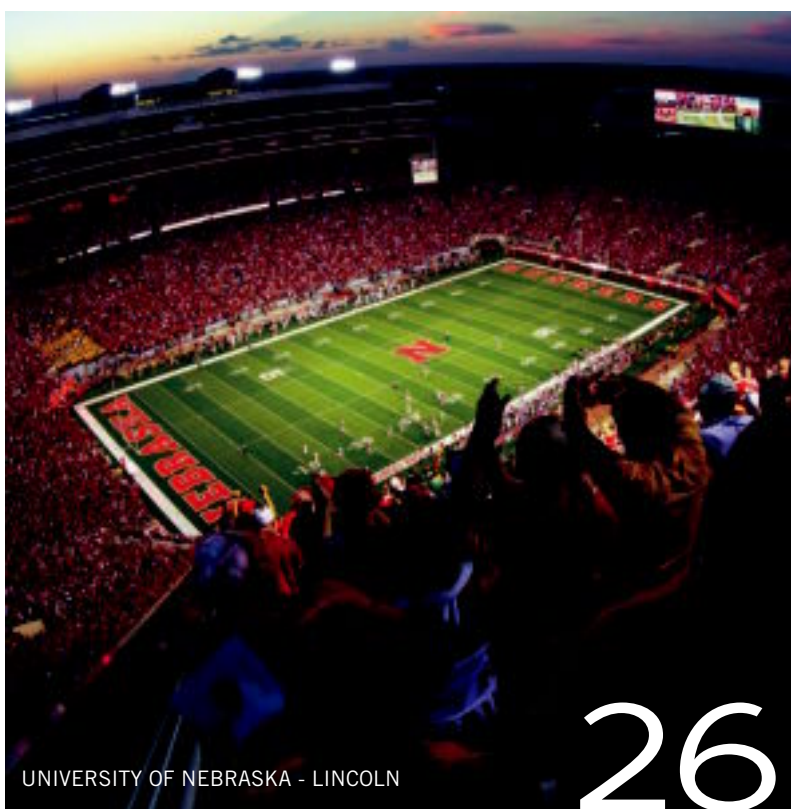
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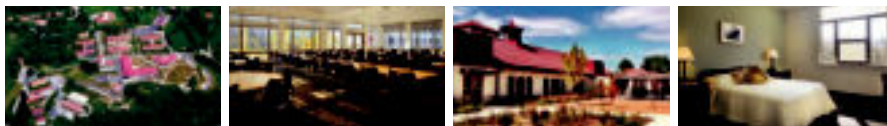
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PUBLISHER'S LETTER



JUST LAST NIGHT, I WAS HAVING DINNER WITH a friend of mine who eats only gluten-free meals. When the waiter came over to take her order, it took the waiter nearly 10 minutes to get it all on paper, listing how she wanted her salmon cooked and the ingredients she needed removed from her salad. The waiter answered her questions with ease and even brought over gluten-free bread fresh from the oven. I was impressed with all the ways the restaurant was trying to accommodate her, but I shouldn't have been. This is the new normal.

In today's Foodie Nation, not only are consumers choosier than ever when it comes to dining out, but the meetings and events industry has also had to quickly sharpen their kitchen tools as well to cater to ever-changing dietary needs and wants.

Colleges and universities are no different—in fact, they have been adhering to these demands for far longer. Just take one look at the demographics on a campus and you'll see students from every state, country, religious affiliation and cultural background, many with specific dietary accommodations that need to be met on a daily basis. These are dining services' customers for eight months every year, and campus food service (much like academics, sports, clubs, area attractions, etc.) help attract and keep students. The fact that campuses deal with this effortlessly year-round makes them all the more prepared to host a group on campus that has unique catering requirements.

Requirements like bringing in a Rabbi for kosher meals, finding specific ingredients from the local Asian market or even allowing a group to bring in their own chef and food. Don't even bother asking a hotel to do that—you and I both know the answer. Flexibility is the plate du jour of colleges and universities, and it's just one more reason why groups should consider meeting here. Because they don't sweat it, even when there are many cooks in the kitchen.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M Nichols". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michele Nichols, Founder
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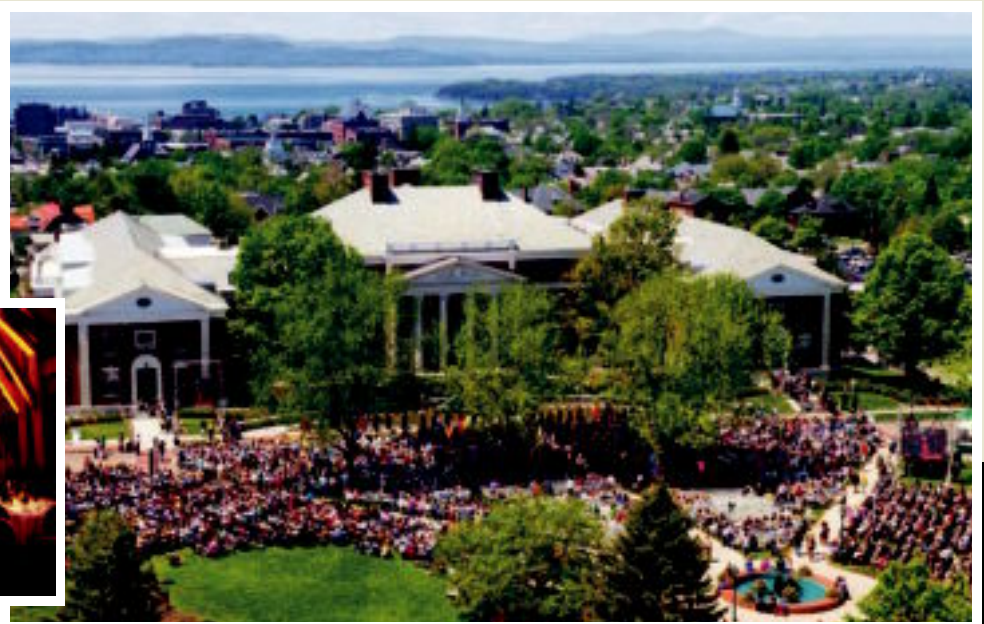
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JOHNS HOPKINS
UNIVERSITY

CLIFF NOTES

power points

✔ **FACT** *or* ✘ **FICTION:** The Real Truth about Meeting on Campus

Do you know the truth—the whole truth—about convening on a college campus? Unique Venues has put together this quick reference list giving you the fact and fiction behind all the myths you might have heard. Get ready to test your knowledge about school grounds!

- ✘ You always have to bring your own linens.
- ✘ All campuses are available year-round.
- ✘ A/V and Wi-Fi are more expensive than hotels.
- ✔ Parking can be challenging.
- ✘ Dining is similar to hospital food and mall food courts.
- ✘ I'll be showering with 20 of my fellow attendees.
- ✘ A group can easily get lost on a big campus.
- ✔ A group will be required to provide insurance.
- ✘ Guests will have to disrupt their workout routines.
- ✔ Attendees will enjoy meeting on campus.

Answer key:

FICTION. Sometimes you will need to do so, but not always. Ask before booking.

FICTION. Some schools only have openings in the summer when students are gone and others operate year-round, providing a variety of options.

FICTION. They have proven to be more cost effective and often free of charge.

FACT. However campus conference professionals will work with your group to make it as easy as possible.


FICTION. Students are demanding when it comes to culinary choices. They get high quality food and therefore so do groups.

FICTION. While some campuses do have communal showers, the vast majority have private or semi-private bath accommodations.

FICTION. You can often keep all your meetings and events in one building or area of campus.

FACT. Many campuses require it, although doing so will keep your costs down.

FICTION. Many campuses have extensive rec centers with state-of-the-art fitness equipment. Sometimes it will include a daily fee or it might be included.

FACT. Most haven't stepped foot on campus since graduation day. They will find it refreshing, nostalgic and most importantly, educational. 

CLIFF NOTES

expert advice BY PERRY HACKER

If You Build It, They Will Come: New Campus Hotels and Conference Centers are Good for Everyone

If you've had a look around a college or university campus lately, you might notice a flurry of construction zones. That's because, in addition to renovating existing buildings, campuses are welcoming new additions with a number of hotels and conference centers that allow them to retain a competitive advantage—and then some. Here are 10 reasons why these new buildings can benefit every planner.

MEET, EAT AND SLEEP IN ONE SPOT. With overnight accommodations and all the facilities for meetings and activities during the day located in one site, there's no need to go off-site to work or relax.

THE TITANS OF TECHNOLOGY. Because campuses cater to students first and foremost, they have a lot of demand when it comes to technology. Universities have built in resources like media departments, IT divisions and super fast connections you won't find in a hotel, all of which are provided for in the conference center.

EXPERTS AT HAND. Need a brilliant guest speaker or a keynote address for your conference? Tap into a whole network of professors and experts that can come with compelling research and resources to discuss.

LOWER COSTS. Campuses are by and large non-profit organizations, which means they don't have the same market costs as traditional venues and can therefore keep the prices of conference spaces and guest rooms affordable.

CENTRAL BILLING. With the advent of these new spaces and services, more and more campuses are becoming One-Stop Shop Certified, which means you can coordinate with one office and one bill

for the multitude of resources you'll use during your stay.

BETTER CUSTOMER SERVICE. Many of the employees of the hotels are in fact students who are always friendly and eager to help out. Our goal is to be customer-oriented.

EDUCATION IS KEY. As a learning institution, our primary goal is to give an educational experience that will meet your conference's bottom line of providing information and training.

MORE TO DO. Not only are campuses full of educational opportunities but after sessions, groups can spend time in rec centers, on biking paths, in movie theatres, bowling alleys or stadiums for more entertainment. Every campus has something unique about it to enjoy.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT. Dining options are limitless and fit every budget, from boxed lunches to a buffet to full catering. Many schools offer a variety of caterers to choose from as well.

WE'RE ALWAYS BUILDING. That means where you stay and convene will most often be brand-new or revitalized and given the most modern amenities. **uv**



PERRY HACKER
Director, University Guest House &
Conference Center at the
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Vybe is compatible with iPhone 4S, iPhone 5/5C/5S and all Android, Windows and Blackberry models that support Bluetooth 4.0, and can last up to four days on a single charge. It's available in seven colors, including green, blue, yellow, pink, red, black and white and can be worn on the wrist or ankle with an extender. [uv](#)

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Sheet sets can be ordered ahead of time and delivered right to the venue for your guests to pick up upon arrival. The product line includes full, no-wash sets (with fitted and flat sheets and pillowcases) and pillowcase-only packages that can be used up to two weeks before discarding, composting or recycling—which also means energy and water saved. With this product line, now you can really sleep easy. [uv](#)

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE CONVENIENT, ECO-FRIENDLY SHEETS AND PLACE AN ORDER, VISIT BEANTOWNBEDDING.COM



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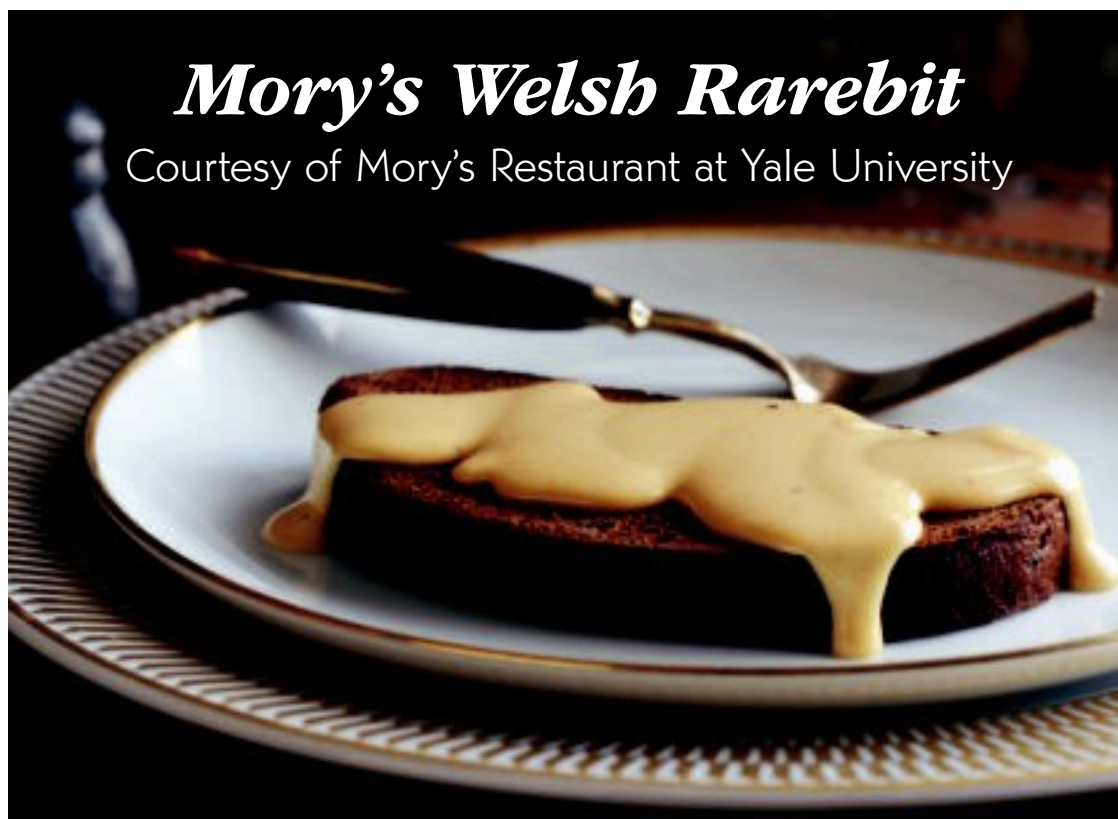
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CLIFF NOTES

home-cooked meal



Mory's Welsh Rarebit

Courtesy of Mory's Restaurant at Yale University

INGREDIENTS:

- ½ lb. flour
- 2 sticks butter
- 8 cups beer, preferably bass ale
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 5 lbs. grated extra sharp cheddar cheese
- 6 shakes Tabasco sauce
- 6 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1½ caps Colemans mustard
- Kosher salt, to taste

*Makes about 30 servings

TO PREPARE:

1. Make a blonde roux using the flour and butter: Gently melt the butter in the pot you will make the rarebit in, and then whisk in the flour until it's smooth—but don't cook it.
2. Slowly whisk the beer and heavy cream into the roux mix and turn the flame to medium heat.
3. Bring the mixture to a simmer for 5 minutes. Keep whisking to ensure it is homogenous and free of lumps.
4. Lower the heat and add the cheese slowly while you continue to whisk.
5. Once you have added all of the cheese, turn off the heat.
6. Add all of the dry ingredients and whisk them in vigorously.
7. Adjust seasoning preferences with salt. **uv**

Mory's has been a tradition of Yale University since 1849 with world-class cuisine for lunch and dinner and private rooms for groups. Welsh Rarebit is a popular cheese fondue starter dish served with bread.

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CLIFF NOTES

signature drink

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Courtesy of Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts

INGREDIENTS:

2 bottles red wine
1 cup brandy
½ cup Grand Marnier
4 cups pomegranate juice
1 cup simple syrup

TO PREPARE:

1. Make at least 24 hours before serving.
2. Mix all ingredients in a carafe.
3. Garnish with oranges and apple slices and top with pomegranate seeds. [uv](#)



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INSIDE THE INDUSTRY

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

The DIGITAL DETOX

As devices start to outnumber people, our industry is taking a stand by going unplugged. Here's how it works and how it helps people stay present in your next event.



Meetings unplugged? Yes, it's happening. The latest trend in conference technology seems to have come down to putting the smartphones away, shutting down the laptops and iPads and logging out of Twitter and Facebook. In unprecedented numbers, more and more conference goers (if not people in general) are actually volunteering to go offline and get back to meeting basics—those days of yore when status updates qualified as face-to-face interaction and a social network was the group of people you were stuck in a ropes course with for half a day.

Companies like the Oakland, California-based Digital Detox Retreat actually create the space for you “to give individuals the freedom and permission they need to truly unplug and decompress,” or so says a mission statement on their website (thedigitaldetox.org). Participants, they say, “put aside their digital arm and unplug, recharge, gain perspective and reevaluate their relationship with digital technology. In turn, they reemerge with new found inspiration and tools to create more mindful, meaningful and balanced lives, both online and off.” If you want something closer to home, Digital Detox

Retreat also hosts corporate workshops to help develop employee and management relations as well as event production.

Recent findings have hinted that there are a wealth of benefits to going off the grid: Results have included an increase in creativity and efficiency, teamwork skills and more gratitude towards colleagues. Personally, people have enjoyed lower blood pressure and heart rates and better sleep.

Here are three simple ways you can start instituting these policies:

Phone Charging Stations – Upon check-in, ask guests to also check their phones at

a secure area of charging stations. Setup a number of outlets and chargers for all types of iOS and Android devices, and provide attendees with a ticket that corresponds to their phone—like a coat check. Also make sure to have personnel in charge of watching the area to ensure there is no risk of theft or misplacement. While guests enjoy their time in the company of others, their final parting gift will be their fully charged device to take home.

Coordinate Activities – Without the safety of hiding behind a device, you'll definitely want to encourage people to interact.

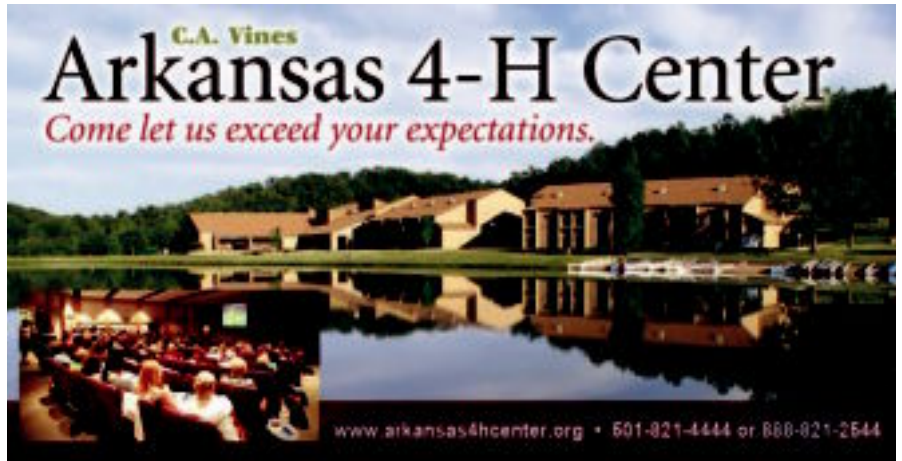
The best way to do so is have simple activity-driven prompts at each table or station. Leave conversation starters and ice breakers that can get guests talking to each other and starting a real-life “social network.” You can also set up creative ideas like coordinating an “Instagram” drawing contest, inviting guests to draw what they see around them instead of snapping photos on their phones. Or have points of interest where people can sample food, get an express massage or have fun in a photo booth.

Ready Your Resources – While an absence of cell phones is great for increased engagement, it also means less user-driven photos and social activity that can help increase your online profile. Have no fear—there are ways around it. First, hire professional photographers to get quality images throughout the event (and more candid photos from an engaged crowd!) and emphasize that you do encourage Tweeting and recaps after the event is over and after the crowd has fully enjoyed themselves. Do so by having hard-drives ready with all the program information, hashtags and social media handles people will need—you might even consider hosting a contest to make it more appealing to later-gram. Doing so also ensures your meetings can continue to stay green.

These are all just simple steps to start revolutionizing your meetings and events. The world may never be rid of our devices, but then again no one says you have to block online activity—rather create boundaries so people can enjoy the moment. **uv**

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THE MAIN EVENT

BY SELENA FRAGASSI



Wake Forest University's Wait Chapel was the site of the funeral and lasting tribute to Dr. Maya Angelou who had been on staff with the school for 30-plus years. In an all-hands-on-deck mission, the school came together to successfully manage the 5,000-strong guest list.



The Final *Tribute*

Wake Forest University was the academic home of Dr. Maya Angelou, so it was only natural her family would choose to host her funeral services on campus in a 5,000-person, nationally syndicated event

Nine days. Nine days was the amount of time the team at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina had to pull together one of the biggest and most honorable services of the year—the funeral for and final tribute to Dr. Maya Angelou.

“She passed away May 28 and, at the time, her son was on the other side of country, but he wanted to have her services quickly,” affirms Brett Eaton, Wake Forest’s associate VP for communications & external relations who worked closely with her next of kin as well as facility staff, campus police, the special events team and media relations to pull the event together on June 7.

Dr. Angelou was not only a noted poet, author and activist but also had been on staff at the university for 30-plus years (she was actually scheduled to teach courses this fall until her untimely passing). So,

Eaton says his department did not take its responsibility lightly with its role in making her final tribute memorable.

“One of the most difficult parts of the planning was deciding on the guest list and informing those individuals they were welcome to come,” says Eaton of the 5,000-person, invite-only guest list that included everyone from Oprah Winfrey to performers Lee Ann Womack and BeBe Winans and speakers Michele Obama and the Clintons. That also meant dealing with Secret Service’s requirements and the swarms of local, national and international press who wanted access

to cover the festivities, which included formal services in the Wait Chapel and a 500-person reception at the Graylyn International Conference Center.

“On the day of the event we had 130 members of the media from 45 news organizations like CNN, NBC, AP and even Entertainment Tonight that wanted to see inside the chapel and talk to the family, so we had to manage all the requests and also respect the family’s privacy. There were logistical issues for sure but we have an incredible team and managing high-profile events like this is not new to us,” says Eaton. In fact, just two weeks prior,

the university hosted Jill Abramson's first speaking engagement after her departure as the *New York Times*' executive editor.

One thing that helped was the live streaming capabilities the university offered, allowing a greater audience than just those in attendance to experience the renowned event. "It's a service we had already established and used for our commencements but this was the first time the live streaming was employed for a private event, and it was our largest viewership," says Eaton, noting nearly 700,000 people tuned in after many news organizations embedded the feed on their websites.

The other huge benefit was the assistance of Oprah Winfrey's production company HARPO that helped guide the family through important decisions and coordinated all the talent in the program as well as organizing the reception.

Internal communication amongst departments was perhaps Wake Forest's saving grace. The Wait Chapel had already scheduled a wedding for June 7, "but no one wanted to tell the bride to move her date," says Eaton, so together the team (which included "dozens of people") found a way to accommodate both events at the same time.

They also were able to account for the influx of both parties' guests by canceling undergrad courses and delaying check-ins for camps that were just beginning to start as well as staffing the quad for those checking in to receive credentials, parking passes and event tickets. The team even went as far as borrowing golf carts from the athletics department to shuttle guests. "It was a huge feat involving every department we have," says Eaton, "but it was probably one of the most memorable events we've held and we made it happen." **uv**

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COLLEGE ROAD TRIP

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

SILVER LAKE COLLEGE OF THE HOLY FAMILY

The Phillips Center is one of the luxe meeting spaces on campus.



THE GREAT PLAINS

The Midwest is known as “the heartland,” and these six incredible campuses prove it by putting a lot of heart and soul into hosting meetings and events

Flatlands? Not here at these six amazing colleges and universities that have enough resources, attractions, amenities and services to give guests a real thrill. We take you on a tour of some of the Midwest’s best venues in an array of cities, from one of the happiest places in America to the birth of the jazz recording.

Bethel College (Mishawaka, Indiana)

When you book with this college (located near South Bend), you’ll be tapping into a robust network you may not know even existed. “There are six campuses in the area, and we started our own little support group,” laughs Lisa Greco, director of special events and conference services. Notre Dame and St. Mary’s College are just two examples. “We meet every quarter to share stories—and equipment!” The other asset the internal network shares is referrals. “We work very collaboratively with the other schools and the CVB to make sure planners get what they need when they visit the area.” That includes seeing Amish Country and a large shopping district in nearby Indianapolis. “Anything you could want or need is within a two- to three-hour drive.”

On-site, guests can tap into an 865-seat auditorium, athletic facilities, two gymnasiums and intimate spaces for about 30 people.

Then there’s the food. “Because we’re a Christian college, there’s no smoking or drinking, so food is our vice,” says Greco, noting that menus can be customized. Coming soon: One-stop shop accessibility. “We’re working on our certification now, although we’ve always operated this way.”

Earlham College (Richmond, Indiana)

If the performing arts are what your group is after, look no further than Earlham College. Located on the border of Indiana and Ohio in a quaint town called Richmond, it is here that the first recording of jazz was ever pressed. So it’s no surprise that Earlham was inspired to debut its brand-new Performing Arts Center in the heart of campus this fall. It will offer retractable seating for 258 people and theatre space for 100. If you also want a show—no problem, says Lynn Knight, director of events and operations. “Summer is actually

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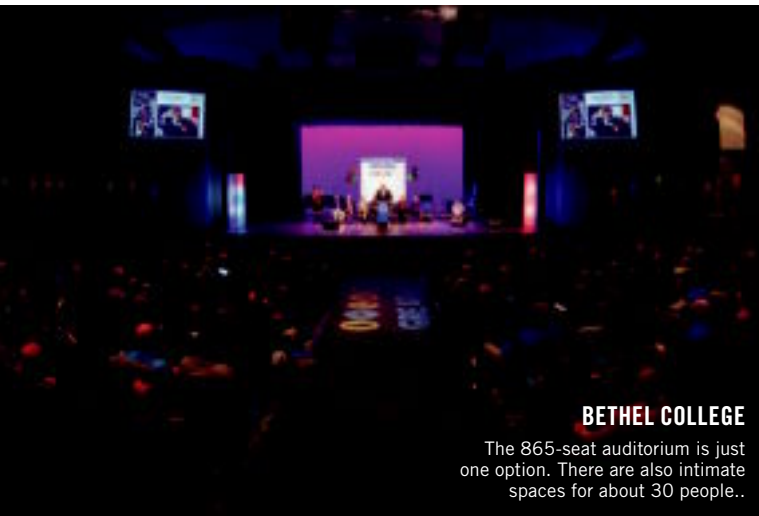


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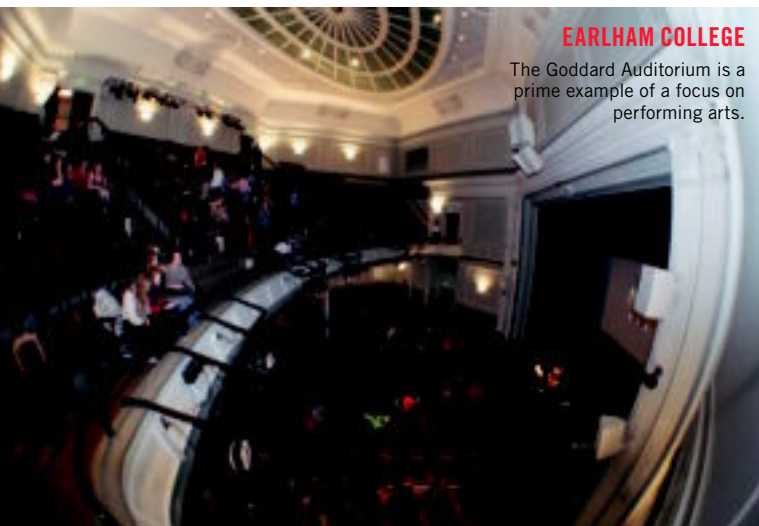
COLLEGE ROAD TRIP

BY SELENA FRAGASSI



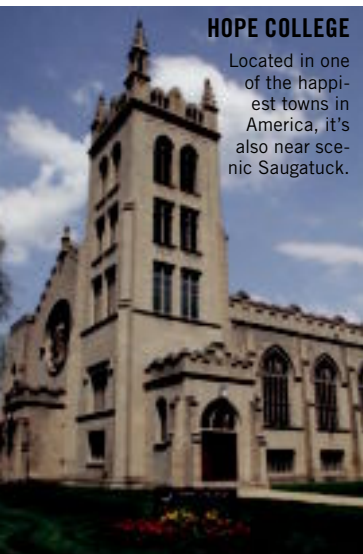
BETHEL COLLEGE

The 865-seat auditorium is just one option. There are also intimate spaces for about 30 people..



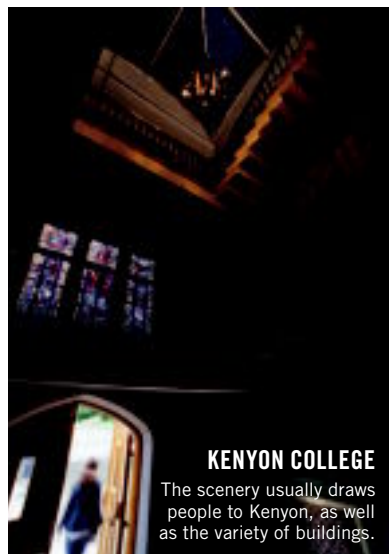
EARLHAM COLLEGE

The Goddard Auditorium is a prime example of a focus on performing arts.



HOPE COLLEGE

Located in one of the happiest towns in America, it's also near scenic Saugatuck.



KENYON COLLEGE

The scenery usually draws people to Kenyon, as well as the variety of buildings.

a great time to book here because we have a variety of festivals including outdoor films and concerts and the new Shakespeare Festival.”

In addition to the arts, Earlham College also has a handle on sports with a brand-new baseball stadium and AstroTurf football field and the country’s longest bike path just outside the campus grounds. “We also have two large gyms with weight rooms, a pool, rock climbing wall, athletic fields and a wellness center,” says Knight.

Classroom spaces range from small quarters that host 6 people to auditorium-sized theaters that seat 150 to 600, each with state-of-the-art features like video conferencing. Accommodations vary, too, with eight residence halls that offer single, double and triple rooms. “We’re the only full four-year college in Wayne County,” says Knight, “so we don’t have classes in summer and can do more for our guests.”

Hope College (Holland, Michigan)

In 2009, Holland, Michigan ranked as the “second happiest town in America” on the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index—and any visitor to the area’s Hope College will understand why. “You can’t help but notice the welcoming atmosphere and generosity of the people that live and work here,” says Heather Roden, director of conference services. Clearly that do-good attitude applies to her event team as well. “We always want our guests to have an enjoyable event, and we aim to exceed expectations by honoring random requests and making a great experience.”

Like when one youth group was able to “TP” a tree and another was given permission to “yarn bomb” some of the school’s landmarks. “The groups and events we host vary, but we’re always up for their challenges,” says Roden.

When it’s time to get down to business, Hope College can provide the right fit as well with a range of facilities from small seminar rooms to the Knickerbocker Theatre and a field house that seats 4,000 people. There’s also The Haworth Inn & Conference Center with more than 10,000 square feet of meeting space and 50 hotel rooms. “In the summer we can accommodate up to 1,500 people in our residence halls, too,” Roden affirms. And what better spot for summer than Holland, which is not far from vacation portals Grand Rapids, Saugatuck and Kalamazoo.

Kenyon College (Gambier, Ohio)

It’s the scenery that usually draws people to Kenyon College in central Ohio, just two hours from both Cleveland and Cincinnati and a short trip to the capital city of Columbus. “We often receive accolades for being one of the most beautiful campuses in the nation,” says Manager of Marketing and Sales Barbara Kakiris, pointing to Kenyon’s early Gothic architecture combined with more modern green-certified structures. Once guests arrive, she says, “they have no need to leave.”

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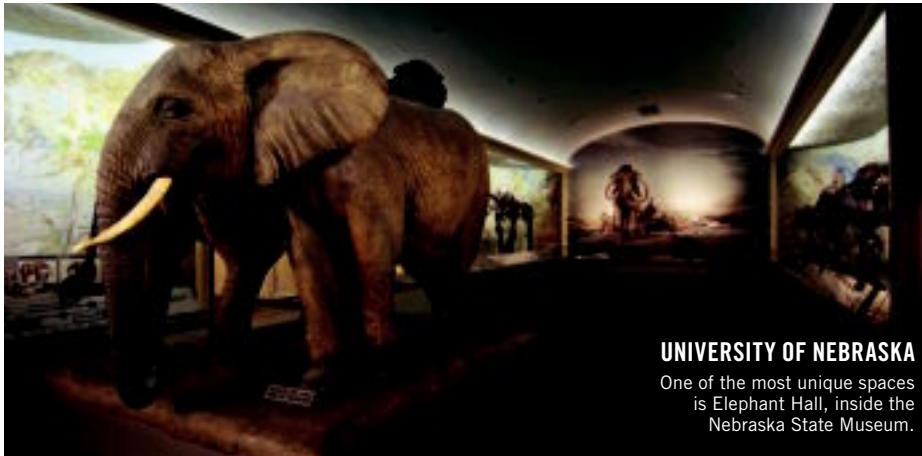
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COLLEGE ROAD TRIP

BY SELENA FRAGASSI



UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

One of the most unique spaces is Elephant Hall, inside the Nebraska State Museum.

to-table dining programs, a library and computer labs and a slew of facilities such as classrooms, overnight rooms and a \$72 million athletic center. “It’s kind of like a retreat,” affirms Kakiris.

The largest space available is Rosse Hall, which can host 612 people, but there are also smart classrooms, art studios, galleries and even a craft center. “Our facilities are in various types of buildings, but inside all are equipped with great technology.”

Silver Lake College of the Holy Family (Manitowoc, Wisconsin)

Being on the edge of Lake Michigan has its perks. “Guests can enjoy our spectacular public beaches, go charter fishing or scuba diving and see one of the many famous shipwrecks,” says Hollie Marcola-Pichla, event and conference coordinator for Silver Lake College.

In actuality, Manitowoc (between Milwaukee and Green Bay) is considered the Maritime Capitol of Wisconsin, but when it’s time to dock, there’s much more to look forward to inside the campus’ walls. “The Franciscan Center for Music Education and Performance Hall is our crowning jewel at the moment,” says Marcola-Pichla. The brand-new facility offers an atrium with seating for 200, floor-to-ceiling windows, natural lighting and a fireplace; a performance hall with state-of-the-art sound and lighting, a 25’ x 25’ screen and seating for 500; and a conference room fit for 25 guests. The school’s main campus also offers classrooms of varying sizes (up

to 150), lodging for 150 during the summer and a versatile cafeteria.

The list of resources has helped Silver Lake College acquire a number of groups, says Marcola-Pichla, including medical summits, performances by the Manitowoc Symphony Orchestra and, new in 2014, the Alice in Dairyland Conference.

University of Nebraska – Lincoln

You can’t find more middle ground than the University of Nebraska, which makes it highly appealing for national events. “Lincoln has a regional airport and is located on the interstate, providing easy travel to our city,” says Tony Rathgeber, conference services and events manager. The nearby Omaha airport also helps, which has given the school an advantage to book the International Thespian Festival and the Special Olympics National Games.

The campus is host to a number of distinguished spaces for 5 to 5,000, none more interesting than Elephant Hall. “It’s probably the most unique campus location that we can offer for an event,” says Rathgeber. The 250-person venue is an actual exhibit in the University of Nebraska State Museum, and features real mammoth skeletons and beautiful murals.

Also of note are suite-style accommodations for up to 1,500 people. With so much to offer, the university makes sure to make the booking process seamless. “Planners work with one contact to arrange anything else they need while on campus.” **uv**

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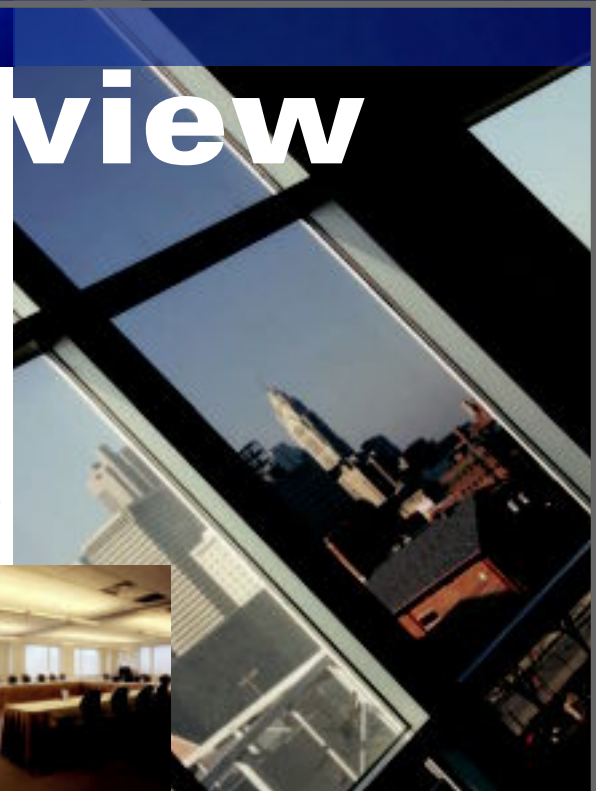
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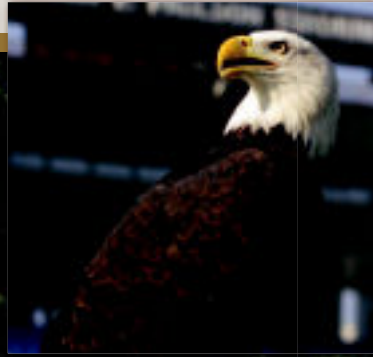
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Bon Appétit!

FROM COOKING KOSHER TO PREPARING A TASTE OF HOME FOR MIDDLE EASTERN CONFERENCE GUESTS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ARE GOING THE EXTRA MILE TO PROVIDE WORLD-RENOWNED CUISINE *By Selena Fragassi*



PHOTO BY: TATE CARLSON.

*T*urns out it is a small world after all. At least when it comes to the vast array of cultural food options that are now available to discerning diners in restaurants and, more than ever, at meetings and events. Gone are the days of homogenous dining where everyone has to eat the same meal that is prepared for the group. We simply don't live like that anymore—and in today's world the standard is tailored, custom menus for international visitors abiding by cultural or religious customs, or for guests with restrictive diets based on health needs or moral convictions.

In some ways, colleges and universities have proven to be the most equipped of all for authentic, varied menus. Their day-to-day customer base includes students from around the world that are looking for meals that will continually add variety and also keep with customs and give them a taste of home.

“Many colleges and universities are continually catering to an international resident population, and so our staff has had a significant exposure to menus from around the world,” says Imad Zubi, director of the Willets-Hallowell Conference Center and Hotel at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts. “In the past we've even had students provide us with recipes for ethnic cuisines.”

Zubi's team has been working with regimented groups for a number of years, recalling one of their most challenging was in hosting the National Yiddish Book Center's weeklong conference as far back as 2000. “This was before we had kosher catering on campus, but at the time we chose to convert one of our dining hall kitchens to be a kosher operation by providing two sets of serviceware, separate refrigeration for meat and dairy and other standards that were up to code.”

Chris Shields, director of sales and marketing at Northern Arizona's High Country Conference Center in Flagstaff, recently had a similar experience with a Chabad Jewish Center that was looking to host a 250-person fundraiser dinner. “It was our first time going after this market,” he admits. “In our area, not a lot of other venues will try to get that type of business because they think it's high-maintenance or not worth their time, but for us, we feel it can expand our clientele and generate revenue.”

To prepare for the group, Shields and his team (operated by Sodexo Conferencing) had to acquire rare spices and meats through specialty vendors as well as kosher

wine. “We had to shut down the entire dining area 24 hours in advance to bus the kitchen and hire a separate cleaning crew to steam clean every pot, pan and piece of silverware,” he says, noting the whole process took about five months and “lots of in-person visits.” The first step was a meeting with the Rabbi and a variety of personnel at the conference center, including the director of food and beverage, the executive chef and general manager, to plan out the occasion and see if it could be done on-site. Next came a meeting to price out the products and services and finally a third visit included the Rabbi's elder who did a walk through and targeted the step-by-step procedures for the day of the event.

“Once we got the food in place it wasn't that big of a deal to coordinate,” Shields admits. Having a chef on staff that is of the Jewish faith also helped.

WORLD-CLASS CHEFS AT YOUR SERVICE

Chef backgrounds are of extreme importance at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania, one of the first schools to integrate kosher menus in its campus restaurant. Today, though, 75% of the school's 150 external events also host groups from the Middle East, China and South America, which the college is prepared for given its diverse culinary team. Of the three executive chefs and seven sous chefs, there are individuals from nations as diverse as Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Syria, India, China and Cambodia. “The training Sodexo provides us is one thing,” says John Middleton, director of culinary operations, “but there's nothing that can top a home-made recipe for something like Chicken Pozole soup that makes our cuisine really authentic.”

Muhlenberg prides itself on getting “extreme” to meet guests' palettes and preferences, says Middleton.

“We’ve gone so far as to build a tandoor oven for one of our Moroccan groups or make okonomiyaki, a traditional Japanese pancake not often seen stateside, for a summer Pan-Asian camp.” The real challenge sometimes involves finding the authentic ingredients, but if you look hard enough you can find any kind of market, according to Middleton. “We have Philadelphia at our back door, so I’ll get my staff to go to the authentic markets, talk with the vendors and shop for the particular ingredients and spices we need to bring back to the kitchen.”

If there’s any notion that chefs on campus are run of the mill line cooks, though, think again. “Dining in a college venue is an untapped resource,” says Middleton. “A lot of our chefs have hotel backgrounds and people can sometimes underestimate the quality of the product available. But I would put any of our staff or menus up against anyone, anywhere, and we’d pass the test.”

Looking at the résumés of executive chefs like Jeffrey Viviano at Mount Holyoke College proves his point. Viviano has 25 years of experience with appointments at The Hartford Club, The Griswold Inn in Essex and a number of Hyatt properties in Beverly Hills, New York City and the East Coast. “With his experience at hotels in major cities, Chef Viviano comes with a lot of diversity and great ideas,” says Zubi. “His creative style was honed at properties with great reputations for consistent American cuisine with Mediterranean flavors.”

That exposure comes in handy when the college plans for the annual Arab American Arts Music Institute retreat, a seven-night conference they have hosted for the past 18 years. “All the dinners are completely Middle Eastern-themed and developed in collaboration with Chef Viviano and Najeeb Shaheen, a former restaurateur who is associated with the program. They finalize the menus together and Najeeb also helps us procure the

products needed from import stores in New York City,” says Zubi.

CATERING TO DIETARY NEEDS

Cultural customs are just one of the ways campuses are accommodating a diversified clientele. Others, like the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, also create specific menus for those with dietary restrictions, such as vegetarians and vegans. For 20 years, the North American Vegetarian Society (NAVS) has been hosting their annual Vegetarian Summerfest on the campus grounds. Over the course of several days, 750 people convene to attend workshops and meet other like-minded families—and one of the biggest concerns is making sure guests aren’t just eating plates of lettuce.

“The university has been wonderful and accommodating to all of our dietary needs,” affirms Sharon Graff, the executive director of the Society. “They have helped us not only stay vegan since the very beginning, but have also instituted

more particular food items over time for our guests that need gluten-free options or more raw preparations. They are very willing to work with us and always do an incredible job given that we have such a complicated menu.”

To orchestrate the very specific menus, the university allows NAVS to use their kitchen space but with the flexibility that the Society can bring in their own chefs to oversee operations. “We’ve been doing this program with UPJ for so many years that they really understand us and our conference so it runs very smoothly each time,” says Graff, further noting how important the choice of venue has been for their annual summit. “We’ve always preferred to use campus facilities because we find them to be more economical than a traditional hotel; they have great rates and always meet our needs.”

.....

“Dining in a college venue is an untapped resource. A lot of our chefs have hotel backgrounds and people can sometimes underestimate the quality of the product available.”

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TOP ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: Creamy Brazil Nut Soup, Dehydrated Nacho Chips with Vegan Cheese Sauce and Zucchini Ravioli with Cashew Ricotta and Balsamic & Sun-Dried Tomato Sauce, all from the NAVS Summerfest at The University of Pittsburgh–Johnstown. **MIDDLE ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT:** Raw Ginger Pate Nori Rolls with Mango Sauce, Live Corn Chowder with Red Pepper Cream Soup and Avocado Key Lime Ice Cream with Raspberry Puree Sauce, all from the NAVS Summerfest at The University of Pittsburgh–Johnstown. **BOTTOM ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT:** Okonomiyaki - a traditional Japanese pancake, cucumber salmon appetizer prepared by Muhlenberg College, Creamy Greens Soup from the NAVS Summerfest at The University of Pittsburgh–Johnstown.

WELL DONE SERVICES

UPJ's Event Manager Tammy Barbin is quick to say that providing for groups like NAVS has become the norm for her team. "It's just one more way we cater to our groups and customer service needs," she says. "But I do think the requests are becoming more refined across the board and catering has had to keep up as a specialty operation more than ever before. Campuses are really equipped to lead the charge in this regard because we have student bodies that demand it." Every year, Barbin says, there are more and more students from varying countries admitted as undergrads, "and that prepares us for conferences that are just as diverse."

Cindy Zapata, the office of conference services manager at Iona College in upstate New York, says flexibility is the biggest advantage campuses can provide to a wide range of guests. "We are new to the summer business, this is only our sixth year or so, and therefore we are always willing to take feedback and improve our operations," she says. In her tenure, the school has hosted an annual Passover/Seder meal, a number of events for the area's growing Haitian community and a variety of summer camps that play up odd food holidays to keep menus interesting. "Research for us is key as well as asking the clients questions. We are very dedicated to having detailed conversations to make sure we understand preferences and food allergies."

While prices can increase for these types of services, it's mostly related to the market price of ordering organic food items for the vegetarian crowds or specialty spices for the more authentic cultural dishes. Shields says for his kosher group, the per-person plate cost was

\$39.95, "and really the extra \$5 or \$6 was for nothing more than shipping food from other cities if we didn't have it here."

Middleton says it's the same case at Muhlenberg College. "The cost for these catered meals really runs right in line with what our prices already are. Acquiring some ingredients can be expensive, but we try to keep it as cost-effective as possible." And if all else fails, he says, "Our dining halls also offer very diverse meals and are open to the public so guests can get a taste of home without doing a comprehensive menu if they don't have the time or budget."

Although Zubi says he has had to turn away some requests that were not practical for the college for a variety of reasons related to resources or expertise, the two-to-three events with challenging catering requests that the campus does host every year do find certain advantages. "We have the ability to offer the same experience at a lower price point than commercial hotels who

might nickel and dime you. We also have advantages, such as having more staff available to work with these specialty menus."

If colleges and universities have learned anything from these vast experiences, it's that food is the cornerstone of any great event, and when done well, it brings everyone to the table. "Food opens up conversations," says Middleton, "and that allows us to sit down with our clients and really get to know them so we can wow them every time." **UV**

.....

"We've always preferred to use campus facilities because we find them to be more economical than a hotel; they have great rates and always meet our needs."

.....

TRY THESE CULTURAL RECIPES!

(Courtesy of Mount Holyoke College)



Hummus

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 can (14 oz.) garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 cloves garlic
- ½ cup water
- 2 TBS fresh squeezed lemon juice
- ½ tsp kosher salt
- ½ cup Tahini

TO PREPARE:

1. In a food processor, chop garlic and garbanzo beans. While machine is running, add water, salt and lemon juice.
2. Puree until the mixture is well incorporated, about 2-3 minutes.
3. Continue running the machine and slowly pour the Tahini in until it is all incorporated together.
4. Allow the machine to run about 1 minute more, or until the hummus looks smooth and creamy.
5. Taste, and adjust seasoning as needed.

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Falafel

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 lb. dried garbanzo beans, soaked overnight and drained well
- 1 bunch cilantro, washed
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 jalapeño, chopped
- 1 TBS cumin
- Kosher salt to taste
- Fine grain Bulgur wheat as needed

TO PREPARE:

1. Heat fryolator to 350 degrees.
2. In a meat grinder, using the fine grind attachment, grind the garbanzo beans, cilantro, garlic, onion and jalapeno.
3. Mix all together in a bowl until well incorporated.
4. Season the mixture with cumin and salt to taste.
5. With a small scoop, form into balls, then press into patties.
6. Test fry 1 to see if it stays together in the fryer. If it separates, add some bulgur wheat to bind it.
7. Fry to a golden brown, about 1-1 ½ minutes.
8. Break open and make sure it is cooked all the way through.



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A group of four diverse young adults (two men and two women) are smiling and holding a large white sign. They are standing on a reflective white surface. The man on the far left is wearing a pink shirt and red sneakers. The woman next to him is wearing a blue top and white wedge shoes. The man in the center is wearing a red shirt and white sneakers. The woman on the far right is wearing a light blue top and red flat shoes.

New Hires

ONE OF THE BENEFITS OF HOSTING AN EVENT
ON CAMPUS IS THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS
THAT CAN BE ADDED RESOURCES FOR
PLANNING, COORDINATING—AND JUST ABOUT
EVERYTHING ELSE

By Selena Fragassi

Welcome to the Real World. There is no phrase more ubiquitous for college students come graduation day. Yet the real world, the real working world at least, is where the many students who are valued employees within college and university conference services departments have been living.

“Students are quite literally the front line of our office,” says Mari Gorda, registration and operations manager of conference services at Atlanta’s Georgia Institute of Technology. Here they are responsible for answering calls, checking guests in and out, event setup, A/V preparation, inventory tracking and campus tours. “It’s hard to list them all,” Gorda says of the many responsibilities her students have in helping orchestrate the meetings, events and conferences that come to campus.

At the University of Maryland in College Park, it’s even more of an organized operation says Tom Flynn, senior associate director of conferences and visitor services. “We don’t consider students extra help per say since we have a whole staff structure where they all have job descriptions and responsibilities to uphold,” he says. This network has been in place since 1985 and hires about 65-70 people per summer (and another 5-10 during the school year).

Student employees at the University of Maryland can focus on one of three tracks, including housing operations (turning residence halls over to conference accommodations), program management (working directly with clients to coordinate services and facilities) or operations (daily items like housekeeping and linens). Titles range from assistant manager to supervisors or specialists for entry-level positions. The students are paid for their work but the real benefit, says Flynn, is the para-professional experience they receive. “We are developing students to prepare them for life after college. That’s why they have job descriptions and are regularly evaluated.”

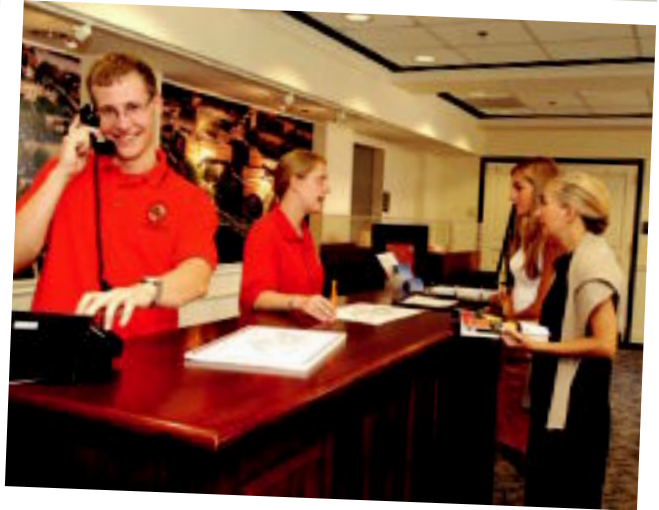
AHEAD of The CLASS

Cassey Wyatt, a recent graduate of Brenau University in Gainesville, Georgia, is one example. As a

summer coordinator, she received work-study hours for her help in coordinating events on campus, the most prominent a 135-person fundraising gala and a barbecue for a 500-person youth group. Although Wyatt was a student in the university’s music department, the life and work skills she has gained from her experience helping with campus events are invaluable, she says. “It helped me to solidify the areas I wanted to focus on in applying for jobs. I started looking into special events programs and my experience really helped me organize and focus on the kind of job I wanted to pursue after college.”

While Flynn says the University of Maryland does not have a dedicated hospitality program from which to pull candidates (“it’s more of a recruitment campaign for all undergrads”), others like Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts give students in this field of study a wealth of heavy experiential opportunities. “Our student employees are almost always from the UMASS Amherst Hospitality Program so they gain a great deal of real world job experience; we include them in every facet of the event industry,” says Kate Fields, assistant director of sales and marketing for Hampshire. “We train them to shadow all of our activities so they have extensive knowledge of a variety of events that will benefit almost every incoming group.”

Derek Emerson, director of events and conferences at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, would agree. “Students grow a great deal in these opportunities because we give them decision-making work and develop their problem-solving skills,” he says. However, having the extra hands is a bilateral bonus, also helping expand his department. “Since our department is not likely to grow much, students allow us to continue to improve in what we offer without cutting corners.”



The numbers can be staggering in the summer months, too, he says, with 10-12 full-time (and a number of part-time) student workers overseeing 40 conferences and 15,000 guests in a short span of time. Duties range from selling tickets and ushering to running the scoreboard for sports camps, handling A/V and lighting needs, selling merchandise, escorting guest speakers, compiling data and so on. “We find a lot of our guests like working with our students and we receive many compliments on how good they are at their jobs,” Emerson admits.

“We love the energy and enthusiasm shown by our student staff to our conference guests,” seconds Flynn. “They love interacting with the individuals and groups coming to campus and they are willing to work hard to accomplish goals.”

LESSONS *To Be* LEARNED

At the end of the day, these are young adults in their late teens and early 20s, so there are some challenges to be had. “Because they are new to the hospitality industry, when we hire students, we tend to entrust them with small items first and then increase responsibilities as they go,” says Emerson. “We expect mistakes, and we work on educating students about them.”

There is no one learning curve for creating a professional, says Fields who on a few occasions has had to go over dress codes and shift times. At Georgia Tech, Gorda finds the greatest challenge in the training process. “There are very few students who join our staff that have had previous event experience so it can take a couple of weeks to get them oriented, but they learn quick.”

Especially in that tight time period between the end of the school year and the ramp up of the summer conference season, says Flynn. Yet he and his staff believe in giving students a lot of autonomy in their training. “Sometimes they are the only ones on-site, but they






know to call us if we are needed to be pulled into the situation. They have to weigh each situation separately, but really that's the only way they'll learn to survive in this fast-paced environment."

WHAT You're INVESTING

When you have students on your event staff, not only are you doing a good deed helping to develop incoming colleagues to the industry and getting extra help in the process, but you end up getting rewarded with cost savings. Of all the representatives we talked to, they said the cost of hiring student workers is the campus' burden and not yours, so it's really an extension of the services already provided.

"Although recruiting, hiring, training and supervising students requires time and money, for us, we see it as part of the educational mission of our college, so it is time well invested. Plus, as the students become more independent they can help us expand in what we can do for our guests," says Emerson, pointing out one very clear example of how a student went above and beyond the call of duty. "We were in the midst of a severe thunderstorm, and one of the high schoolers from our youth camp headed to our dining space terrified of the activity outside. One of our student workers noticed her and took the girl aside, found towels to wrap her in and comforted her for nearly an hour. This allowed the rest of the youth group to continue on with their day, and let the client know that we truly think of every one of our guests as a gift." 

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INDUSTRY UPDATES

news & awards

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

University of British Columbia is the Proud Host of the Special Olympics

From July 8-12, the campus in Vancouver was the host venue for the 2014 Special Olympics Canada, showing off its expansive sporting facilities—nine of the eleven events (including swimming, soccer, basketball and bocce) were held on-site with only golf and bowling orchestrated at locations nearby. The partnership also pulled in a great deal of resources from the school, including 25 full-time employees involved in all aspects of planning and logistics and hundreds of volunteer staff and students. Those in the geography department created maps for the 1,300 participants and thousands of spectators while students enrolled in Land and Food Systems researched how to find local food and reduce waste. UBC also aimed to make the Special Olympics one of the most sustainable sporting events ever by providing attendees with “green passports” that provided stamps for activities such as riding a bike or walking to a competition or taking an abbreviated shower to conserve water. Prior to the games, UBC also hosted the Athlete Leadership Program for Special Olympics BC to provide leadership training for athletes who wanted more meaningful roles. During the course of the games, all athletes, coaches and officials were housed at the university as well, getting to know the campus’ great accommodations and services first-hand.

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University of Notre Dame Offers Overnight Guests More with Morris Inn

A recent \$30 million renovation and expansion has given this Indiana campus hotel (originally built in 1952) a touch of the glam life. Inside the doors of the Gothic-style building guests are greeted by bright golden walls and navy furnishings with even more room to enjoy. The overall size of Morris Inn has increased to 137,500 square feet, which means 150 guest rooms (up from 92), a brand-new 300-person ballroom with attached pre-function space and 30,000 square feet of meeting space next to the Notre Dame Conference Center. Two new dining venues were also added, including pub-style Rohr’s and the outdoor spot Fireside Terrace, which both complement the already beloved Sorin’s Restaurant. With all the new amenities, the hotel has also doubled its staff to further meet guests’ needs.

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Kenyon College is Enjoying Award Season with Four Nods in 2014

This Gambier, Ohio campus has welcomed an honor roll of achievement with a slew of prestigious accolades since January. The Princeton Review named it one of the Best Value Colleges for 2014 and later recognized the campus’ athletic facilities. Yet it’s the great scenery at Kenyon that is really drawing attention, including BuzzFeed.com, which named the college #3 of the 41 most Instagram-worthy schools in a recent ranking. As well, *Travelers Today* said Kenyon was the #1 “prettiest college campus” for its Gothic buildings, centralized layout and beautiful dining hall. With so much chatter, you just might have to see it for yourself.

UniqueVenues.com/KenyonCollege



PHOTOS COURTESY OF: NOTRE DAME, KENYON COLLEGE, SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT UNIVERSITY.




Southern Connecticut University Heads in Right Direction with New Space

Summer groups will be delighted to hear about the recent renovations at the New Haven campus. The private Farnham Programming Space can accommodate 355 standing or 120 seated with a number of added features including free Wi-Fi services, an iPod dock, microphone and stereo hookup and two large television screens that connect to Blu-ray, cable, DVD, iPads and laptops.

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Carleton University Is Deemed a Healthy Workplace

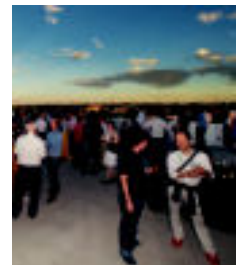
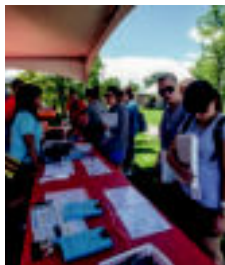
Excellence Canada, an independent, not-for-profit organization committed to advancing organizational excellence across the country, recently awarded Ottawa's Carleton University with a Level 2 Certification in the Healthy Workplace category. Even more impressive, Carleton is the first and only Canadian post-secondary institution to achieve this result. It was recognized for the healthy activities—from desk exercises to the lifestyle challenge—it promotes for better physical and mental well being both on and off the job. 

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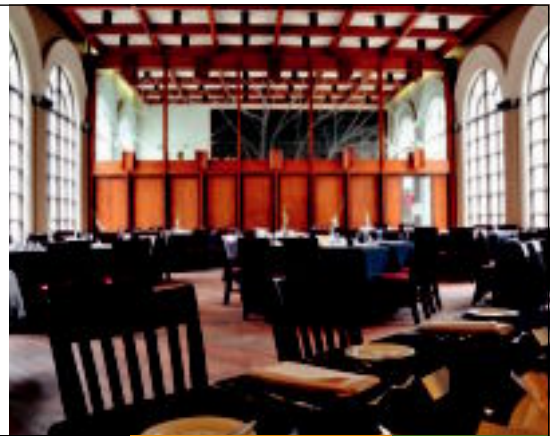
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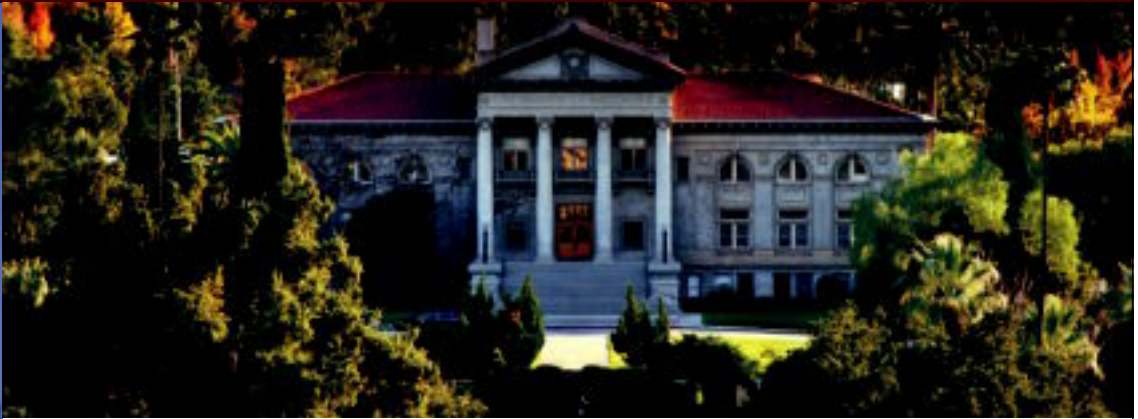
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DEAN'S LIST

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

The *CLASS ACT*

Rob Webb went from working in a university conference department to planning events at them, and what he learned is that campuses are still grade A

“Education is in my blood,” Rob Webb, CMP resolutely affirms as he looks back over the course of his nearly 20-year career. It wasn't so long ago that he was working in the conference planning department at Bentley University in Massachusetts. But in 2011, he came across an opportunity to sit on the other side of the desk by joining Envision as its director of conference services in Washington, D.C. In his new role, Webb now becomes the meeting planner overseeing contractual and support services for experiential programs catered to career-minded students interested in medicine, law, engineering and business.

“Envision was actually a client of mine at Bentley,” says Webb, “and one night I was talking with my predecessor who was getting ready to leave the organization, and I thought it would be a good fit for me having been in higher education for so long.” Webb fills us in on how he made the transition and his biggest piece of advice for planners.

Unique Venues: Was the transition from client relations to employee of Envision challenging?

Rob Webb: “Not really. Knowing I would be working with so many colleges in my new role made me really excited. I met so many different people in the collegiate industry across the country over the years, which made it easier because I felt like it would be a comfortable fit.”

UV: How often do you get to book with campuses for Envision's programs?

RW: “It's about 75% colleges and universities, 25% hotels, which is up from a 50-50 split. It's important for us to use campuses to give students the feel of sleeping in residence halls and eating in dining halls. But hotels are still a big value partner because we have year-round programs.”

UV: Having now been on both sides of the job, what do you see as some of the areas where collegiate services need to improve?

RW: “Definitely being a one-stop shop. As a planner it's so helpful. It doesn't mean we won't book with a campus that doesn't have this service, but it's certainly an advantage. My team books 85 sites a year with at least

85 contracts, so if there's just one person we need to communicate with at the venue, that's great. Another area is the booking policies. We like to commit a year out and tell students where we will be next summer to get our early enrollments up, but a lot of universities can't commit that far in advance.”

UV: What is your biggest piece of advice for planners interesting in booking a meeting or event on a campus?

RW: “It's beneficial speaking with other planners who have done so. Most schools are happy to give references so you should call a planner who has been there before and get their feedback on the process and how it works.”

UV: What are some of your biggest achievements over the years?

RW: “It was a proud moment getting my MBA after years of balancing work and little kids and going to school at night. I was also honored to have been president of ACCED-I [the Association of Collegiate Conference & Events Directors International] when I was working on the campus side. That was one of the best times of my career.” **uv**



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