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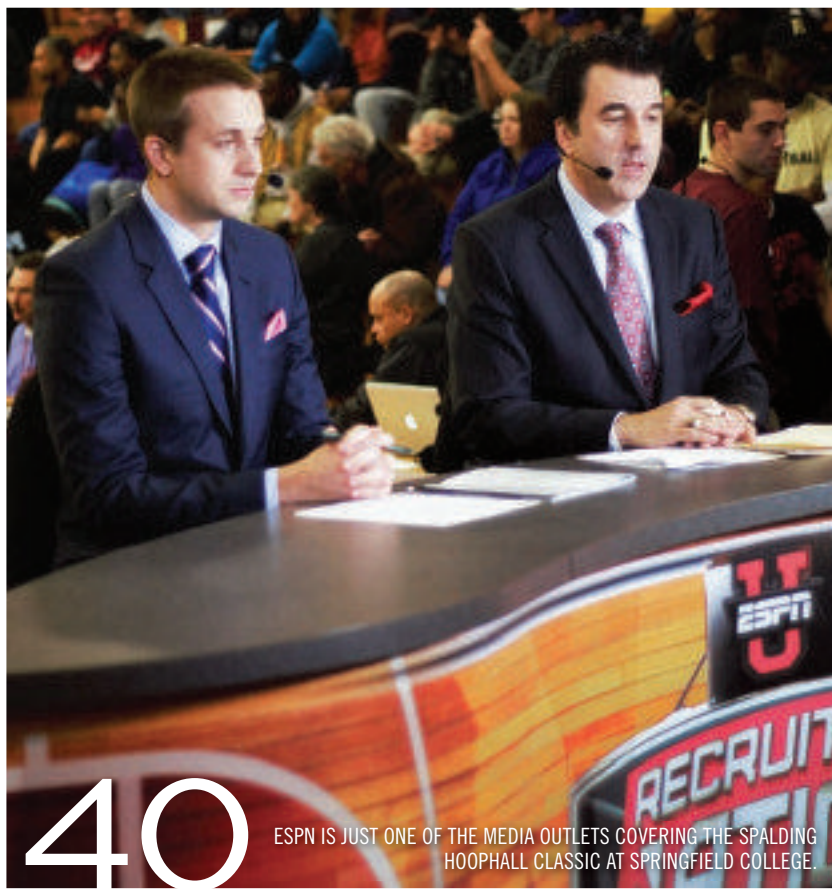
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THE EVENTS TEAM AT NOTRE DAME CONFERENCE CENTER HELPS MANAGE DOZENS OF EVENTS EVERY YEAR.

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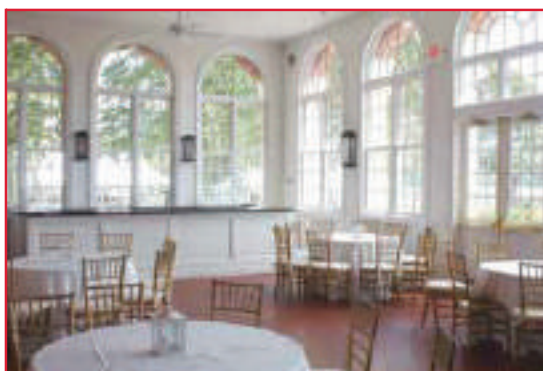
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Spring 2016

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PUBLISHER'S LETTER



IF YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED YET, there's something very special brewing in our Spring Issue. While we spend time discussing the growth of campus breweries and wine programs in our brand-new feature, the story behind-the-scenes is that we are also raising a glass to the 30th anniversary of Unique Venues in 2016.

It's certainly been an incredible journey for our company the past three decades. Since launching in 1986, we've grown from a directory service for colleges and universities looking to attract hospitality clients to becoming the trusted resource for meeting and event planners on the hunt for non-traditional venues that impress. In that same time our membership has more than quadrupled as have our services, which now includes an annual conference, yearly Best Of Awards recognition, and this very magazine, one of the only publications covering our niche industry.

As you start to flip through the pages, you'll understand why we find it so important. The featured venues in this all-campus issue are quickly becoming leaders in day meeting centers and have set the bar with exclusive meeting management packages that redefine the idea of a One-Stop Shop. One of our members has hosted the prestigious Spalding Hoophall Classic tournament the past 15 years, another has historic Royal connections, and a third was voted as having the "best outdoor adventure" program on the east coast by *Outdoor Magazine*. You'd be hard-pressed to find that at a traditional venue.

The truth is, thirty years ago, hotel chains were the majority of what was available in the market, and we were given so many reasons why a company like ours would not succeed. Today, however, our members have not only edged out the competition but verifiably become it by touting incredible service, affordable pricing, and benefits just as unique as the properties themselves. Having more to choose from only serves to make the industry stronger and provide you with more options to find the best setting for your meeting, conference, or event.

Just like wine gets better with age, so has our industry—and what better reason to toast to the future and everything that is yet to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M Nichols". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a stylized "N".

Michele Nichols, Founder
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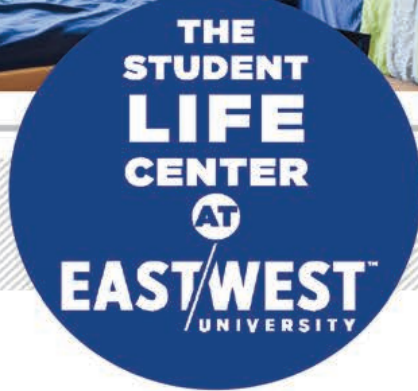
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CLIFF NOTES

work / life / balance BY MANDY VOLPE



Spring into Action

As the weather takes a turn for the better, here's how to keep up with that to-do list.

The days are getting longer and warmer, and before you know it summer will be here offering so many distractions you'll find yourself drowning in work if you keep heading to the pool. But, there are ways to enjoy the beautiful weather while still accomplishing your work to-do list, if you have a game plan. Here are three tips to "spring into action" and not get lost in the "summer daze."

Work early bird hours. You're on the sun's schedule now. So get up early and enjoy it! If you start work at 7 a.m. and wrap up by 3 p.m. you'll still have worked a regular eight-hour day and have plenty of daylight to enjoy other seasonal activities that you would have missed out on otherwise.

Find a new work desk. Just like kids heading to camp, sometimes a change of pace can do you good and make you feel like you are adding some excitement to the workday, which will motivate you to keep at it. One option is to invest in a temporary co-working space that offers an office shared by other like-minded professionals—who knows, you could even make a business connection! You can rent one for the entire season at WeWork.com, or if you're in Chicago, you can try a new local app called Deskpss (deskpss.com) that offers a membership plan

to reserve a new space every day or week, however often you'd like to switch it up.

Schedule a team-building activity or mini outing regularly. Who says only kids can go on field trips? Treat your team or clients to a fun activity that will get you away from the office for just a few hours but also rejuvenate that creative spark that could help inspire a current project that has hit an impasse. There are so many options to choose from—arts classes, improv workshops, culinary cook-offs—but even more compelling could be adding in a charitable mission. Try a company like Team Bonding (teambonding.com) that can set up group programs like charity bike builds, assembling care packages for the homeless, even volunteering at dog shelters. Doing good for others could pay back for you, too. **uv**



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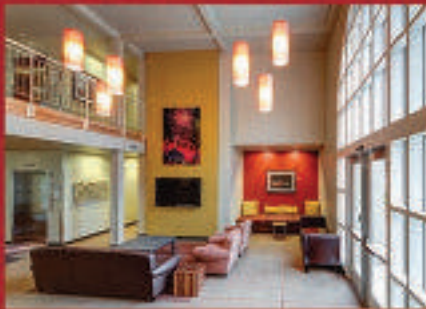


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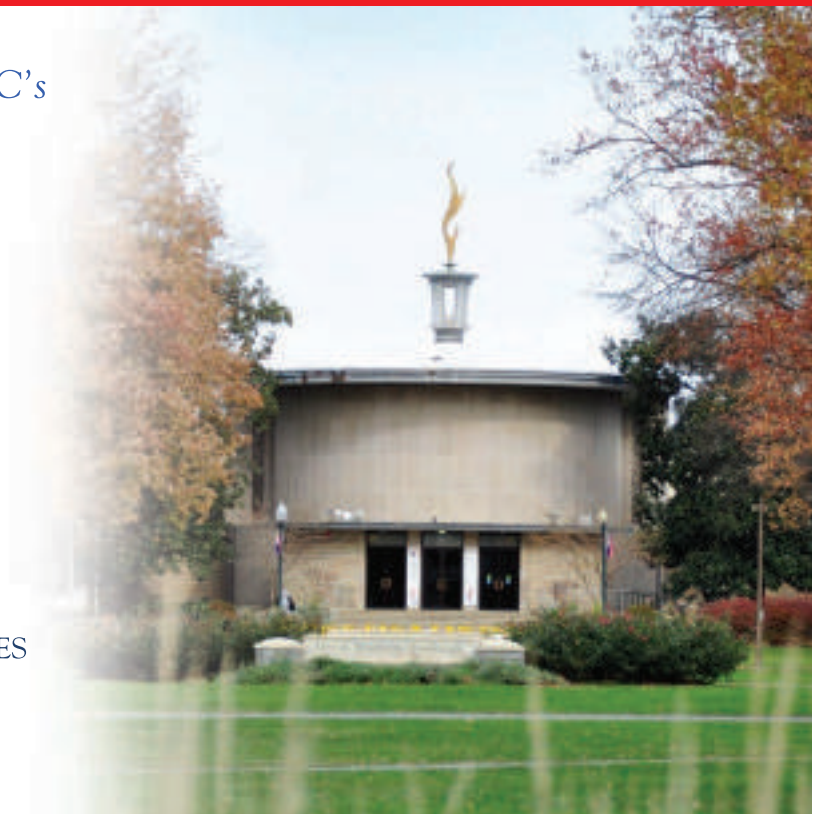
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CLIFF NOTES

expert advice BY ANNE MCCAWE

GOAL!

Canadian meetings have never been more affordable.

As the strength of the American dollar continues to grow, the Canadian dollar has significantly decreased, valued at about \$1.45 per every one U.S. dollar. That is as low as it's been in 11 years, which is creating really strong buying power for groups interested in traveling across the border. If you consider contract and rate negotiations and then take half off the top, you can see how cost effective it can be to bring conferences, meetings, and incentive programs up north. Of course, there are some other advantages, too:

IT'S YOUR PASSPORT TO A FAMILIAR BUT FOREIGN DESTINATION. There are plenty of similarities between America and Canada—the language and cuisine are familiar—but the differences allow your group an experience from another world. Depending on what part of the country you visit, you'll find a different European atmosphere. In the Maritimes, the eastern provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland, you'll find a strong nautical history and heritage of Scots and Irish Celts. Out west in Victoria, British culture is abundant.

CROSSING THE BORDER IS EASY. There's good reason inbound traffic is increasing to Canada, particularly from the U.S., which gave tourism an 8% boost in 2015 according to Statistics Canada. The country is accessible by both land and air from most American hubs, and with prices continuing to drop at the gas pump, many are opting to travel by car or coach.

FACILITIES ARE MODERNIZING JUST ABOUT EVERYWHERE. The Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance has been promoting Canada as a preferred sports destination, and acquiring a number of major sporting events in the process, such as the Olympic Games in Vancouver, Pan Am Games in Toronto,

and the women's FIFA championship. As such, a lot of money and effort has been put into updating facilities in many provinces to support the new business sector. That includes a number of college and university campuses that have played host.

THERE'S A LITTLE SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE. In 2015, the International Congress & Convention Association reported their top 10 list of meeting destinations in North America, and Canada appeared three times in the top 5 (Vancouver at #1, Toronto at #2, and Montreal at #5). Perhaps it's because all the different regions cater to different tastes. Corporate retreats can find themselves at home in Banff and the Canadian Rockies or even planning an urban adventure in Vancouver or Victoria. Those looking for a metropolitan experience will love Toronto while those favoring old world charm can look to Quebec.

IT'S ALSO A TIME FOR CANADIANS TO CONSIDER STAYING HOME. With our buying power so much weaker traveling abroad, now is the time to promote Canada to locals, too. With so much to see and do, consider a different experience such as taking your meeting to the prairies or Newfoundland—or anywhere that can give a change of pace. **uv**



ANNE MCCAWE
Unique Venues
Canadian Representative

Find comprehensive listings of all our Canadian venues at UniqueVenues.ca and in the index on page 77.



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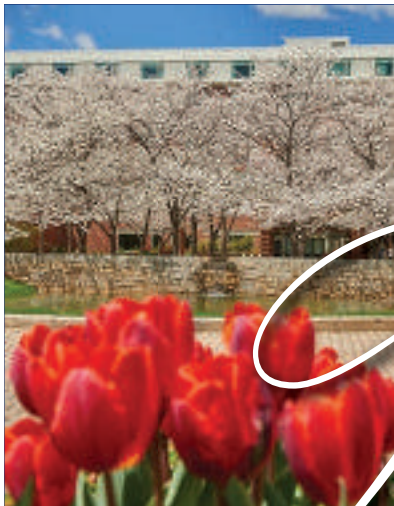
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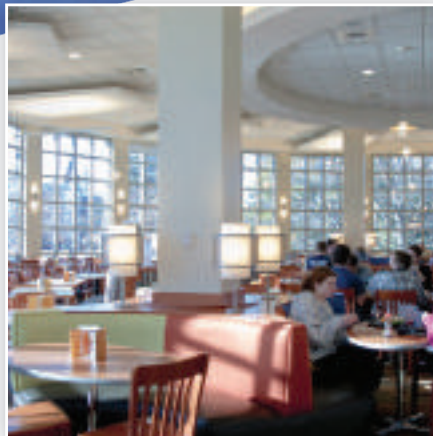
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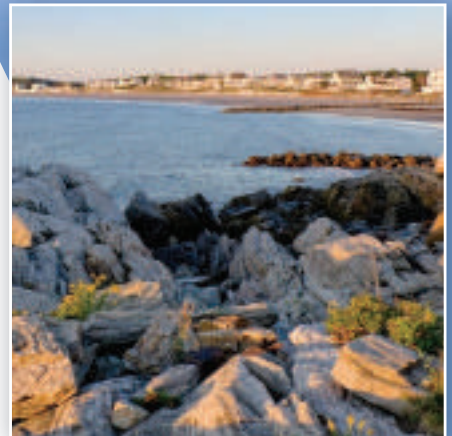
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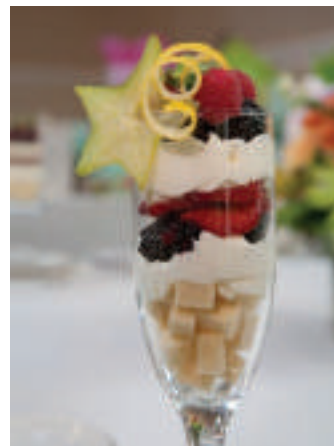
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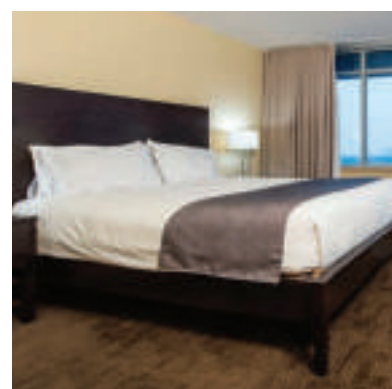
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CLIFF NOTES

food for thought



Steak with Brandied Cherry Sauce

Courtesy of UCLA Lake Arrowhead
Conference Center & Bruin Woods
Family Resort (Lake Arrowhead, CA)

*We're over winter, but not quite yet into summer,
which makes this dish perfect for the in-between
spring season. Combining grilled steaks with a
rich, tart cherry sauce, it's a dish that's not only
filling but also unforgettable.*

INGREDIENTS:


- 8 beef steaks (6 oz. each)
- salt and pepper
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 ½ Tbsp. shallots, peeled and slivered
- 2 tsp. garlic cloves, peeled and slivered
- 1 tsp. green peppercorns, in brine
- ¾ cup sherry wine
- ¾ cup red tart cherries (frozen, in juice)
- ¼ cup brandy
- ¾ cup veal demi glaze
- ½ tsp. Dijon mustard
- ½ tsp. fresh thyme, chopped
- ½ tsp. fresh mint, chopped
- ½ tsp. fresh tarragon, chopped
- ½ tsp. fresh sage, chopped

TO PREPARE:

TART RED CHERRY SAUCE:

1. Heat a thick-bottomed pan until very hot. Add oil followed by garlic and shallots, and sauté until slightly browned.
2. Add sherry wine, peppercorns with juice, half of the cherries with juice, half the brandy, and half of the herbs. Reduce by one half.
3. Add the veal demi glaze and Dijon mustard, followed by the other half of the cherries with the juice. Simmer until slightly thickened.
4. Add the other half of the herbs and brandy. Adjust seasoning as desired.
5. Hold at warm temperature.

THE STEAKS:

1. Season steaks with salt and pepper.
 2. Grill or sauté the seasoned steaks over high heat until the desired temperature.
 3. Top with sauce and serve. 
- Makes 8 servings.*

GET CONNECTED

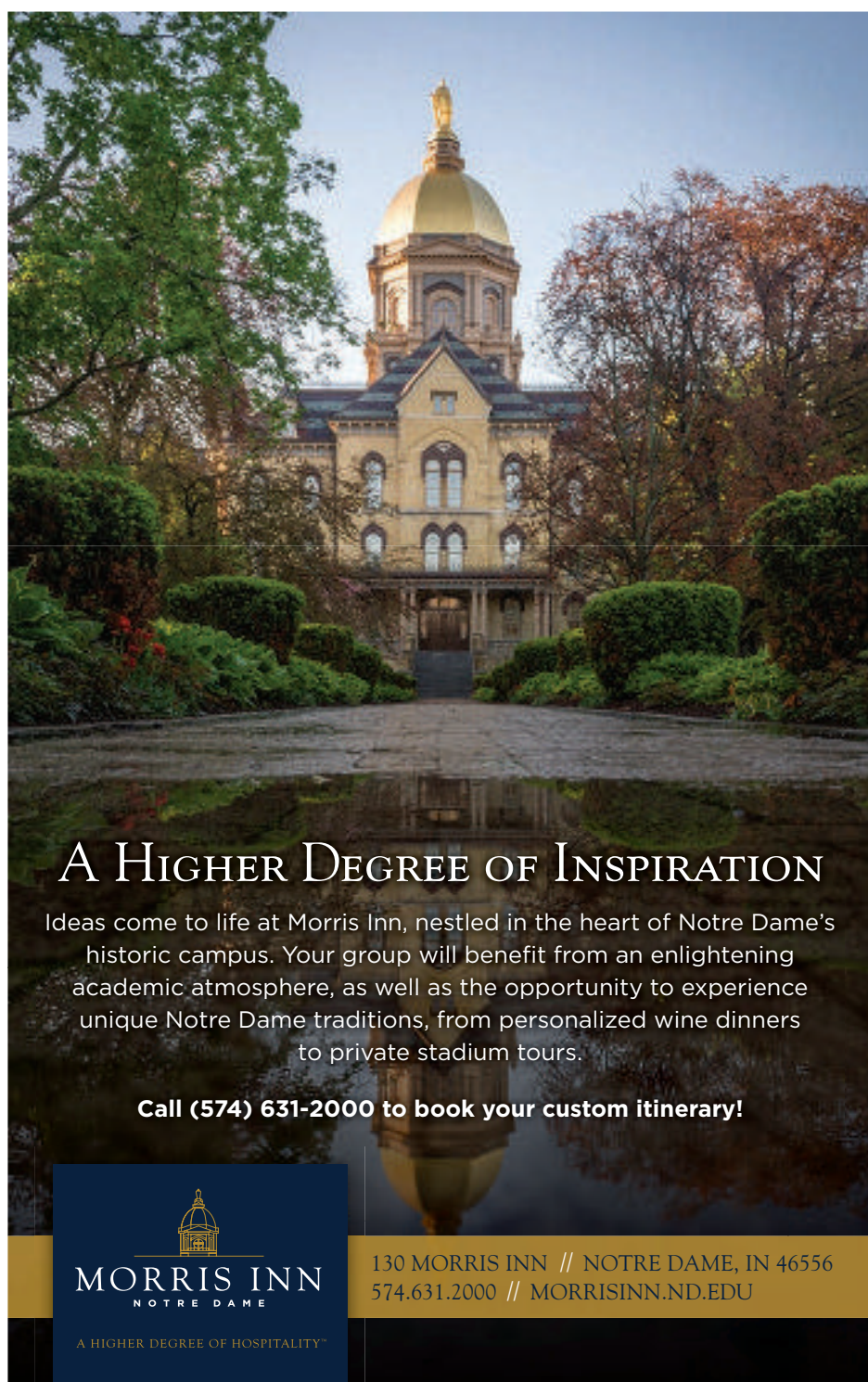
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CLIFF NOTES

happy hour

Sesqui Sangria

Courtesy of Lehigh
University
(Bethlehem, PA)

Lehigh University toasted to their Sesquicentennial celebration in 2015 with this refreshing non-alcoholic version of sangria that was enjoyed by all at a special Diner en Blanc and Brown event attended by 500 students and administrators.

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 boxes white grape juice (48 oz. each)
- 750 ml. Welch's sparkling white grape juice
- 20 oz. pulp-free orange juice

TO PREPARE:

1. Mix all the ingredients together and chill for 2-3 hours prior to serving.
 2. For garnish, add orange slices or white grapes sliced in half. **uv**
- Makes 30 servings.*



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PHOTO COURTESY OF: LEHIGH UNIVERSITY; CHRISTA NUE.



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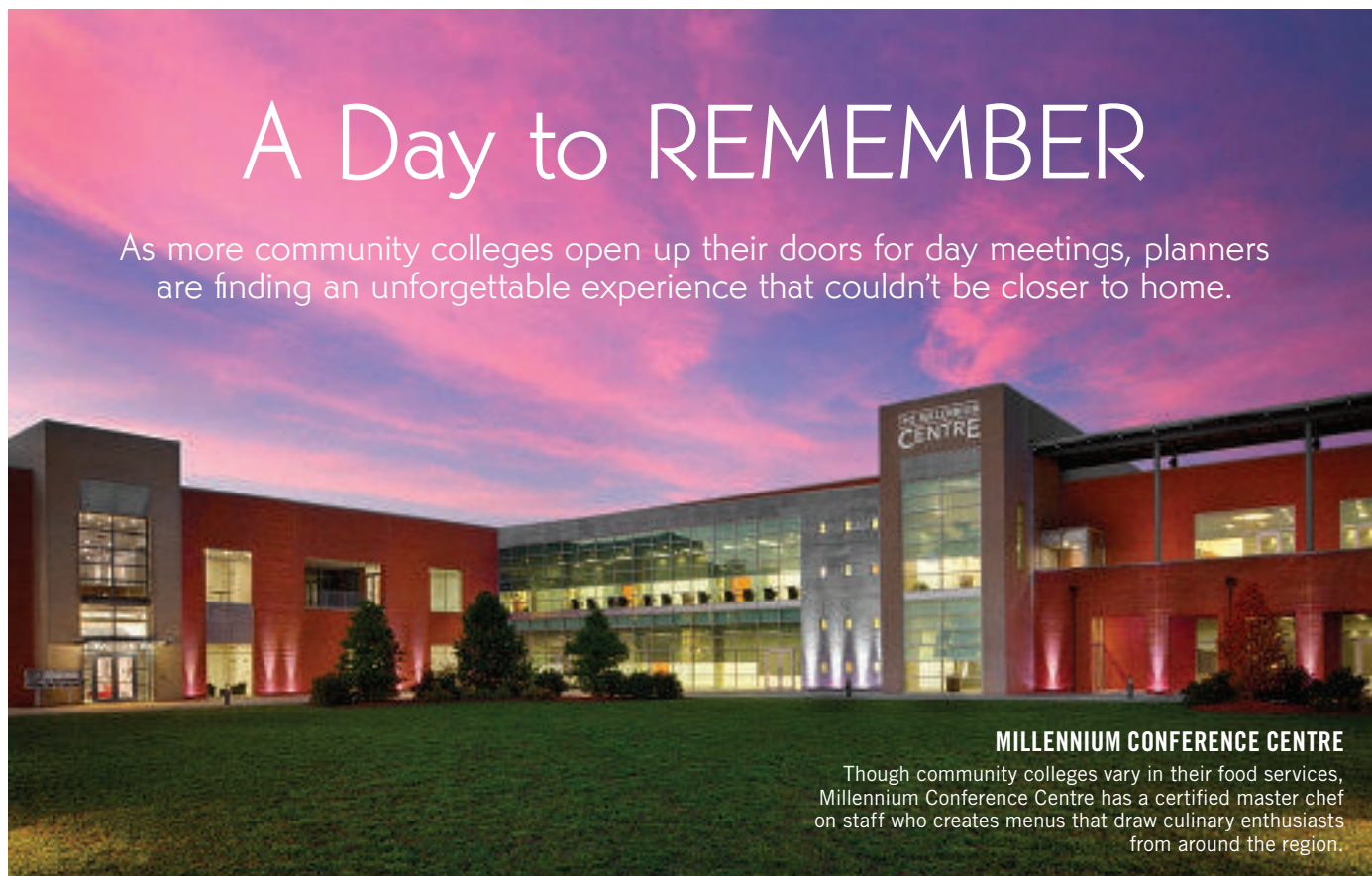


WHAT'S TRENDING

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

A Day to REMEMBER

As more community colleges open up their doors for day meetings, planners are finding an unforgettable experience that couldn't be closer to home.



MILLENNIUM CONFERENCE CENTRE

Though community colleges vary in their food services, Millennium Conference Centre has a certified master chef on staff who creates menus that draw culinary enthusiasts from around the region.

The day has come for community colleges to be regarded for their day meeting services. If you and your group are working 9-5—and don't need overnight accommodations—"our rates are very competitive and can beat those of other institutions," says Dustin Frost, auxiliary services manager of Tallahassee Community College.

In 2015, the Florida campus decided to become even more competitive by offering a block rate schedule for their 490-seat theater for groups that, more or less, need to reserve space by the hour. Day rates and half-day rates are also available for the other 15 spaces Tallahassee Community College has to offer to meeting planners, which includes two 11,000-square-foot gymnasiums, a pair of ballrooms (for 250-300 people), auditorium, and standard classrooms for 12 to 75.

"Each space comes with all the technology a meeting would need, including a computer, projector, screen, audio, and free Wi-Fi. It's all included

with the rate," says Frost who notes that nonprofits, by far, are their biggest client due to an added discount as well as a strong connection to the community. "It's in our name. Being a part of Tallahassee is something people take to heart. They look at us as their institution and want to come here."

The popularity of Columbus State Conference Center (at Columbus State Community College) follows the same rationale. "Our current president, Dr. David Harrison, is very active in the community and in building community partnerships. We do quite a bit of co-sponsored day meetings with government and educational entities,"

remarks CSCC Director Rita Bedritis, CMP, estimating that the Central Ohio-based facility pulls in 1,000-plus events with 48,000 attendees coming through every year. That's an all-time high for the 10-year-old property that occupies the entire fourth floor of the college's Center for Workforce Development building.

CSCC offers 13,000 square feet of space spread out amongst a 4,700-square-foot ballroom and balcony and six flexible breakout rooms. Pricing here, too, is all-inclusive with bundled services including a professional events management team, A/V technology, Wi-Fi, and parking.

"Now, we actually have fewer conferences under 100 people, and the average attendee per event is larger," Bedritis says of the latest trend, which she believes is due to a rise in smaller budgets that planners have to work with and her team's legwork of connecting with more

associations through organizations like MPI, PCMA, ISES, ACCED-I, and OSAE.

One of the amenities that does seem to vary at community colleges is food service. Columbus State has a list of five approved caterers they work with, for example, while Tallahassee Community College has no restrictions, as long as the food service provider can present documentation.

At Millennium Conference Centre in Johnson City, Tennessee, however, the property actually specializes in complete food and beverage service that's "considered a cut above the rest," says General Manager Adam Maurer, noting they draw "culinary enthusiasts

COLUMBUS STATE CONFERENCE CENTER

The venue offers 13,000 square feet of space for rent spread out across a lavish ballroom with balcony and six flexible breakout rooms.



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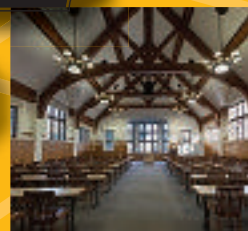
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WHAT'S TRENDING

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

throughout the region.” Menus are crafted by Certified Master Chef Jean-Claude Seruga, a Paris native who has the distinction of being the youngest CMC in French culinary history.

The setup here is a bit different since The Millennium Conference Centre is located directly next to East Tennessee State University with a pedestrian walkway connecting the two, offering convenience for university and conference attendees. As well, Millennium Conference Centre has offered exclusive day meetings since opening in 1999 with special Day Meeting Packages that are popular says Director of Operations Terry Woodward because “it offers clients an easily understood price point for less than an ‘a la carte’ structure.”

Internal clients at ETSU and local

medical groups are the most regular clientele that utilize the Centre’s 66,000 square feet of space that includes a 5,900-square-foot ballroom, two auditoriums, breakout rooms, and a centralized dining area. That’s mostly because coordinating travel into a regional airport with few direct flights “can be a challenge,” says Woodward.

At Tallahassee Community College, attracting large national events is also difficult since there are no overnight accommodations, though Frost says they do partner with local hotels to offer room block deals.

“Most would also say that this is a small challenge in relation to the meeting experience they receive,” says Woodward, noting their retention rate is 92%.

Bedritis seconds that. “Because we

are a smaller property there is that special attention and detail to service and flexibility. Our rules are not hard and fast like you might find elsewhere.”

Though perhaps the best news about these growing day meeting centers is that you can always find one in your community. **uv**

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Tallahassee Community College

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TALLAHASSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

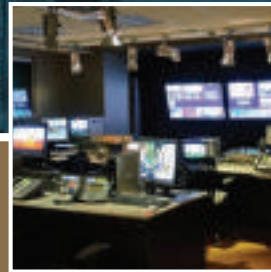
Last year, the college became an even more competitive day meeting center by offering a block rate schedule for its 490-seat theatre.

PHOTO COURTESY OF: TALLAHASSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

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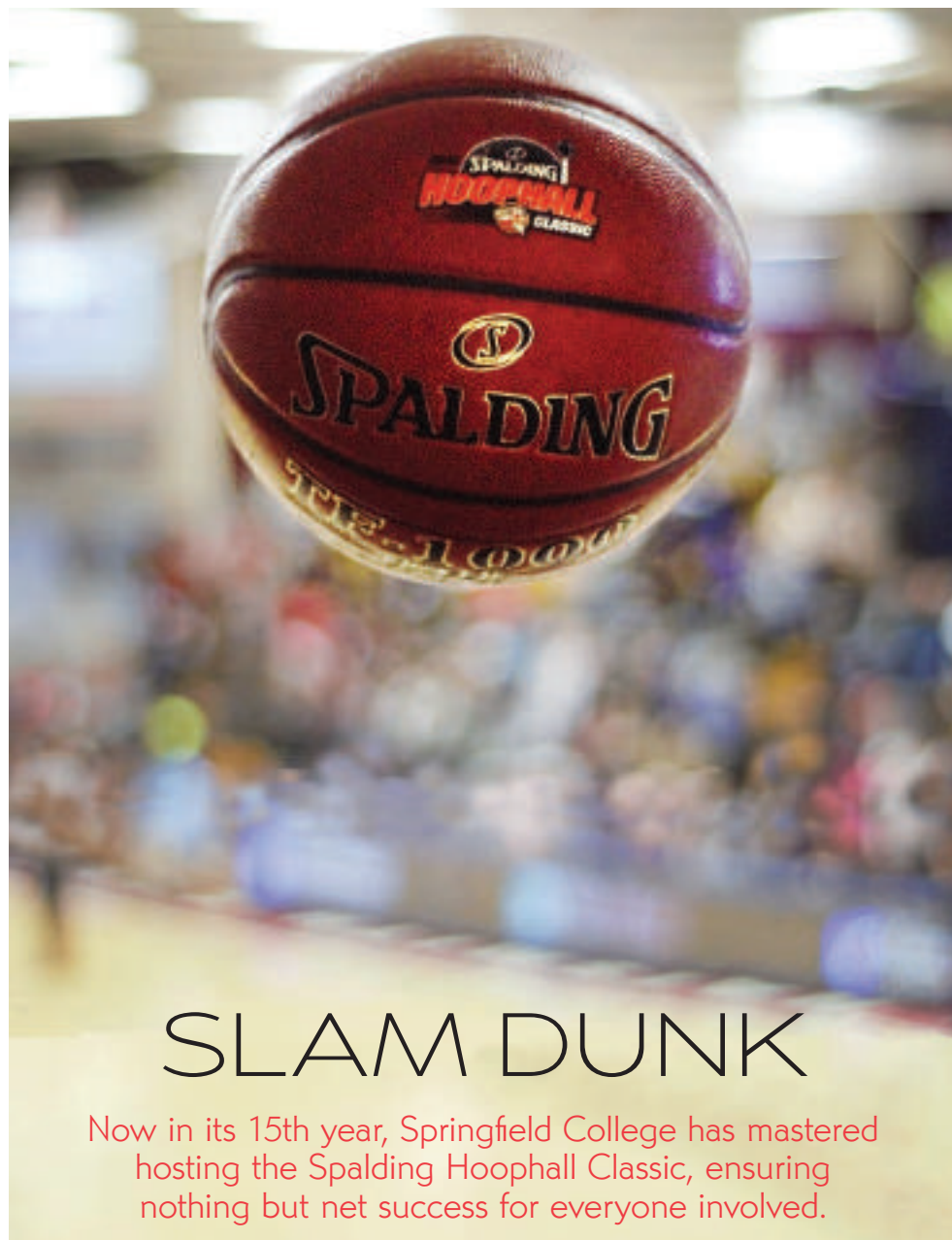
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THE MAIN EVENT

BY SELENA FRAGASSI



SLAM DUNK

Now in its 15th year, Springfield College has mastered hosting the Spalding Hoophall Classic, ensuring nothing but net success for everyone involved.

The game of basketball was invented on the Massachusetts campus of Springfield College. So, it was only logical that the annual Spalding Hoophall Classic High School Invitational—featuring 50-plus teams made up of the sport’s next stars—would take center court here.

“It’s really become a partnership between the [Naismith Memorial] Basketball Hall of Fame and Springfield College, in a symbolic way, too, since the inventor of basketball was actually on our faculty,” says Director of Conferences and

Special Events Katherine Smith, recalling how Dr. James Naismith created the game 125 years ago. He was tasked with coming up with an “athletic distraction” after a brutal Northeast winter left many of his students rowdy. The rest, as



they say, is history.

Though weather can still be a concern for the Spalding Hoophall Classic, which draws players from all over the country in the middle of January, it has never been sidelined by any winter storms. “We couldn’t afford to have that happen, especially on televised game days,” says Smith who even remembers the one time her staff had to drive to the airport to retrieve lost luggage that contained necessary uniforms.

“The major growth of the event has been in the ability to get national TV coverage,” says Greg Procino, Vice President of Operations for the Basketball Hall of Fame. In fact, the ESPN networks have covered much of the five-day program since 2005. “That, in turn, has expanded interest in viewership and for fans who come to the games.”

It’s an important point for Springfield College that has not only weathered great increases in attendance—last year alone 8,000 tickets were sold and 140 media credentials distributed—but also increased the venue’s profile with a spotlight on the college. That includes ad space in the official program book and a 30-second national television spot. To that end, the college just went through a rebranding process that produced a new

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: SPRINGFIELD COLLEGE.



Last year alone the Springfield Hoophall Classic issued 8,000 tickets and 140 media credentials, all of which puts a spotlight on the college.

logo and banners for the long weekend.

"We are on the map for five days, and we take that very seriously in how we execute all the details," says Smith, noting that the planning process is a 12-month cycle working in tandem with the Basketball Hall of Fame just as the current year wraps up. "It really becomes a microcosm of everything we do best with all our conferences, and we try to [showcase that]."

For this particular event, that means constantly being on-site providing customer service, making connections for new business, "even picking up litter in the aisles if it will make the venue look better," she jokes. She's also come up with new ideas in recent years such as turning the jogging track above the main arena into a hospitality area.

Though the college is not in session at the time of the Spalding Hoophall

Classic, Smith ensures grounds crews are available to clear sidewalks and parking lots. She also organizes a shuttle system and hires 40 part-timers to help with manpower since the program involves not only the games but also meals and concessions, sponsor activations, and facilitating large production crews (everyone is housed off-site at nearby hotels). The event has also been used in recent years as a learning lab for sports management majors who make up additional volunteers.

"We have a lot of moving parts we have to accommodate internally and externally, and I think we have put together a super team," says Smith, acknowledging the comfortability that comes with having a repeat annual event. "There's less time spent triple checking some of those details because everyone knows their role."

Procino agrees. "The working team between the Basketball Hall of Fame and Springfield College has been pretty much the same group of people for a number of years so we all know how each other works. Because of the strong partnership, any challenges we have encountered have been easily fixed." Plus, he says, the venue is perfect—beyond even those historical facets. "The college is cozy but big enough to accommodate our crowds. We use every ounce of space and jam it in there so it feels like something is really happening." **uv**

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COLLEGE ROAD TRIP

BY SELENA FRAGASSI



Southern Charm

If you're looking for a little southern hospitality for your next meeting or event, these five venues are a sweet tease of what awaits.

From North and South Carolina to Georgia, Virginia, and Florida, there's something to be said about meeting in the South. It's a place where history and attractions collide and nature is at your doorstep—and as these five venues show, it's a place where you can find true southern hospitality for every meeting, conference, and event.

Florida Gulf Coast University (Fort Myers, FL)

Having just opened in 1997, groups won't find much of anything "old school" at Florida Gulf Coast University besides its idyllic preserved surroundings. "We are able to offer very new, modern facilities in a really natural environment," says Ruth Rodrigues, director, campus reservations and records management of the sprawling campus that's set on 800 acres, half of which have been kept in their natural state. Guests can take it all

in while traversing five miles of nature trails and boardwalks.

As such, FGCU was thoughtful in the design, such as creating a 15-acre solar field to power three of its largest academic buildings and achieving Silver LEED certified status for Osprey Hall located in the campus' "resort-style" South Village where buildings have solar water heaters and parking for energy efficient cars. The campus' Northlake area is another option that's on the waterfront with a man-made beach.

Here, each of the 3,000 total beds comes with a private bedroom, a key feature that led to college ranking site Niche naming the university to its list of the 10 campuses with the best residence halls. Accommodations are available from May to August and can be reserved through the certified One-Stop Shop conference department.

During the academic year, day meetings are a great option with accommodations at eight hotels "just five minutes away," says Rodrigues. For unique spaces, she recommends the Wine Tech Lab, modeled after the Culinary Institute of America, Napa Valley campus and the interactive Client Health Education Center for smaller meetings and events. A ballroom and lecture halls are also available.

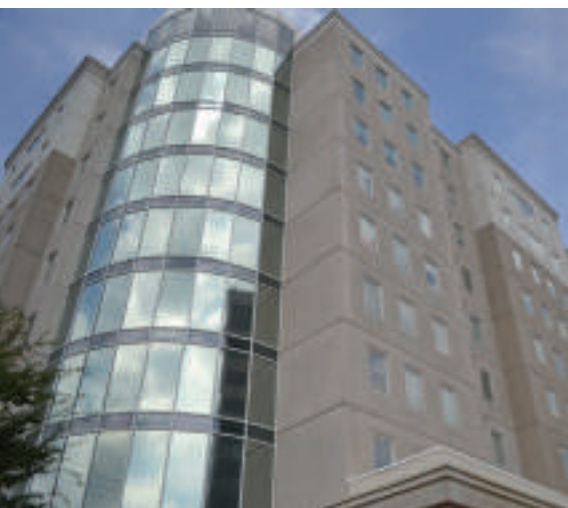
PHOTOS COURTESY OF: FLORIDA GULF COAST UNIVERSITY, GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY.

FLORIDA GULF COAST UNIVERSITY

Much of the appeal of FGCU is its idyllic surroundings, many of which are preserved in their natural state. Five miles of trails and boardwalks let you take it all in.

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

GSU's prime location in downtown Atlanta allows staff to work with planners to help manage every aspect of events held both on-site and off-site.



Georgia State University Housing (Atlanta, GA)

One of Georgia's peachiest areas is, of course, Atlanta—and one of the prime places to be if you want to experience all the city has to offer is Georgia State University. "Our entire campus is in downtown Atlanta," says Donata Davis, senior meeting coordinator for Georgia State University Housing Conference Services. The campus is in between two MARTA public transportation stops and housing is adjacent to bus and street car lines so guests can get to attractions like the Atlanta Convention Center, Centennial Park, and the Coca-Cola Center with ease. "It's a completely walkable area, and we have our own Panther Shuttle that goes all around downtown, too," furthers Davis.

Though perhaps the biggest benefit GSU provides to summer conferences is an affordable housing option in the busy metropolitan area. "We often work with larger groups that have overflow," says



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COLLEGE ROAD TRIP

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

Davis, providing an example of how the university housed 1,600 of the 50,000-person Alcoholics Anonymous conference held off-site last year. The campus currently has 2,500 beds, but that will expand to 4,200 with the opening of a new high-tech residence hall this fall.

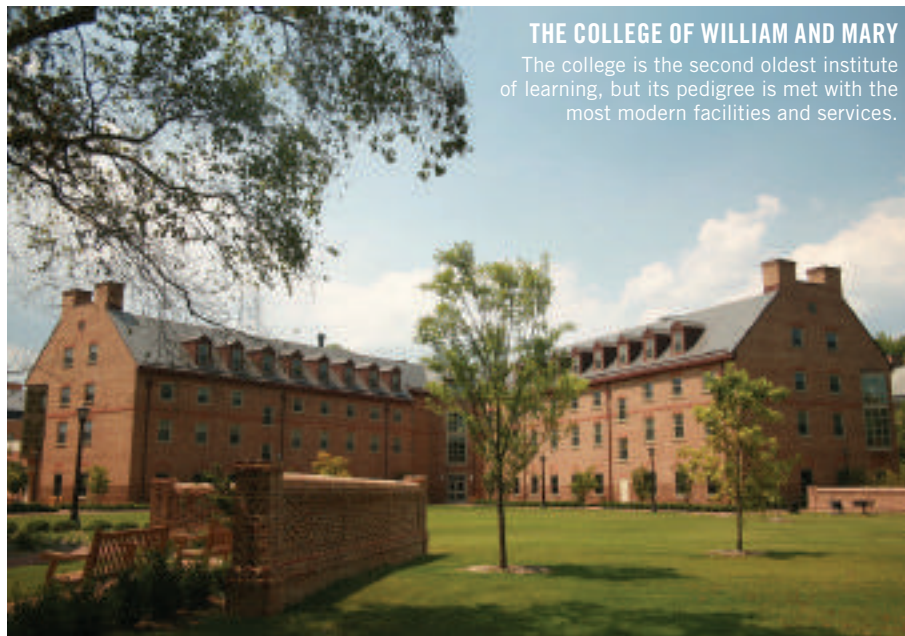
The Student Center is GSU's "central hub" that Davis and her team partner with for on-site meetings. "It has a number of conference rooms, ballrooms, and an auditorium they provide if available," she says, also noting that her team works with local venues to help accommodate day meeting space. As well, the One-Stop Shop is known for their full-scope event management services. "If you are an out-of-state client we can assist you with the full planning and logistics of any events here in Atlanta, on-site or off-site."

The College of William and Mary (Williamsburg, VA)

History repeats itself in many unique ways at this college. Not only is it the second oldest institute of higher learning in America (just behind Harvard), but it's also the nation's only college founded by a royal charter school "of King William III and Queen Mary II of England in 1693," says Mariellynn D. Maurer, director of conference services.

The College of William and Mary is the alma mater of figures like Thomas Jefferson and is across the street from Colonial Williamsburg, "the country's largest living history museum; they reenact the 18th century," says Maurer noting that the college works with the museum to provide tours and other features. "You can have 'Jefferson' be a speaker at your welcome session or have a fife and drum corps at your closing banquet." The department also offers day trips to historic plantations and Washington, D.C., three hours away.

Yet not everything is stamped in time here. The college's pedigree is also met with modern spaces and amenities in-



THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY

The college is the second oldest institute of learning, but its pedigree is met with the most modern facilities and services.



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

University of South Carolina has everything from historic architecture to very modern buildings, and quaint meeting spaces to a large arena.

cluding a beautiful, 2,000-seat outdoor Lake Matoaka Amphitheatre and a certified One-Stop Shop that offers full registration services. "We also have a big focus on sustainability with buildings that are not only state-of-the-art but are environmentally kind," says Maurer. A number of them are LEED certified, which the college hopes to continue with a new Integrated Science Center opening in August (with a greenhouse on the roof) and an Integrated Wellness Center that is also planned to break ground this year. The college also just purchased a nearby hotel with plans to turn it into a residence hall. Says

Maurer, "There's a lot coming in the next few years."

University of South Carolina (Columbia, SC)

Southern charm is a part of everyday life at this bustling campus located in South Carolina's capital city. "Because our campus is so large we have visitors here daily, and we are very welcoming," says Kate Shelton, director of continuing education and conferences, which is a certified One-Stop Shop. "We appreciate them being here and want to include them in our campus. Hospitality is what we are all about."



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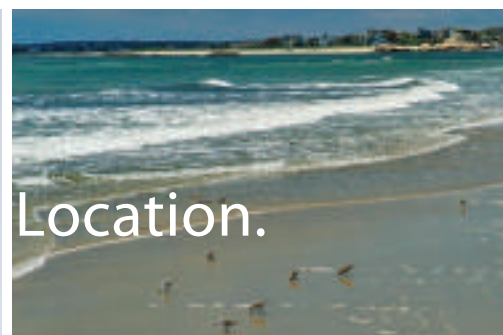
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COLLEGE ROAD TRIP

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

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WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Western Carolina University can book thrilling adventures like whitewater rafting (above), but when it's time to get down to business, venues like the John W. Bardo Fine and Performing Arts Center (below) offer state-of-the-art spaces.



That includes sharing many of the university's notable spaces such as traditional classrooms and auditoriums as well as the Russell House Student Union with a ballroom seating up to 600, a 300-seat theatre, and 11 meeting rooms. There's also the multi-purpose Campus Room for up to 400 that can be divided into two salons; in the same building is a revolving restaurant, Top of the Carolina, on the 18th floor. For much larger events, the Colonial Center is an 18,000-seat arena and the Koger Center for the Arts seats up to 2,254. "We boast everything from historic architecture to very modern buildings, quaint meeting

space to a large arena seating," says Shelton, noting the most exciting development is the new Carolina Alumni Center that opened last fall decorated with the official Gamecocks mascot motif. "You really get the spirit of our brand and hospitality there."

The university's location is also ideal, centrally located in the state and close to the coast and the mountains. "We can offer a lot of great resources for groups from the Riverbanks Zoo and Garden to a great state museum and the Columbia museum of art," some of which are in walking distance, says Shelton. "We work closely with our clients to ensure everything goes

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY.

smoothly. We really want them to have a very successful program.”

Western Carolina University (Cullowhee, NC)

For the second year in a row, this lush campus (located in the Appalachian Mountains, 50 miles from Asheville) has been voted “best outdoor adventure school” on the east coast by *Outdoor Magazine*. As Director of Conference Services Devon Nease explains, the university even has its own year-round adventure group called Basecamp Cullowhee so that visitors can explore all the nature that is right at its backdoor. “We can take folks on guided tours of white-water rafting, rock climbing, hiking, canoeing, kayaking, mountain biking, camping, caving, and backpacking; anything you can think of to do outdoors we have the equipment and staff to make it happen.”

There are some great indoors at WCU, too, including 50 smart classrooms and meeting rooms. Notable options include the John W. Bardo Fine and Performing Arts Center with a 900-seat, state-of-the-art theater and lobby for breakout sessions and registration. “It’s one of the nicest theaters in the North Carolina system,” says Nease. There’s also the Ramsey Center, an 8,000-seat arena that can be broken down to host as few as 200 people and the attached Ramsey Concourse with exterior patios for cookouts and tented events. Soon, a new 400-bed, mixed-use residence hall with dining and retail options will also be unveiled adding to the capacity to host up to 3,500 guests overnight.

“Groups especially like coming here in the summer because our climate is very attractive,” admits Nease, thinking ahead to next season. “Some come here just to get away to a place that is not crazy hot or humid.” **uv**

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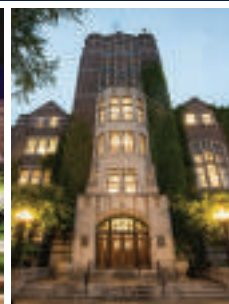
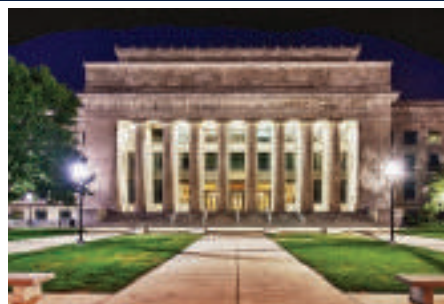
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WHAT'S ON TAP

SOMETHING IS BREWING AT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AS MICROBREWERIES AND WINERIES START TO CROP UP ON CAMPUS, GIVING PLANNERS SOMETHING TO "CHEERS" ABOUT.

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY.

There's something in the water in Fort Collins, Colorado. Since ending its "dry" spell in 1969, the town has become a literal mecca for micro beer distributors in the know of the natural resources of the Cache la Poudre River that distributes fresh snowmelt from the Rocky Mountains throughout town. "It makes [Fort Collins] an ideal place for brewing some of the nation's best beer," says the Visit Fort Collins website, and the river's desirable properties have, in essence, created the "Napa Valley of beers" with nearby institutes like Colorado State University catching on to the growth potential.

"It's become almost a fad for breweries to come here. They are all over town," says CSU Conference & Event Services Director Dezarai Brubaker. The campus will soon add to the mix, opening their own microbrewery in the fall, which will become the 21st in town behind respected brands like Odell Brewing Company and New Belgium.

The latter, in fact, donated \$1 million and equipment to CSU's new project, which will in kind be called the New Belgium Fermentation Science and Technology Lab. It is being built adjacent to the campus' popular Ramskeller Pub where "you will be able to actually see the process of fermentation and all the barrels while enjoying a drink by the glass windows, the same as if you went to any other microbrewery in Fort Collins," adds Sales & Marketing Manager Elodie Vigneron.

The New Belgium Fermentation Science and Technology Lab (and the smaller Anheuser Busch Foundation Quality Lab already in place) are primarily learning tools for the 125 or so students enrolled in CSU's newly offered (and quite rare) fermentation degree program—but the conference and event services department is also looking forward to promoting its brews and activities to the public, including conferences and visiting groups.

"A lot of groups that come to campus have found the brewing in Fort Collins to be very exciting, but up until now we've set up tours off-campus at New Belgium and Odell. Now we will be able to give that experience right here and offer packages where you can watch beer being made and then do tastings of the small batches," Brubaker envisions. Her team is also planning on promoting

Ramskeller more and more as a venue option especially since the bar, first built in the '60s, received a recent facelift as part of the Lory Student Center upgrades in October 2014.

"So if you have a conference and then, in the evening, you want to have a reception at the bar, it has multiple TVs, pool tables, and music," says Vigneron noting the laidback setting is great for a more informal social event or as an addendum to a meeting. "Some conferences are looking into that for the summer with the Olympic Games and World Cup events. Our international clients want to watch those sporting events while they are still attending their conference. We are particularly excited that we can promote the idea to them since many have no idea about craft brewing, and that's one more level of interest we can provide right here."



Colorado State University's popular Ramskeller Pub will soon add on with the adjacent New Belgium Fermentation Science and Technology Lab that will offer guests the chance to try home-made microbrews and take tours.

THE GROWING BUZZ

In Canada, the craft beer craze has also hit a fever pitch.

"The movement really began in the late '70s/early '80s, but what we are seeing now is a larger percentage in the market being taken by craft beer, and the response in stores is to carry more of them on shelves. With that economic boost it's become impetus for people to go and make their dreams come true, open a microbrewery, and be their own boss. Not all of them make it but a good portion do—and the thing is there's enormous capacity for growth. It's not slowing down, it's gaining speed and will do so for a long time to come," says Dale Wood, an associate professor and chair of the Department of Chemistry at Bishop's University in Quebec. He's also the founder and co-owner/operator of the campus' brand-new Bishop's Arches Brewery (opened in August 2015) and says that the popularity and attention paid to microbrewing was "absolutely essential" in getting the university to come on board with the idea.

"It actually started with a course I began offering about seven years ago called 'The History and Science of Brewing.' I developed it as a means of introducing chemistry, biology, and biochemistry to non-science students. And those students continuously asked why there wasn't a lab to go along with this idea. A lot jokingly said, 'wouldn't it be great if we could actually brew beer?'" recalls Wood. "The more I developed the concept, I thought that's a good question. Why can't we get a brewery going?"

He originally pitched the idea to the university about three-and-a-half years ago. "They said yes right away as they recognized the multi-disciplinary aspect of a microbrewery, not only for the science department, but it had elements of business, financing and accounting, entrepreneurship, even fine arts as students in graphic design could contribute with the beer labels. It touched all aspects of

the university."

Bishop's also realized the revenue potential. Though the brewery was considered an academic project and was therefore eligible for renovation funds supplied by the provincial government, the university did have to buy fermenters and appliances, which was done with the recognition that the brewery would be able to generate money to pay back the debt.

"So we decided if we were going to make beer we might as well sell beer to generate revenue for the project and the university, and so from the beginning we looked at getting proper permits to brew and sell," says Wood, noting they mostly have four to five varieties ready for purchase at any time. To do so, the university had to complete a federal and provincial process, which provided the two permits.

If you're wondering how on earth a brewery would be approved for a college campus, well in Canada, consider that Bishop's has the benefit of having a lowered drinking age.



TESTING THE LIMITS

If you're wondering how on earth a brewery would be approved for a college campus, well in Canada, consider that Bishop's has the benefit of having a lowered drinking age. In Quebec, it's only 18 years of age so "our students come in from the first year and are legally able to participate. That's something that is critical to us," says Wood.

It's less common in the States since the legal drinking age is a hard 21 years. "We are the only Division 1 University to have a bar on campus and can serve alcohol in our athletic venues," says Vigneron of CSU where the Lory Student Center, and its ballroom, have liquor licenses. "It's really the culture of where we are. Brewing and craft beers are essential to tourism and our community. It's provided a lot of jobs here and

brought revenue. And brewing is now becoming an art and science so it's been a perfect fit for places like New Belgium to partner with us to legitimize what they do with even more expertise and acknowledgement."

Brubaker does admit, "We had a discussion several years ago about underage drinking and over-drinking and really wondered if we should we be selling beer on campus, but I think our new fermentation lab is the answer to give it more credit; it's more about having a learning living lab for educational purposes rather than just having a bar on campus."

Not that responsible adults can't enjoy its rewards.

THE TOAST OF THE TOWN

"All of [the events] are buying kegs," says Wood, noting that faculty and student events have proven to be the most popular, including beginning of the semester, holiday, and graduation parties. "But any group that wants to have our beer available, we are more than happy to accommodate them."

For now there's no restaurant or bar attached at Bishop's as there is at CSU and tours are more difficult because the facilities only fit up to 12 people, "but who knows what the future will bring," says Wood, as the program continues to attract attention.

As well, he says, "Conference Services does a good job of making people aware we are available and planners are taking us up on it."

So, too, at Colorado State, which not only hosts the 300-person Master Brewers Association of America Conference every other year, but Vigneron also remembers a recent American Society of Virology conference that, through a partnership with former CSU students, was actually able to make their own brew, fittingly called Hopatitis. "We made about 12 kegs for the conference and gave everyone a beer glass with the



Opened in August 2015, the Bishop's Arches Brewery at Quebec's Bishop's University is a learning lab for students taking courses in the history and science of brewing. They produce up to five varieties at a time, which can be used for conferences and events on campus.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF: SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY, TILCO ARCHITECTURE.



In 2017, Sonoma State University will open the Wine Spectator Learning Center (seen above in renderings) that will further showcase programs around wine for the general public. It will also complement the instruction provided at the school (featured at left), one of the only in the country to offer a graduate degree in wine business.

logo of the conference and the name of beer imprinted on it. It was a big hit," she says.

SOMETHING TO WINE ABOUT, TOO

Beer, however, is not the only idea fermenting on campus. At California's Sonoma State University, the Wine Business Institute is also a burgeoning department that, since 2008, has been offering undergrad and MBA degrees as well as professional certificate programs, including several online options. "We are still the only place in America where you can earn a graduate degree in the wine business, and the only executive-level wine business degree in the world," says Director Ray Johnson, and enrollment is skyrocketing.

Geographically speaking, Sonoma State University is in the "perfect triangle" for such a platform. "Napa Valley is to the east, Sonoma County to the west, and just to the south is San Francisco so there's a nexus of world-class wine production at our back door," he furthers. "It's turned out to be good niche for us as folks who already have great careers in wine production are doing masters with us as the industry becomes more professional and people are focused on getting numbers as well as quality right."

There's no production done at Sonoma State University; rather, the focus is on "preparing students to take on business leadership roles in a dynamic and evolving industry," says Johnson. However, the campus nonetheless has a lot of intersection with various partnering wineries such as the Wilson Winery and Kokomo Winery where students can shadow winemakers. Johnson's department can also set up tours for visiting groups, working directly with alumni at

the Sonoma County Tourism division.

In June, Sonoma State University will also break ground on the new Wine Spectator Learning Center, projected to open in 2017. "For us it will become a showcase of programs around wine that we can share with the public, the wine industry, and the broader business community. We'll be able to bring people to campus to host events around wine," Johnson says. "For consumers, that might mean contributing to their programs by bringing in alumni who are connected with the university and work within the wine industry, or for example, bringing on board Cuban sommeliers who are visiting northern California. We have great partnerships, and the university can offer a broader view of the industry that's not just commercial. People call on us to be the objective look at the industry as a whole."

The educational component is a huge part of what separates universities from the run-of-the-mill brewery or winery experiences, says Wood.

"I think what we can offer is the academic aspect. We can answer questions from procedure to in-depth science, so depending on the level of the group or what they are looking for it can be a fun or educational experience with a tour and tasting," which is something universities hope attendees can remember long after the last sip. **uv**

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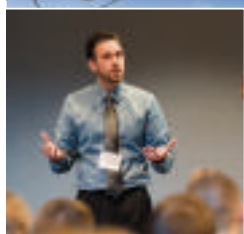
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ONE and Done ✓

With all the talk of One-Stop Shops, these three universities have taken their services even further by creating comprehensive event management programs that do all the planning for the planner. *By Selena Fragassi*

Imagine for a second that you didn't have to do your job. No, seriously.

Imagine if, after simply selecting your venue, someone else would “take it from there.” They would create a unique website for your conference, design all the tools for registration, collect all the payments and data, track financials, coordinate the details of food and beverage and A/V services, execute room setup, plan activities and spouse programs, book travel itineraries, update and manage social media accounts, and even print out all the official programs.

You're not dreaming. That, in fact, has become the reality that many meeting and event planners have found working with colleges and universities that have started to carve out comprehensive conference management packages.

“For us it’s so easy, and it saves the planner a lot of time,” admits Julia Clarke, business development manager at University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, Canada, which has evolved their full-service conference management program over a period of ten years to become a dedicated division within the conference services department. They offer all the components listed above through optional and flexible meeting planning packages, which are starting to become popular. Clarke recently outlined the program in a well-received speech at the Canadian University and College Conference Organizer’s Association (CUCCOA) summit for colleagues that are starting to buy into the idea.

“For us, it started when we saw the need, specifically with our internal customers on campus, to help to run a conference, whether that be basic logistical planning or offering full registration services and website creation,” she continues. “It evolved from there. Our job is now so much more than just booking rooms.”

FROM START TO FINISH

Instead, Clarke and her staff “take an event from start to finish,” with each person honing in on a specialty to ensure everything is streamlined and given the utmost attention. “We build a committee around each conference. One person manages travel, one person creates the registration site, and normally myself or our senior director does the logistical planning,” she says, explaining the inherent benefit. “We are always in the loop, so we can anticipate and ideally prevent challenges that might come up rather than someone coming in and planning it all on their own. We fully understand the entire meeting process, and how it flows.”

That came as a huge benefit to Jodi Goguen who works for the Student Recruitment Office at UNB and says she has yet to find the complete “start-to-finish” services off-site that she does on campus through Clarke and her team.

“Michelle, Julia, and the conference service team



The team behind the conference management program at University of New Brunswick (featured at right) can offer a full range of services, from venue booking to social media management and website creation.



Duke's Associate Director of University Center Activities and Events Jim Hodges (at left) works with his team to arrange comprehensive registration tools for events held at Penn Pavilion, a 25,000-square-foot flexible events space for up to 750 people.

handle absolutely everything and anything that you need—they see everything as an opportunity where I often saw challenges or road blocks,” she says. “They saved us not only time but also money since they have excellent relationships with vendors both on and off campus. They also always have unique and innovative ideas that we could never think of; there has never been one issue or hurdle that they didn’t have a plan for.”

That’s an important selling point, says Megan Akatu, director of sales and marketing for the Morris Inn & Notre Dame Conference Center at the Indiana-based university. “We find that planners like to work with other planners. That way, they have ample time to discuss their event and review all the details. The creative juices start flowing, and the next thing you know [there’s] a custom menu and a beautiful room.”

THE TEAM SPIRIT

To help, the Notre Dame Conference Center has its very own Events Team at its disposal, one of the oldest official meeting planning departments at a university—it’s been around for 35 years. It’s comprised of a director of events, four event specialists, two wedding specialists, and two registration coordinators that automatically work with clients when a meeting or event is booked to iron out logistics, housing, and décor. Complete registration services—including website creation, payment processing, badges, and follow-ups—are also available at an additional tier.

After the event specialists determine menus, A/V

needs, and timing for events, they enter the information into an event management system, called EBMS, that helps them coordinate with the kitchen and banquet staff. The Event Team also controls overnight accommodations and works with the Office of Housing on the client’s behalf to secure blocks at the adjacent Morris Inn or dormitories for larger summer conferences. “We have individual rooms and keys assigned and have developed a sign-in/sign-out [system] with the residence hall managers so that they know where everyone is and can keep the meeting planner informed.”

One of the ways Duke University, located in North Carolina, has set itself apart is through its wide-ranging registration services. “We have had varying degrees of registration services for at least 15 years, and we are continually growing that business on campus,” says Jim Hodges, associate director of University Center activities and events.

FINDING THE ONLINE LINK

At Duke, the conference and events services office is part of the student union, which is a unique model supporting not only campus conferences but also event logistics for campus activities and student events, too. “So we are the logistical support for any programs on campus, whether they are conferences, departmental meetings, or student events.” Their operations have also transformed over the years, from a paper and snail mail operation to a more convenient process that Hodges equates to shopping on Amazon.com. “You put what you want in your



Event specialists at the Notre Dame Conference Center include Megan Akatu (at right) that work to create long-term relationships with clients needing help with renting spaces and ironing out logistics, housing and decor. Optional registration packages are also available.

‘cart,’ provide a credit card, and you’re done. ...Most of the work is done on our end to get the website correct for the client, which means they really need to map out their website and have that planning done before they meet with us,” he continues, “But once it’s solidified, including all the different price points, price breaks, and however they need to set it up, all the attendee has to do is pay, they get a confirmation, and they are good to go.”

His department uses the same software for website development to process meeting room requests and summer accommodations, which further simplifies the facilitation of a meeting or event. The University Center staff has also started offering abstract management services much to the delight of academic meeting planners.

Having such streamlined procedures has been a godsend, says Hodges. “Twenty years ago, faculty and external planners oftentimes had an assistant, but they are few and far between now. So having these assisted services has increased the business coming to the conference and events office, and the revenue generation,” he says. Though the registration services are optional, he estimates that, in just the first half of the 2015-2016 fiscal year, the department has fulfilled more than 4,000 space requests, worked with 75 unique conferences and, received 11,000 registrations totaling \$1.2 million in fees.

ROOM FOR GROWTH

Having the event management programs at the Notre Dame Conference Center is a bonus for Akatu as well.

“We do find the dedication of an event specialist does improve client loyalty. Our clients have long-term relationships with the event specialists and know that they will work hard to coordinate all of the details of their event,” she says.

So, too, at University of New Brunswick. “We get a lot of people who keep coming back to book with us,” says Clarke noting that about 70% of internal clients use the event management programs for large conferences (of 80+ people) in some way since theirs is an à la carte service.

While the universities interviewed don’t necessarily have event management programs, Hodges notes that “one of my assistant managers did come to us through the event industry and another was an undergrad at Duke who worked with the Union, so there is a lot of experience in our team.”

At the Notre Dame Conference Center, several of the staff “have been with us for over 25 years and have a vast knowledge of our clients and how to navigate the campus to provide a single point of contact,” says Akatu. The other half have come from former corporate meeting planning positions. “Because of the varying backgrounds, we engage in a great deal of training. Everyone participates in Guest Service training because we want all clients to be treated as if they are VIPs.”

Clarke is also working towards her CMP designation and the UNB department is part of professional organizations such as PCMA and MPI, which they use for continued training opportunities.

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That has helped extend the branches of the conference management program even further, she says, to now working with meetings and events that are not even held on their campus that still need help managing programs—that includes this year's Canada Wide Science Fair held off-site in Montreal. "It's a whole spin off, essentially we have people working as meeting planners within our conference services."

At Notre Dame Conference Center, event specialists have also started working and developing relationships with local decorators. "Together we can walk the client through linen and floral selections, as well as uplighting and other décor elements and actually have samples in the office for them," says Akatu, explaining the decision to expand with external talent. "We want everyone working with us to say that this was the best experience they ever had." **uv**



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INDUSTRY UPDATES

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BY SELENA FRAGASSI

Illinois' North Central College in the Midst of a Building Boom

Last fall, the college in Naperville, Illinois opened the doors to a new residence hall that offers single, double, and quadruple occupancy suites for up to 229 total people. Each suite is fully furnished and comes complete with a living room area, kitchenette, and private bathroom (or bathrooms). Great for meetings, the building is a one-stop for business purposes, too, and is geared towards corporate training and conferences. In addition to guest rooms, it also boasts a large breakout meeting space, computer lab, lounges on each floor, and Wi-Fi access throughout the building.

Earlier in 2015, the college also broke ground on a new 125,000-square-foot Science Center “that ranks among the most transformative facility upgrades in the College’s 154-year history,” according to the *Chicago Tribune*. It’s expected to wrap up by the summer of 2017 and will offer high-tech facilities for students looking to advance in STEM fields. Inside will be 15 classrooms/seminar rooms, a lecture hall, and multiple gathering spaces that could also become beneficial to groups in the non-academic season.

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Old Is New Again at Unity College with Modern Farmhouse Project

In the year 2000, Unity College did the unthinkable: turning a two-story 19th century farmhouse and barn on the Maine campus into the college’s Center for the Performing Arts. When it opened 15 years ago, guests were able to have access to a 200-seat theater as well as a banquet hall and art gallery. Administrative offices are also housed inside. However the college was not done. Realizing how expensive energy costs would be to operate the building, personnel started investigating ways to reduce costs and become more environmentally friendly.

The “green energy project” reached its completion in January, which included in no short order replacing light sources with LED lamps, installing heavier insulation and air sealing in the attic while also spray foaming the basement, and upgrading to modern, programmed air sources for air conditioning and heating uses. The cost for the project was estimated at more than \$100,000, part of which was supplied through grants; however, the college estimates it will save nearly \$15,000 annually and also cut down significantly on electricity and heating oil. “We’re proud to be able to demonstrate how to modernize an older building for 21st-century uses. It’s an example of solving legacy efficiency issues using partnerships, creative thinking, and state-of-the-art technology,” Unity College President Melik Peter Khoury told the *Portland Press Herald*. UniqueVenues.com/UnityCollege

MacEwan Identifies with All Gender Washrooms

The students asked and MacEwan listened. At the request of the Students' Association of MacEwan University, the Edmonton, Alberta campus has started introducing all gender washrooms. Signage bearing the words "all gender" (rather than unisex, which is also limiting) appears on the doors of a number of single-occupant washrooms indicating that they are accessible by anyone of any gender, including gender variant individuals, as well as people with disabilities who have a personal care attendant, and those with chronic illnesses.

"Transgender and gender variant individuals often experience open or covert emotional abuse and physical harassment when using gender-segregated washrooms. All-gender washrooms are important in contributing to their sense of safety, well-being, and security when exercising their basic right to use a washroom," said a statement on the official university website. Cathryn Heslep, vice-president of student services for the university, also added, "University is a time of growth, learning, discovery, and finding one's way in the world. We are happy to be part of that process, and we are committed to supporting various diversity initiatives for students, faculty, and staff, including all gender washrooms." 

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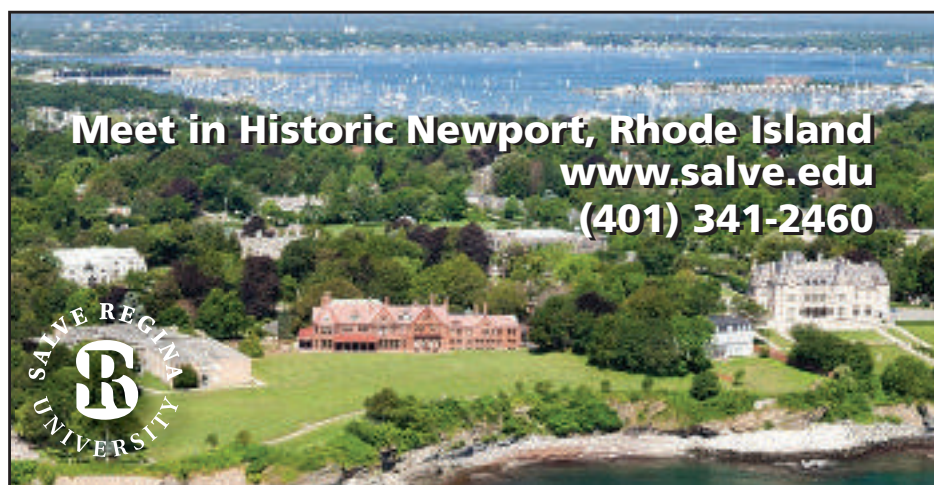
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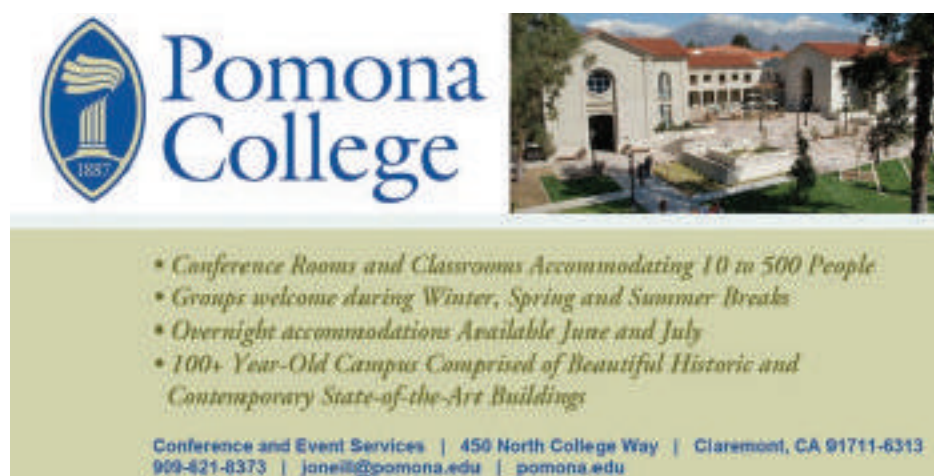
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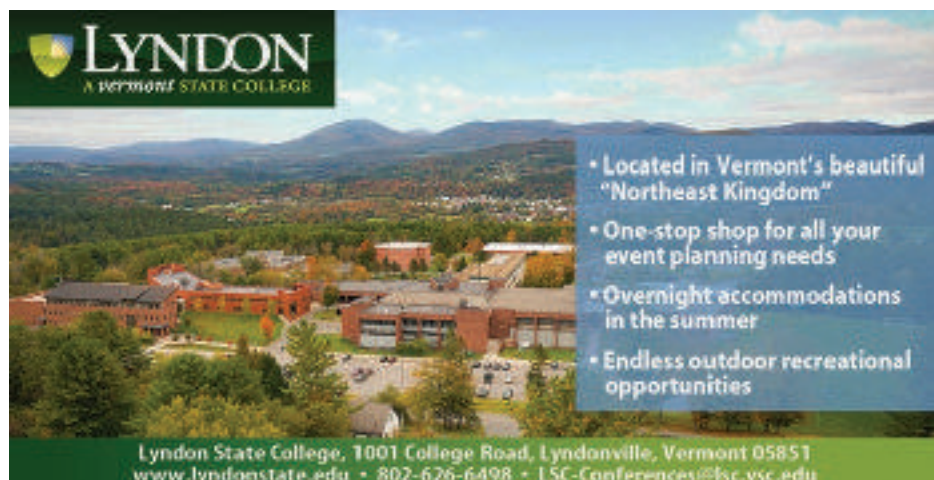
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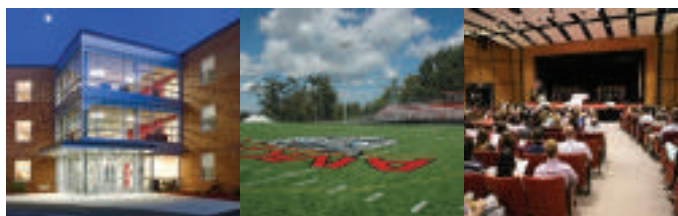


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DEAN'S LIST

BY SELENA FRAGASSI

THE GRADUATE

As an alumnus of UCLA, Jason Walley couldn't wait to get back to campus—and when he did, the perfect job was practically waiting for him.

"I'm a lifelong learner," admits Jason Walley. "I know a lot of people may say that about themselves, but in our information age, I try to stay on top of what is going on and educate myself in order to stay up-to-speed on everything." True to his word, the once history major at UCLA has made it his career to continually research and devour information. This time around, though, it's used to enhance the university's collegiate conference department where he has worked for 13 years and was recently promoted to director of sales for conferences and catering.

"Since graduating I had been looking to find a job at UCLA," Walley says, admitting demand was high. Yet after working for a number of years developing Musiker Discovery Programs for college-bound high schoolers, he finally found an opening as a sales manager. "UCLA is a prestigious school, and I think having that DNA within the team is a positive thing and provides a connection to the campus beyond a paycheck." That bond has helped Walley to triumph in his role, bringing Olympic committees to campus, gaining attention for all of Housing & Hospitality services from the California Council for Excellence, and becoming involved in the Association of Collegiate Conference and Events Directors-International (ACCED-I).

"I don't think kids are running around saying, 'I want to be a collegiate conference professional one day,' but it's a job that, if you're lucky, you fall into and it fits your personality."

Unique Venues: How does being an alum benefit your role and your clients?

Jason Walley: "I have realized I have a unique experience to offer clients that can help them not just with logistics, but to give them an additional level of familiarity with the campus and help them solve headaches to make their programs better."

UV: In what ways has the department changed in your 13 years, and how were you instrumental in shaping that growth?

JW: "In the beginning, I spent a lot of time

developing and managing the relationship between our sales office and operations, and creating work teams to solve issues. Working together made us more forgiving of each other and that helped move us into the next phase. I also went a step further and helped spearhead an initiative to apply for an award with the California Council for Excellence so Housing & Hospitality could use the process, and the scrutiny of examiners, to look at the department and tell us where we were doing things right or could do things better. I've done many improvement projects, like helping to create a professional development program for managers within housing.

UV: What other accomplishments at UCLA are you particularly proud of?

JW: "Most recently, helping to manage the International Special Olympics in L.A. last summer. I also participated in L.A.'s (unsuccessful) bid for the 2016 Olympic Games. The Olympic Committee came to campus, and I toured them around and gave them a sense of what we could do for them."

UV: Are there trends or developments you are uncovering this year?

JW: "L.A. is a top market in the hospitality industry. Being here, we are seeing rates go through the roof at hotels for sleeping accommodations, catering, and everything else. This trend is going to continue to be a benefit to us, making us one of the best values in the market." **UV**



JASON WALLEY
Director of Sales for Conferences
and Catering at UCLA

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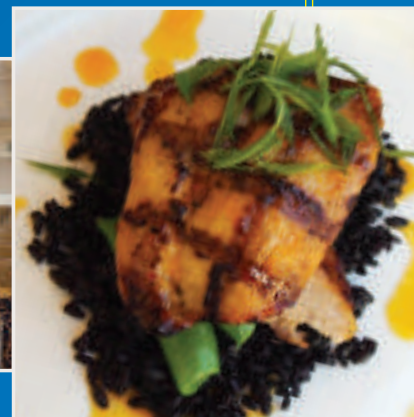
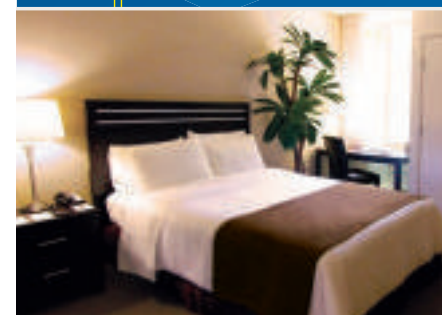


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