

SUCSESSES & STORIES/FALL 2015 – SPRING 2016

HILTON COLLEGE

PORT

RAITS

IN HOSPITALITY

#IamHospitality

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON
CONRAD N. HILTON COLLEGE



CELEBRATING THE BEST
IN HOSPITALITY EDUCATION
1969-2019



WE ARE **CONRAD N. HILTON COLLEGE.**

WE ARE **HOSPITALITY.**

WE ARE **THE BEST** in hospitality education and research as
regarded globally by the academic and hospitality communities.

We embrace and foster an environment that includes

Community... Relevancy... Collaboration... Multiculturalism...

Experiential Learning... Innovation... Integrity... Passion...

THIS IS **OUR MISSION.**



UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON
CONRAD N. HILTON COLLEGE



THIS IS HOW WE ROLL!

An Interview with Dean Reynolds

July 1st marked Dr. Dennis Reynolds' one-year anniversary as the new dean of Hilton College. After the remarkable jam-packed schedule he has maintained, all of the people he has met and everything he has experienced, learned and accomplished, it's fair to say that we can no longer call him the "new" dean.

Dean Reynolds flew into Houston right along with Tropical Storm Bill to take the reins as the College's seventh dean. He arrived from Pullman, Washington, where he held an endowed professorship and served as director of Washington State's Wine Business Management Program at the School of Hospitality Business

Management. He's traded snow for rain – *lots and lots* of rain – and is "okay with that" after years of weathering snow – *lots and lots* of snow – in Pullman and Ithaca, and Boston and Philadelphia before that, where he held both academic and industry positions. Flooding? Humidity? All worth it to be able to wear shorts in January, he attests.

Dean Reynolds hit the ground running and is *not* slowing down. He's met with key constituents throughout the country, including the new president of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the iconic Eric Hilton, area industry leaders and, of course, faculty and staff in both Houston and San Antonio – among countless others.

He has attended alumni mixers, represented the College at industry trade shows in NYC and Chicago, joined his partner deans in Lausanne, Switzerland, to meet the first cohort of students enrolled in our new global master's program, conferred diplomas to UH hospitality graduates in Lima, Peru, presented at global hospitality and tourism conferences in Bangkok and Hong Kong, and explored possible collaborations with universities in Seoul, Korea.

Just two of the many highlights of his first year? His welcome reception, which included a proclamation from then-Mayor Annise Parker declaring that September 15, 2015, was officially "Dean Dennis Reynolds Day" in Houston; and the ribbon-cutting ceremony with Hilton Worldwide's CEO Chris Nassetta to open the Hilton Legacy Exhibit during the 20th Annual Hospitality Industry Hall of Honor.

He and his wife Julia, along with the youngest of their two daughters (the eldest is away at college), have adjusted well to life in the Lone Star State and are enjoying the people, the food and the welcoming embrace of Houston hospitality.

We sat down with Dean Reynolds to ask him about some of his observations and his most noteworthy accomplishments after one year at the helm of Hilton College. One word you'll see repeated often in his answers is "amazing." And, the words "we" and "us" rather than "I." He could not be more sincere. It's just "how he rolls."

by Debra Kay Maurer

How has your family adjusted to your role as dean?

We knew what was coming and my family was all in. Students need to know how important it is to have a work-family balance, and we feel it's important to demonstrate how much more effective you can be if you have the support of family. Does it mean giving a little bit more? Yeah. But that's okay. I think the most telling was our first welcome picnic. The students were just as interested in talking to my wife – maybe even more so – as they were to me. And that's great. She's more fun! Julia has attended every major event and lots of smaller ones in between. At this point, wherever we go, people run up to her first. I'd rather have it that way.

How have your initial impressions of the College changed since you've been here?

I was already familiar with the College and I knew the quality of the faculty. What's changed for me was my impression of the students. They are rock stars! I see them doing great things and truly changing the future of the hospitality industry.

What surprised you about the College?

I think what surprised me most is how many great things the College is doing that I just didn't realize when I first signed on. Things like our amazing new global master's program... the breadth and depth of our undergraduates... the caliber of our doctoral students who are part of our first Ph.D. cohort... Things like Peru. Who knew? There is so much that we do and do well. We're now talking about how to better communicate this to our external audiences, so that people aren't surprised the way I was.

Was your first year harder or easier than you expected?

It's been fun. At the end of the day, if it's not fun then you shouldn't be doing it. But sure, some things have been harder; some things have been easier. Like every institution of higher learning, things tend to move at "academic light speed," but what's been really refreshing to me is the support we've received from the Provost and the President. Having the full support of the University makes such a difference in what we'll be able to accomplish.

How have you been received and supported by the College's community?

The support has been phenomenal. From younger and older alumni, the faculty and staff, the other UH deans – everyone has just been amazingly supportive. I can't believe how many comments and emails I've received – and continue to get – that say, "What do you need to make you successful?" And it's all genuine. Our donors have been equally amazing.

What is your fundraising philosophy?

To me, at least for the first couple of years, it's important to "friendraise," not just fundraise. I want people to get to know me as a person – they have to know what I want to see for the College and I have to learn what they see for the College. It can't just be my vision. It has to be an alignment of what I want to do and what they want to do to contribute... then we can determine how we can help each other to benefit the College... I think I've been fairly successful in finding several common touchpoints. It's been a lot of travel, but it's been a good investment of time. I think we'll see the benefits of that certainly, within my first five years and beyond that, for sure.

What has been your biggest challenge?

Probably just learning all the nuances of the College. We're a big operation, operating within a bigger university, so the learning curve has been substantial. While that's made it fun and interesting, you don't know what you don't know. My goal to meet every single person who works in this building through one-on-one meetings – for example – was lofty and laudable, but it was also a goal that took a long time to satisfy. Knowing that now, I would not have done it any differently. I learned so much about the depth of humanity here at the College... It was amazing to me how conversations with 115 people I barely knew, or didn't know at all, unfolded. Some of these conversations were deeply personal, and the fact that so many were willing to share so much and trusted me with their confidence felt really, really good. It's been time well spent to invest in these relationships.

What has been your greatest reward?

The people. In this past year, the recognition our faculty has received at the University and academy level has been unprecedented. We're not nearly as big as some of the other colleges here, so to have our faculty receive UH's prestigious Career Award for excellence in teaching over the course of a University career (Dr. Agnes DeFranco) and the Instructional Technology Award for innovative teaching using instructional technology (Dr. Cristian Morosan) is very gratifying. Our faculty have also been very research productive. Last year, they published more manuscripts in top journals than ever before. We've also been able to promote staff from within. We have some really good people, and that's a huge competitive advantage.

What has been your biggest accomplishment?

The external review, which was fully funded thanks to a generous grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. We just finished one of the hardest things you can do as an organization, which is to hand pick people from all over the world and say, "Okay, come review us – come tear us apart." It's analogous to having people in your home; there are just certain doors you keep closed. With this exercise, no doors were closed. We will benefit from this greatly as an organization in the long term, but it will also make everything very, very public.

Who was on the review team?

We were so blessed to have had an amazing review team that included industry leaders and faculty members from peer/aspirant colleges from Europe and North America. Every person I called said yes unequivocally and no one asked about an honorarium or if travel expenses would be covered. Members traveled for onsite meetings that lasted all day and into the night. They also divided into four subcommittees and held Skype meetings almost weekly. They were committed to this process. They wanted to be here, and that really says something. (See page 9 for committee members.)

What areas did the review cover?

There were four “big buckets” that the team examined: 1) curriculum; 2) organizational operations, including social media; 3) everything external, which includes development, alumni relations and executive education; and 4) student-related services, such as recruitment, internships, placement and again social media. They also looked at the financial performance of the College and the hotel. They looked at RevPAR, occupancy rates, the number of students working in the hotel, how much supervision is required for managing every single student working in the hotel, and so on. As I said, no door was left unopened.

How did the review team evaluate the “big bucket” areas?

They interviewed many of our faculty and staff, and then interviewed people in similar positions at peer/aspirant schools. This exercise was really useful because it started by asking, “Who are our peers?” and that answer has changed over time. They were very upfront and asked a lot tough questions like... Do you want to be X or Y? How far out do you want to plan? Can you continue to organize your curriculum and operations in the same traditional manner, or do you need to look at things from a much more macro or micro level? How can you be flexible enough to move as the industry changes and evolves?

What were the review team’s big picture findings?

What this external review really underscored was that we can’t just look at tomorrow; we need to be anticipating what students need to know at least five to 10 years out and address that in our curriculum and in our approach to everything we teach. We are preparing students for jobs that don’t yet exist, using technologies that haven’t been invented; so how do we anticipate that? The hotel room of 2021 is going to look very different than it does today – 20 years ago the industry just wasn’t changing that quickly. If one of our goals is to create future leaders of the global hospitality industry, then what does that future look like? That’s really critical for us. Frankly, the timing could not be any better for us to undertake this kind of organizational review and planning.

One of the key findings in the report is that we need to address our learning outcomes – we’re behind the curve a little bit here. Before the start of this fall semester, we took a bus trip to our San Antonio campus for a faculty retreat and took several hours just to look at learning outcomes for our curriculum. Basically, we discussed the four or five major qualifications that our graduates need to have going forward when they walk out of these doors. These learning outcomes are critical because once we agree on them, we’ll then take a look at our entire curriculum to determine if each course we are currently teaching has a tie-in to at least one learning outcome. If it doesn’t, then either our learning outcomes are flawed or we have to ask ourselves why we are teaching that particular class.

What are your next steps?

The next step is to prioritize the recommendations and then put together a timeline and measurements for each initiative, which we are doing now. There are a couple of key things that the review team has recommended that we need to do first in terms of project management. Some of it is real low hanging fruit, so that’s the easy part. But other recommendations are a little more subjective, depending on where your passion falls. Once priorities are set, our strategic plan will be expanded, reflecting the key areas for change. For example, areas like development did very well in this review, so there probably won’t be a lot of change there. Whereas, we’ll need to take a closer look at other operational areas of the College and hotel.

Who is involved in developing the College’s strategic plan?

The strategic planning process has and will continue to include both faculty and staff; some of this is very faculty driven, whereas things that are more organizational in nature involve staff. The resulting plan will serve as our roadmap for the future. We also want to include our industry partners and alumni. For example, part of our plan will include a curriculum review, which we plan to do this year. This will include focus groups comprised of industry leaders (including alumni). The main focus is industry relevancy that is future focused.

How was the College’s new mission statement developed and how does it relate to your strategic planning process?

It’s critical; it’s the foundation for all of our planning going forward. As with most things we do, we started with our leadership team and vetted our ideas. As part of this initial process, we included the results of word-cloud exercises that we had collected from the Dean’s Advisory Board, the alumni board, faculty and staff. Then our director of communications took these ideas and shaped our proposed statement. Next, we sent the draft to our faculty and staff for their input and buy-in. We had a couple of suggestions for improvements and no complaints. The process was inclusive, relatively painless and very positive, which is highly unusual in any organization. Our new mission statement reflects our values and stands true for who we are as an institution. It really does dictate our future at a 30,000-foot level; nothing that we discovered in our external review goes against this new statement. And in fact, everything we found supports it with regards to community, relevancy, innovation, collaboration... It’s all right there. (See page 1 for new mission statement.)

What else do you want the Hilton College community to know about your future plans?

I want to underscore that our faculty, staff and alumni are going to dictate our success. This is one of the most important messages I want to articulate. We’re in this together. Moreover, we’re not a hotel and a college, or a college that just happens to have a hotel in it. We are a college that features an integrated, full-service hotel. This is a very different way of viewing the organization... But it is a highly functional way to operate, both from the financial perspective of having a revenue-generating component, and through using our hotel as a learning laboratory. We want to teach students how to manage effectively through hands-on experience. And while that’s an expensive proposition, we also want to train students in a setting where realistic profit targets are maintained.

Are you looking forward to your second year as dean?

I’m more excited at the beginning of this second year than I was at the beginning of my first – and I was super excited last year! The opportunities are clearer to me now of where we can take the College, and that’s a pretty satisfying feeling. There’s a lot of work ahead. And this next year is going to be so much harder than the last, but that’s okay. Some hard choices and changes need to take place, but then we’ll start to enjoy the benefits of our efforts... This is an exciting time at Hilton College, and the possibilities are endless. I’m looking forward to working with our outstanding faculty and staff, alumni, advisory boards, industry friends and partners, donors and – of course – our students, to keep this program at the forefront of hospitality education. ■

SUCCESSSES FOR THE 2015 – 2016 ACADEMIC YEAR

THERE WAS AN **INCREASE** IN **FACULTY GRANTS**, FROM SMALLER GRANTS TO SUPPORT COURSE WORK TO LARGE FEDERAL GRANTS THAT SUPPORT FOOD SCIENCE RESEARCH.

ASSISTANTSHIPS The College has always had graduate assistantships, but this past year we began funding undergraduate assistantships. Rather than just awarding scholarships, **PAID ASSISTANTSHIPS ARE NOW BEING OFFERED TO UNDERGRADS** to assist faculty in the classroom and with research. This is the new emerging model; **STUDENTS LEARN BETTER WHEN THEY ARE INVOLVED.**

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

NEARLY **\$1 MILLION** in merit-based scholarships were awarded to Hilton College students. MORE THAN **\$300,000** in income from the College's endowments, COMBINED WITH THE **\$600,000** from the *UH Excellence Fund*, made this our best year for supporting student success.



LEADERSHIP

The College is leveraging its learning laboratory to create competitively paid internships in sales and event services, and food & beverage purchasing and accounting within the hotel. This is in addition to **STUDENTS GAINING EXPERIENCE** in front desk operations and housekeeping. The first of these leadership positions will be offered in fall 2016.

GRADUATION RATE



The University has a new software system that calculates a student's likelihood of graduation success based on courses taken and results received. With that, we are now using predictive analytics to ensure that our **STUDENTS GRADUATE AT AN EVEN FASTER RATE.**

PLACEMENT RATE OF GRADUATING STUDENTS

93% **90%**
SPRING SEMESTER AVERAGE FOR THE YEAR

HILTON COLLEGE GRADUATE STUDIES

PH.D. IN HOSPITALITY ADMINISTRATION

We welcomed the first cohort of doctoral students for our new Ph.D. in Hospitality Administration.

MASTER'S IN GLOBAL HOSPITALITY BUSINESS

This fall, the first cohort for our new Master's in Global Hospitality Business joins us for their final semester after having spent their first semester at *Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne*, their second semester at the *School of Hotel and Tourism Management at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University*, and their summer semester working on their capstone projects with partner companies all over the world. This 18-month program culminates here at Hilton College, with 27 students graduating in Houston with a graduate degree from the college of their choice and a certificate from all three institutions. This truly global program partners the top hospitality programs in Europe, Asia and North America. They chose us. There is no other program like it *anywhere* in the world.

EXECUTIVE MASTER'S IN HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

Our new online Executive Master's in Hospitality Management will launch in January 2017.



INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

WE ENHANCED TEAM COMMUNICATIONS THROUGH ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS, TOWN HALL-STYLE FORUMS AND LUNCHEONS, AND ALSO ADOPTED A NEW WAY TO **PUBLICLY CELEBRATE AND RECOGNIZE OUR FACULTY, AND COLLEGE AND HOTEL STAFFS.**

IN ADDITION to completing the first external review in years, here are some of the highlights and successes that marked Dr. Reynolds' first year as dean of Hilton College. THIS is how we roll!

YOUNG HOTELIERS SUMMIT

For the first time, the College was invited to attend the annual *EHL Young Hoteliers Summit* in Lausanne, Switzerland. This was huge for us because it is an **INVITATION-ONLY EVENT** involving only the **TOP PROGRAMS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE.**

We now have a permanent seat at the table.

THANKS TO the *Dave Smalley Leadership Program*, we were able to fully fund two students (*Kaitlin Fear* and *Caitlin Fuller*). And, our faculty member (*Dr. Juan Madera*) received a UH grant for international travel. As one of our students put it, "This experience changed my life forever."



ALUMNI RECOGNITION WALL

In tandem with the Alumni Association, we installed a much-anticipated alumni recognition wall on the first floor of the South Wing. It was unveiled during the *Spring 2016 Alumni Awards* reception.

The wall bears the names of past **ALUMNI AWARDEES** and pictures of current **ALUMNI BOARD MEMBERS**, and was created to **INSPIRE OUR STUDENTS.**



SAN ANTONIO CAMPUS

This campus has emerged from a small start-up to a full-blown program; we continue to add faculty and to build relationships with industry, and community and area junior colleges to make this program even more robust. In May, the first two students from our inaugural class walked at commencement with our Houston class.

THIS FALL, WE ARE EXPECTING AN ENROLLMENT OF 50 STUDENTS AND 120 STUDENTS BY 2018.

We plan to grow this campus to the point where supply equals demand to ensure every graduate has a job, with the end goal of having the students who graduate in San Antonio be no different from the students who graduate from our Houston campus.

EXTERNAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Doug Brooks – *Committee Chair*
Former Chairman, President & CEO
Brinker International

Dr. Jeff Beck
Associate Professor
Eli Broad College of Business,
The School of Hospitality Business
Michigan State

Elizabeth Cheung
Senior Program Manager
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

Scott Joslove
President & CEO
Texas Hotel & Lodging Association

Carlye Knowles
Manager
Figgins Family Winery

Randy McCaslin
Managing Director
CBRE Hotels – formerly PKF Consulting

Dr. Karthik Namasivayam
Associate Professor, Economics
Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne

Dr. Dennis Reynolds
Dean & Barron Hilton Distinguished Chair
University of Houston Conrad N. Hilton College

Kurt Robertson
Director – Brand Performance
Hilton Worldwide

Jon C. Schultz
Assistant Dean for Business Development
University of Houston Conrad N. Hilton College

“People don’t remember facts...
they remember stories. We just need
to keep sharing OUR STORIES.
That’s what gets people interested!”

– Dorothy Nicholson ('77)
Eric’s Club

There are some 7,600 alumni in Houston, across the country and around the globe who are proud to call Hilton College their alma mater. There are hundreds more industry partners, donors and friends, and scores of recruiters throughout the nation who have all played roles, large and small, in the growth and success of this College. Then, there is our great faculty and indispensable staff. And, of course, our students, who continue to excel and surprise.

You may know some of their faces... you may know some of their names... but do you know their stories? Out of *thousands* of stories, here are just a few, framed as “Portraits in Hospitality.” These are the stories of our community. As our new mission statement avows, “... *We embrace and foster an environment that includes Community...*” Together, We Are, You Are, I Am Hospitality.

ROLANDO PABLOS

CHAIR OF THE TEXAS RACING COMMISSION
ADJUNCT FACULTY – SAN ANTONIO
MEMBER DEAN’S/SAN ANTONIO
ADVISORY BOARDS

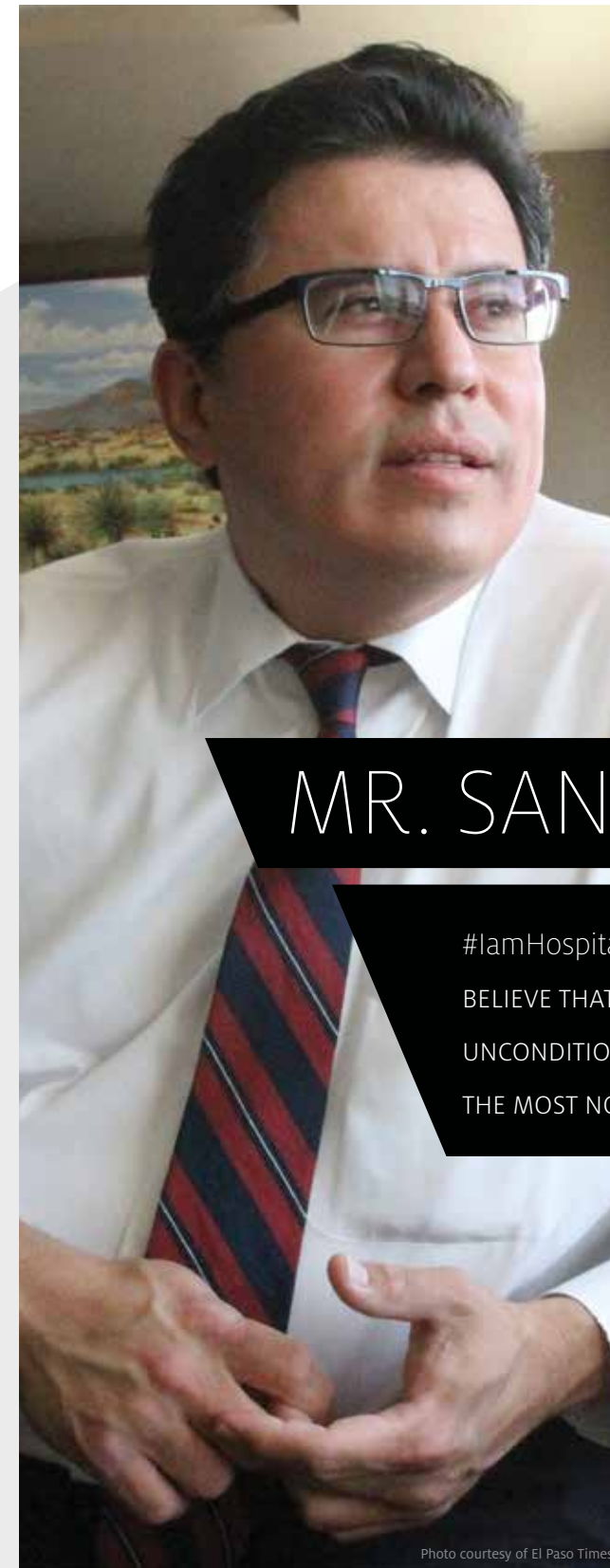


Photo courtesy of El Paso Times.

When Rolando Pablos (MHM '96) combined his passions for the greater good – public service, hospitality and education – he helped to lay the foundation for Hilton College–San Antonio, and he’s really excited to teach there this fall.

“I have been wanting to help people in the San Antonio area acquire a hospitality degree without having to leave home,” said Rolando. “With this new campus, students can receive the highest-quality training right in their own backyard, and they won’t have to make huge sacrifices to earn their degrees.”

Rolando knows all about sacrifice when it comes to pursuing one’s education. He worked in hotels and restaurants to help pay for his BA from St. Mary’s University and his MBA from The University of Texas at San Antonio. He then moved to Houston to gain his Master of Hospitality Management at Hilton College, while his wife Laura trained to be an orthodontist at the UTHealth School of Dentistry in the Texas Medical Center.

But during his last semester at the College, a law school acceptance letter arrived from St. Mary’s, and Rolando couldn’t let the opportunity pass. He decided to move back to San Antonio, while Laura stayed behind in Houston to finish her program.

“During my first year of law school, I also had the burden of finishing my master’s thesis,” he said. “It was a very challenging time, and my wife and I had to live in separate cities.”

MR. SAN ANTONIO

#IamHospitality BECAUSE AS A HOST, I
BELIEVE THAT CARING FOR MY GUESTS WITH
UNCONDITIONAL RESPECT AND GENEROSITY IS
THE MOST NOBLE OF DEEDS I CAN PERFORM.

But the sacrifices paid off, and the networking he had done throughout his years of advanced study opened doors that allowed him to make important connections in the gaming industry, and in commerce, tourism and economic development. In 2011, he was appointed to serve as commissioner for the Public Utility Commission of Texas by then Gov. Rick Perry, and today he is chair of the Texas Racing Commission.

Through it all, he has remained a constant presence in San Antonio, and served as

chairman of the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. So, when he noticed that a large population in San Antonio would benefit from a first-class hospitality school, he collaborated with University of Houston and began working with former Dean John Bowen and Associate Dean for Business Development Jon C. Schultz to bring a bachelor’s-level hospitality program “home” to the Alamo City.

“My time at Hilton College was the *best* academic experience I’ve ever had – and I’ve got four degrees,” he said, “so why *not* try to give the people of San Antonio the same chance I had for a UH education?”

With his *huge* Rolodex of friends, Rolando was able to put together a college advisory board that has been the driving force behind the San Antonio campus.

“It’s been so amazing to see this school grow from a seed of an idea to a tangible brick and mortar program,” he said. “I can’t wait to start teaching and hope to encourage my students to keep going after they’ve completed their undergraduate degrees. Because at the end of the day, education is the great equalizer. And being able to have those degrees will open doors in ways they can’t even imagine!” ■ –pkc

CAITLIN FULLER

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT
PRESIDENT OF THE HOUSTON STUDENT
CHAPTER OF NACE

The cover of Caitlin Fuller's planner pretty much says it all – "I AM VERY BUSY." As she begins her junior year, Caitlin will be juggling 16 hours of school, a part-time job and an extended internship for the College's *Admiral Hospitality Scholars Program*. She is also the incoming president of the Houston Student Chapter of the National Association for Catering and Events (NACE), director of membership for the Hilton College Ambassadors, and co-manager of logistics for Gourmet Night 2017. Last semester, she was named the 2015 *NACE Student of the Year* by the Houston Professional Chapter.

In addition to being involved in "just about everything," Caitlin maintains a 3.9 GPA and has earned several noteworthy academic scholarships. But her *biggest* opportunity yet has been representing the College as one of *only two* students to attend the *EHL Young Hoteliers Summit* in Lausanne, the first time the College has attended this invitation-only event. *And* she was nominated by our faculty to go.

"Just knowing that my teachers thought I'd be a good representative in Switzerland was a *huge* confidence boost," said Caitlin, who travelled abroad by herself for the first time, toured a castle and then met the 80 delegates from hospitality schools around the world. "I thought, 'Oh! This is *really* happening!'"

During her "experience of a lifetime," Caitlin competed and collaborated with the *best* of the best. She learned that not only could she do it, but she could do it well. She also discovered that she could network and make friends *anywhere*.

And to think, she almost didn't attend Hilton College because it was "five hours from home."

Caitlin is from Denton, and hospitality is in her blood.

Her father has worked in the restaurant industry since before she was born, and her mother is a "PTA Mom Supreme," which is where she got her love of events. Caitlin had planned to stay in town, attend the local university to study hospitality and become a concert planner. But, her eyes were opened to the possibilities when she attended Hilton College's annual summer camp, and "it's been happiness ever since."

To bring things full circle, Caitlin has worked as a summer camp counselor for the past two years, sharing her experiences with other high school students who aren't from the Houston area and letting them know that Hilton College "is home." Like the student Ambassadors who inspired her, she speaks from the heart.

"What I would have gained from being close to home, I would have lost in opportunity," said Caitlin. "Stepping out of my comfort zone and coming here forced me to talk to new people, try new things and take chances. I *love* what I'm doing here ... I love who I'm becoming." ■ -dkm

#SUPERGIRL



JEREMY DAFOE

UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC ADVISOR
SCHOLARSHIP COORDINATOR

Jeremy Dafoe is just a few months shy of celebrating his 13th year in Academic Services as one of the College's undergraduate advisors. In that time, he has counseled more than 6,000 students and awarded over \$4 million in funds in his dual role as scholarship coordinator. He was hired as "just" an advisor, but over the years he has become *oh so much* more because... well... he's extremely capable *and* is the first to ask, "How can I help?"

Jeremy is the department's go-to guy, the "Mikey will do it" dude whose proverbial plate is *always* full. In "other duties as assigned," he is either managing or heavily involved in juggling the many moving parts of class scheduling, spring and fall convocations, and the new student orientations held every summer. Recently, he was promoted to the highest rank academic advisor within the University system.

He's also established himself as the "gotta-go-too guy" for the student trip to Chicago each May for the National Restaurant Association Show. For the last 12 years, Jeremy has manned the College's booth and served as trip coordinator and unofficial chaperone, spending untold hours planning the myriad details – including food tours – for this popular class. His extra efforts benefit instructors and students alike. *And* he's learned a few things about the Chicago food scene.

"I have a rule about Chicago... I never go to the same place twice, unless it is *absolutely* stellar," said Jeremy, whose favorite restaurants specialize in meat, meat and meat.

THE DO-IT DUDE



The best part of this experience? The sheer magnitude of it all. "I love watching the students and the look of awe on their faces when they step into the convention center for the first time," he said. "It's massive and so exciting to see the latest in restaurant technologies and products. Unless you grew up in the restaurant industry, it's really an eye-opening experience in so many ways."

Jeremy finds great satisfaction in helping these students define their career and life goals.

"I don't have any kids, so it's cool to see the whole freshmen-to-graduation cycle," he said. "I find joy in watching my students succeed. I like knowing I'm a part of that." ■ -dkm

CLARA HOUGH

PRESIDENT & CEO OF HOUSE OF HOUGH

CHRISTOPHER HOUGH

MANAGING PARTNER OF HOUSE OF HOUGH

THE PERFECT MARRIAGE

Clara Hough ('02, Hon. '15) didn't come to UH to study hospitality. Neither did her husband, Chris ('00). She arrived from Venezuela; he by way of Colorado. They met while attending classes at the Honors College and Bauer College of Business. Clara did take a tourism class at Hilton College, which she loved, but a business degree, she knew, would help her open any door.

As soon as Clara graduated in May 2002, the couple started planning their wedding and were married that August. Clara loved the details of wedding planning so much that her first job after graduating was with an event company, where she worked as a catering manager and wedding coordinator to start learning the business.

"I never really went into what I'd call a 'traditional' business" said Clara. "I went straight into hospitality."

In 2005, Clara and Chris combined passion with opportunity and started *Over the Top Linens*, a specialty linen rental company that they ran out of their garage. Clara is the face of the company and a constant presence at industry conferences. Chris' background in accounting has been invaluable to the company's financial operations.

To mark the company's 10-year anniversary in 2015, the Houghs rebranded and started taking steps to conquer the national stage. They expanded their showroom to a larger location in the Houston Heights, and *House of Hough* was born. That same year, *House of Hough* moved up 10 spots (from 47 to 37) on the *Cougar*

100's list of fastest-growing Cougar-owned or -led businesses.

The Houghs have earned numerous awards and accolades over the years, but none more special than the honor bestowed upon Clara in April 2015 from the Hilton College Alumni Association.

"It really caught me by surprise, and I was very emotional," Clara said. "To be recognized as an honorary alumna from any college – especially one that is so dear to my heart – was a *huge* deal to me."

So how does a Bauer grad become an honorary alum here? It actually started through her work with NACE (National Association for Catering and Events), which has an active student chapter at the College. And Clara has mentored and hired our students, provided dozens of internships, and is a frequent guest speaker and industry panelist at the College.

House of Hough is also a regular table sponsor for the College's Gourmet Night, and discounts pennies on the dollar for linens, chair treatments and plate chargers. Their showroom is like a candy store, where students can select from a rainbow of elegant options to make this annual event more dazzling than their budget could ever allow without this generous contribution.

"I just can't tell the students no!" admits Clara.

If that weren't enough, the Houghs have also established the *Christopher and Clara Hough Annual Scholarship* to "pay it forward" for the impactful UH scholarships they received as students.

"Hospitality is our industry and we have the closest connection here," said Chris. "It makes the most sense for us to give back to Hilton College, so we can help 'feed' that next generation."

Clara concurs. "I love that these students are so excited about the careers that they haven't even started," she said. "They are *hungry*, they are *prepared* and when they graduate, they are *ready* to take over the world."

And that is *exactly* what they've learned to do from their mentor, who is also taking over the world... one table at a time! ■ -dkm



DR. CRISTIAN MOROSAN

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR



CONTAGIOUS CURIOSITY

For Dr. Cristian Morosan, there is nothing more amazing than seeing the transfer of knowledge inside his classroom. His inspiration to teach comes from seeing his students engaged, curious and passionate about their work.

“Hilton College students are *really* smart,” he said. “So I try to unleash their collective intelligence. And when I see them putting their minds together to tackle a problem... that is the most incredible thing!”

A fan of active-learning activities, Dr. Morosan likes to assign his students group projects using the iPad as a teaching tool. With the iPad, information is more interactive, graphics are more engaging, and the instant sharing of information allows for immediate peer feedback. And when there is learning through collaboration, Dr. Morosan gets to know his students better.

“Since I’m not at a podium lecturing, I can go from group to group and engage in conversations. When you can look students in the eye and *really* talk to them, your genuine interest and passion for the material can be contagious,” he said.

Dr. Morosan’s enthusiasm in the classroom hasn’t gone unnoticed. This year, he received the *Teaching Excellence Award for Instructional Technology*, given by the Office of the Provost. His use of the iPad to increase classroom engagement helped him attain the award.

“Technology in the classroom makes for a very rich learning environment and I’m proud of that. It feeds my energy,” he said. “But you have to really like what you are talking about, respect the material, and teach it properly.”

No doubt he does. In addition to his Teaching Excellence Award, Dr. Morosan also received tenure. Since joining the College in 2012 from the University of St. Thomas, he has become one of our most published professors, penning some 22 articles that have appeared in the industry’s most

respected peer-reviewed journals – and that’s just since he’s joined *our* faculty!

Dr. Morosan considers himself a genuine, enthusiastic researcher, who has always been inherently curious. His research interests are in information technology adoption, biometric systems, mobile technology, security and privacy, and e-marketing. He is currently researching the security risks associated with the use of mobile devices when traveling.

Dr. Morosan also plans to investigate how people react to technology, and is looking at privacy and security issues in travel, as well as border control. He is prolific in his research simply because the wheels never stop turning in his head.

“When you are innately curious, it’s only natural that you are going to be drawn toward research. You just want to observe things, try to explain things, and you ask questions,” he said. “And when you have this mentality, you become the luckiest person in the world – you can learn *and* share your knowledge for a living.” ■

–pkc

TUCKER JOHNSON

INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
SAN ANTONIO

When Tucker Johnson heard Hilton College had opened a new campus in San Antonio, he knew right away he would work there, even though they weren’t hiring at the time. Without hesitation, he sent an email to the College and introduced himself as a valuable asset for its fledging program.

His initiative proved to be a great move, as the San Antonio campus needed a versatile, all-around hospitality pro who could teach,

recruit and also assist with marketing the new program to the San Antonio community. As it turned out, Tucker had the experience, education *and* enthusiasm that made him the perfect candidate!

A self-proclaimed hospitality nerd, Tucker has worked in the industry since he was 16 and had dreams of opening his own bar. To help put himself through college at Cornell, he worked as a dishwasher, cook, room service cashier, barista and bartender.

His first job after college was as a restaurant manager, before transitioning into hotel sales, digital marketing and revenue management. After earning his master’s in hotel administration from UNLV, he added professor to his resume and began teaching classes at Austin Community College and St. Leo University. No wonder he thought he’d be such a good fit!

Since joining the Hilton College faculty, Tucker said he has landed his dream job, although it is a far cry from his original plan of owning a bar.

GOING FOR IT

“You never know where life is going to take you, so I tell my students they have to actively manage their careers and use their education as leverage,” Tucker said. “I also stress to them that experience matters. If you want to go work somewhere, you need to have the job before THE job. And getting THE job? That’s on them – we just provide the tools to help them build their own dreams.” ■

–pkc



JONATHAN SHEAR
GENERAL MANAGER OF THE BAYOU CLUB

THE CLUB CRUSADER

#IamHospitality BECAUSE I
LOVE SERVICING MY MEMBERS.

Jonathan Shear, CCM, CCE ('80) has the perfect life with the perfect job in the perfect city. He's also on a crusade to show our students that the club management industry he loves so dearly is the *perfect* career choice for them, too. After all, he attests, why should hotels and restaurants inherit all the best talent?

"Club management is a side of hospitality that many people never think about, but it can provide you with the best lifestyle in the industry," said Jonathan, who has been the general manager of The Bayou Club since 1995 and is *never* leaving. "In America we live to work; in Europe they work to live. I feel like my club members have created an environment where I can work to live.

"Clubs have been very special in my life, but my mission to recruit students is self-serving. I want to find intelligent, energetic people to experience what I have, and to be leaders in this industry."

Jonathan doesn't just talk the talk. He recently handpicked Denise Alonzo, his former intern and 2016 graduate, to be the *first* assistant manager in the 75-year history of The Bayou Club. "If you are going to get great talent, you have to scope it out. And when you see it, you have to offer them a job – or create one," he said.

In addition to providing jobs and internships, Jonathan is extraordinarily supportive of the Cougar Chapter of Club Managers Association of America. He attends their socials, meetings and info sessions, sharing generously of his time, expertise and resources.

Twice a year, he opens the doors of his exclusive club to host Alexis Hoey's Introduction to Club Management class, providing lunch and discussion sessions on a myriad of club-related topics, including the unwritten and intangible benefits of being a club staff member. The feedback from the experience is always, "Wow!"

When Jonathan isn't at his club, he's here at the school. But it hasn't always been that way. In fact, it was just about 10 years ago when he first reconnected with the College since graduating in 1980. When asked to co-chair a committee with two other club manager alumni – *Joe Bendy ('89)* and *David Chag ('77)* – to create an endowment to honor their former teachers, Jonathan was all in. Thanks to their joint efforts, the *SSB Scholarship*, honoring Bob Southwell, Red Steger and Joan Breunier, is now the second largest privately funded scholarship endowment at the College.

The momentum from the *SSB Endowment* motivated Jonathan to champion the *Club Manager's Alliance*, which as chairman, he helped to create in 2014. Its purpose is to connect UH alumni active in club management with students aspiring to join the industry through part-time jobs, internships and mentorships. Its message? Hire Hilton College! Not surprisingly then, Jonathan remains a familiar face at the College's career fairs to recruit for the club industry.

"The College is a tremendous resource for talent, so that's why I maintain a high profile," he said.

Jonathan sort of "fell into" the industry, getting his first taste of hospitality at 16 when he worked for a kosher catering company in Baltimore. He didn't have the exposure to club management that students have today – another reason he gives back. He never dreamed his career would take him down this path, yet everything he ever worked for, studied and trained for has led him to the perfect life with the perfect job in the perfect city.

"So why shouldn't I share that with these kids?" he said. ■ -dkm

BENJAMIN SCOTT

GRADUATE STUDENT
PRESIDENT OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT
ASSOCIATION

HOOKED ON HOTELS

Benjamin Scott stumbled into the hospitality industry. As an English major at Texas A&M, he took a full-time job as a bellman at Hilton College Station to help put himself through school. After just three weeks, he knew hospitality was the career for him. He asked his boss to teach him everything she could about the hotel business and within five months, he was promoted to the front desk.

Since A&M didn't have a hospitality program, he left College Station and moved to New York City to work at a Hilton property in Times Square, took online courses from UH-Clear Lake and stayed on track to finish his BA in English literature in four years. Working in New York was the "experience of a lifetime" and he was hooked, gaining even more experience with Hyatt and Marriott International.

But in looking at opportunities to advance within the industry, something was missing. He had the requisite experience, but more than half of the jobs he looked at preferred a degree in hospitality. Looking 10 years down the road it was the same thing – "MBA or master's degree in hospitality preferred."

To stay competitive, Benjamin decided to pursue graduate school. So, he took his GRE, and three weeks later was admitted to Hilton College, where he soon became Dr. Carl Boger's teaching assistant for the annual fall trip to the hotel show in NYC. The two hit it off

famously, and Dr. Boger became Benjamin's mentor and faculty advisor. His special project for this fall is planning a *second* NYC trip. He's also working with Dr. Boger on his professional paper, which examines the growth of how the Hispanic population is influencing the luxury market in the United States.

"The research I'm doing on the needs and travel preferences of this growing population is going to be very useful in my career," said Benjamin, who is currently working full-time at his *dream* company – Four Seasons – thanks to his mentor's connections. "As much as I've learned working in the field over the last four years, this last year of classes has opened my mind and made me see things differently. The skills I'm refining now and the connections I'm making at the College won't just benefit me today, but tomorrow as well."

With plans to graduate in May 2017, Benjamin's goal is to become a general manager of a Four Seasons property, and he's ready to relocate anywhere in the world. His "master's degree in hospitality preferred" education will give him the edge he needs, and with his "people person" personality, the sky's the limit for this English major turned hotelier.

Down the road, there could even be a novel in him. He's kept a journal for years about his hotel experiences and he's *just* getting started. Watch for it! ■ -dkm

Like many young girls who love clothes and fashion, Jiseon Ahn thought she could have a career as a fashion designer. She even earned her bachelor's degree in clothing and textiles from Hanyang University in Seoul and worked as a designer for almost two years before realizing it just wasn't for her.

For the next five years, she tried her hand at retailing and went to work as a promotions assistant at a large Korean drugstore company. Thinking that might be a better path, Jiseon followed her husband to America – with a detour through Austin – before being accepted to UH's College of Technology, where she was working toward her master's in global retailing. It wasn't until a serendipitous collaborative research project with her then-faculty advisor and (pictured) Dr. Ki-Joon Back, associate dean for Research and Graduate Studies at Hilton College, that she found her mentor and discovered her *true* calling.

"We submitted two papers on medical tourism for a conference, and I realized then that this industry has big research potential," said Jiseon. "I was doing some research on consumer behavior that was a bit broad, so that opportunity helped me to narrow my focus on tourism."

Excited by her new-found love of the tourism industry, Jiseon finished her master's and applied to the College's new Ph.D. program in hospitality administration. She especially wanted to work with Dr. Back – and so she is! For the last year-and-a-half, Jiseon has served as Dr. Back's graduate assistant and is working with him on his research in problem gambling behavior. She's also collaborating with him on developing brand strategy in the integrated resort industry, which ties in nicely to her research concentration in consumer/traveler behavior in integrated resorts around the world.

"Every day, every moment, I'm learning," said Jiseon, who appreciates the open and "argue to learn" discussions at UH, where teachers and students interact more like peers rather than traditional teacher and student. "This environment has helped me *so much* to develop my ideas and critical thinking skills. I feel so lucky."

When Jiseon graduates in 2018, she plans to be a hospitality professor – hopefully in the U.S. – and continue the research she started here. She also feels the unspoken pressure of representing this first cohort of the College's doctoral program well.

"I feel like everyone in this industry – and academia – is looking at us. It's really important to me to show how good this program is by having a good outcome," she said. "This College brings out the best in you. I will do my best to meet the high expectations and make my mentor proud." ■ -dkm

JISEON AHN

DOCTORAL STUDENT – INAUGURAL CLASS

THE STEADFAST SCHOLAR

DAN AND JENNIFER MEAUX

OWNERS OF THE CRAWFISH SHACK



Down in Louisiana, they *love* their seafood. And Dan ('96) and Jennifer ('97) Meaux, owners of the wildly popular *Crawfish Shack* in Crosby, personify that passion.

Dan was weaned on Cajun cooking. He admits to eating some “pretty crazy” things growing up on a farm in Rayne, Louisiana, with mostly crawfish ponds all around for miles. Jennifer is pure Texas, born and raised in Channelview, so it was Dan’s momma who taught her *how* to eat and *enjoy* authentic Cajun cuisine.

Jennifer fell in love with hospitality at 16 when she started working as a hostess at Pappas Seafood. Dan was a business major at UL Lafayette working as a waiter at a Hilton hotel when he instantly fell in love with foodservice. The couple met in an economics class at San Jacinto North Community College after Dan moved to Houston, and they soon transferred to Hilton College to study restaurant management. Throughout school, they both worked at Pappas, where the first-class training they received only reinforced their dreams to one day open their own restaurant.

After graduation, Dan wanted to move back to his beloved Cajun Country and open a seafood restaurant. But Jennifer would not leave Texas for *any* reason. With a “boiling pot” restaurant on practically every street corner in Lafayette, staying in Houston turned out to be the *second* best career decision of their young lives. The first? Transferring to Hilton College!

The couple tied the knot at the UH chapel and continued working at Pappas. Jennifer stayed on until the birth of their first daughter, but Dan soon left to pursue a faster track to general manager with Boston Market. Four years later, they were ready. In 2004, the Meauxes opened a drive-through-only *Crawfish Shack* in Crosby.

“That first year was *horrible*,” said Dan. “It was extremely slow and I’d sit in my drive-thru window for an hour or more without serving a single car.”

But, they stuck it out, adding a patio and a couple of picnic tables their second year. Four years later, after moving down the road and buying the property at their current location, they added a metal shed, a giant neon sign and set up 12 tables for dine-in orders.

“We now have 61 tables and a wait line that wraps around the building,” said Jennifer, who left her sales job at an oil and gas company in 2010 to help manage the booming restaurant full-time. For the last seven years, the *Crawfish Shack* has been the *number one* volume crawfish restaurant in Texas and is *consistently* rated among the “Best crawfish in

Houston.” Last February, they opened a second location in Magnolia, which also started out as a drive-thru.

“I’m very proud of what Jen and I have built together,” said Dan, who at the height of the season can go through 12,000 pounds of crawfish – boiled and live – in a single Saturday. Their recipe for success has been passion and hard work, peppered with *extremely* fresh Louisiana crawfish, *exceptional* service and Dan’s *top-secret*, low-salt seasoning – to start.

THE MUDBUG MASTERS

From the moment the season starts in January until it ends in June, the *Crawfish Shack* consumes their lives 24/7; they literally have *no life* outside the restaurant and that’s fine by them.

“We really don’t mind killing ourselves for six months because we have the rest of the year off; in fact, that’s actually the *best* part of this business,” said Dan. “We are truly blessed with a business that allows us to pursue our passion, build relationships with wonderful customers and employees, give back to the community we love, and live a comfortable, quality life.”

To give back to the College where their journey began, the couple established *The Crawfish Shack/Dan and Jennifer Meaux Scholarship Endowment* in 2013.

“This school is a huge part of our success and the scholarships we received enabled us to go on to make an incredible living doing something we love,” said Dan. “Through this scholarship, we can do the same thing for other students who are just as passionate.”

As the Meauxes contemplate retirement – in about five years – they are also on the lookout for an employee who is driven, focused and, of course, passionate enough to want to apprentice with them over the next several years. When they are convinced they have found and *thoroughly* trained someone who is committed to keeping the *Crawfish Shack* thriving at the same level and quality, only then will they turn over the keys to their crawfish kingdom. They would be thrilled if that someone was a Hilton College graduate.

“At some point, our bodies are going to give out and we’re not going to be able to do this anymore,” said Jennifer. “Passing on our business – our legacy – to a student we’ve mentored would be a wonderful thing.”

–dkm



CRISTINA BESOSA

DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES AT JW MARRIOTT
SAN ANTONIO HILL COUNTRY RESORT & SPA
ADJUNCT LECTURER – SAN ANTONIO

Cristina Besosa has been a constant presence at our career fairs and recruiting events for more than 26 years, helping hundreds of students land jobs and begin careers with Marriott International properties. She's also been a lecturer at our San Antonio campus since it opened in 2014, teaching Human Resources. Last spring, she added one more class to her schedule – Leadership – an aspect of the industry in which she is intimately familiar.

Cristina is currently director of human resources at JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort & Spa, where she was part of the hotel's opening team in 2010. Before her time at the JW Marriott, she had worked in everything from operations and employee relations to human resources and college recruiting. But, no matter where Cristina's career has taken her, she's always had a soft spot for working with students.

In fact, her favorite project at the JW Marriott is being at the helm of its summer internship program, where she helps select the very best students from schools around the country. Over

the years, a number of students in the program have come from Hilton College.

"In all my years in HR, I can tell you very easily that Hilton College students are the top talent," Cristina said. "It's very obvious that they are well educated, well rounded, articulate and street smart. They're the whole package."

What has fueled Cristina's longstanding relationship with the College is the magic of seeing students find their place in the industry – with a little guidance from her. She also finds joy in being an educator and a motivator.

"To see these students discover their passion, to see their professionalism, and to know that they are going to be leaders in our industry – and in turn will lead others *with* that passion – is the crescendo of it all for me," she said. "When you can tap into someone's passion, they can set the world on fire." ■ -pkc

FINDING TOP TALENT



CAROL WHITE

OUTGOING ALUMNI ASSOCIATION BOARD
TREASURER & PAST PRESIDENT



ONE OF US

When Carol White (Hon. '88) was recognized as an honorary alumna in 1988 and asked to serve on the Hilton College Alumni Association Board, she had no idea her commitment would impact students for years to come.

A graduate of Rice University, Carol got involved with the board because of her expertise and experience in the hotel industry. She served as the board's "hotel representative" and provided industry standpoints for the College, which at the time, needed to boost its presence and programs in the hotel sector.

"It was a really good fit, and I knew hotels," said Carol, whose experience included human resources and general management for several Galleria-area properties.

In 1998, after a decade of service with the board, Carol's Hilton College family honored her with the *Distinguished Honorary Alumni Award*.

"I really felt part of the bigger picture," she said. "Thinking about our other distinguished alumni – Eric Hilton, Barron Hilton – that is a pretty good group to be associated with."

As a longtime board member, it was important for Carol to ensure Hilton College traditions would never be forgotten, that our programs would continue to grow, and that notable alumni would *always* have a permanent place of recognition in the College. To that end, Carol spearheaded the efforts to install an alumni recognition wall, now located on the first floor of the South Wing.

Thanks to her leadership – and perseverance – the alumni wall was installed and unveiled during the *Spring 2016 Alumni Awards* reception, an annual ceremony she helped bring back after an eight-year absence. The wall bears the names of past alumni

awardees and pictures of current Alumni Association Board members. Its purpose? To serve as inspiration for current students. "We had plaques listing past alumni award winners, but they were lost during the hotel renovation in 2010," she said. "Our new wall makes a statement and isn't going *anywhere*; it's in the perfect place for students to pass by daily and be inspired to be successful in the industry."

Perhaps the most enduring of Carol's contributions is the *Carol and Steven White Student Assistantship and Scholarship Endowment*, also established this year. She had always wanted to start an endowment, but also wanted to wait for when the time was right.

"When I started on the board, the way I could help students was by giving my time," she said. "But that was years ago, and now I can afford to give more than that. It's a mistake if we don't take steps to help educate people in this country – it's important whether they are your kids or somebody else's."

After almost 30 years of attending College events, and generously giving her time and resources, Carol is stepping down from the board. She announced her retirement at the Alumni Association's general meeting this past July.

"It's time for somebody else to do this," said Carol "and the board is in a really good place. They are *so much* further along than when I first started in all kinds of ways."

And though she has stepped down, she's not going *anywhere*. The College's 50th Anniversary Committee will be gearing up soon, and she's happy to be involved if needed.

"I'll be around," she said. ■ -pkc

When Jessica Howton ('11, MS '13) graduated with her master's in hospitality management and received both the *Dean's Graduate Award* and the *Alumni Association Award for Scholastic Excellence* for her perfect 4.0 GPA, she surprised her classmates and her professors with the announcement that she had just accepted a job with H-E-B.

"What?! You have a master's degree and you're going to sling groceries?!" was the common refrain.

Jessica's decision to enter the grocer's School of Retail Leadership (SORL) surprised her as much as anyone, especially considering her four-year involvement as an officer with the Cougar Chapter of the Hospitality Financial and Technology Professionals. But, her thesis on food safety in retail may have been a serendipitous sign that she was destined to have an unexpected career.

Throughout college, Jessica volunteered for Career Fair. As a native San Antonian, H-E-B was already a company she knew and respected. She got to know their recruiter, who was persistent about asking for her resume. Because she had worked in hotels and restaurants and knew that wasn't the life she wanted, Jessica relented and interviewed – more for the practice than anything. One interview led to another and, after talking to others who went through SORL, she was all in.

"So many people discount the grocery business – I did for a while as well – but H-E-B is about creating experiences, and involves so much more than 'just groceries,'" she said. "There are also so many parallels to hospitality in this industry that it just couldn't be a better fit."

After completing SORL's two-year intensive training program in just 18 months and receiving the highest rating through each rotation, Jessica was placed as an assistant store director at a Houston store for 12 weeks, before being pooled to "grand open" a store in Cypress.

During that five-month assignment, she also ran the first pilot opening for *Meal Simple* – a new brand of "grab-and-go" products made in stores that are "ready to heat, ready to eat, ready to cook and ready to prepare." She caught the eye of her regional VP, who put her name up for consideration for the brand's Houston rollout. She's been *killin' it* for the last six months as a liaison between H-E-B corporate and her Houston stores for this special project.

"I've used the event planning skills I learned in school so many times in the last three years that it's allowed me to

become the 'go-to' when it comes to planning major events in the stores," said Jessica.

H-E-B has a long history of giving back to its community, so when Jessica learned that her employer had gifted \$150,000 as a founding underwriter for the College's new San Antonio campus, she said she would have been surprised if they had *not* been involved.

She also believes that recruiters are starting to take notice of the handful of Hilton College graduates they have hired and, because of their success, the focus on recruiting mostly from business schools is starting to shift.

"We have quality students who are *more* than capable of excelling in this industry, and it's exciting that this now seems to be recognized," she said.

AN UNEXPECTED CAREER

It's only been three years since she graduated but, with her drive and attitude, Jessica is poised to just keep climbing within the company. And, she says, she owes much of her success to her time at UH.

"This school pushed me in ways that I had never been pushed... It was my home away from home and I didn't want to leave – I didn't know *how* to leave," she said. And in many ways, she still hasn't.

To stay connected and to give back, Jessica attends College events, alumni mixers and now screens and recruits for H-E-B at Career Fair where her own career was launched. She is also the alumni board's incoming treasurer. And now, she's proud to bring her friends to the College to show them "my wall" – the new alumni recognition wall in South Wing lobby, which catalogs her name for receiving the *Distinguished Young Alumni Award* in 2014.

"I wanted a career with a company that would *want* to push me to strive – just like my College has," she said. "I wanted a career where I could keep growing and setting new goals. I feel blessed to have found it."

So what's next on Jessica's H-E-B bucket list? To land a commercial with J. J. Watt! ■
–dkm



SABAS DELEON

LEAD CUSTODIAN AT THE
HILTON UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON



FOR THE

LOVE OF THE JOB

Sabas DeLeon is *always* moving! At 67, he is the lead custodian responsible for the upkeep of public spaces and classrooms, and can run circles around *everyone* at the Hilton University of Houston. He works the 4:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. shift most days, but that's *after* driving across town from his second job at Hotel Granduca where he stocks the guestroom mini bars.

Here, he works with dozens of student interns each semester to teach them how to strip, wax and buff floors; shampoo carpets and properly clean the restrooms; as well as how to empty and sanitize the facility's recycling bins. And he does it all on *only* three-and-a-half hours of sleep *every* night – and *always* *always* with a smile! His greatest satisfaction? To provide our hotel guests with excellent customer service.

Sabas has been part of the housekeeping team for nearly 12 years. With his help, our hotel has consistently been ranked in the top 5 to 10 percent

among *all* Hilton-branded hotels in guest satisfaction scores. This year, for the eighth consecutive year, our hotel received its highest cleanliness score yet – a remarkable 98.73 – during Hilton Worldwide's biannual Quality Assurance Audit.

Sabas is also a cancer survivor, who was right back to his routine after only six weeks of recovering from lifesaving surgery. Why does he push so hard? It's not that he needs the money; for 33 years he ran his own restaurant hood steam-cleaning business. It's just simply because he *loves* his job – and his students and co-workers, who are like family to him. With 23 grandchildren, eight children and a wife of 47 years, family and work are his world. He takes immense pride in both.

"I tell my students, 'You don't want to work hard like me all your life. Me? I have no education. You? You have an education. So tomorrow I work for you, but *today* you learn from me,'" said Sabas. "I want them to appreciate and respect what it takes to do this job, and to understand that the words they use are important when working with people like me."

Over the years, he has received many thank you letters. But he is quick to deflect praise. "It's them who I appreciate," he says. "If they learn something good from me for their future, that makes me feel *very very* happy."

There is *no one* more genuine than our Mr. Sabas. He is the light of hospitality. ■ –dkm

RICHARD BUNDICK

GRADUATE INAUGURAL CLASS
HILTON COLLEGE-SAN ANTONIO



BLAZING TRAILS

Richard Bundick (16), one of the first two graduates of our San Antonio campus, is definitely on our list of notable alumni. He received the *Alumni Association Award for Scholastic Excellence* for his 4.0 GPA, he blazed a trail as the first president of the Hilton College-San Antonio Ambassadors, and he had *seven* job offers upon graduation. That's right, seven!

Richard credits much of his success to his family, who encouraged him to follow his dreams, to work hard and follow through with every endeavor. In fact, it was his grandmother who inspired his first foray into hospitality.

"Every Thursday we would make a cake and decorate it for her weekly bingo games," Richard said. "That

led me down a culinary path, then a baking and pastry path, and then on to restaurant management at Hilton College."

Even with three associate degrees from St. Philip's College already under his belt, Richard was one of the first to apply when Hilton College opened its doors in San Antonio. One of the best things about this program for him? The chance to further his education *without* leaving the Alamo City.

"Being able to stay close to my family – my support group – and attend a Tier One university with one of the *best* hospitality programs in the world has been amazing," he said. "If you want a job after you graduate from Hilton College, you'll have one."

Out of his many job offers, Richard accepted the one with Pappas Restaurants, where he is on the Fast Track Manager Training Program. His long-term plans include graduate school, and perhaps even enrolling in our global master's program. In the meantime, he plans to give back to the College, starting with becoming active in the Alumni Association.

"The San Antonio program changed my life and it has opened *so many* doors," he said. "So, you give back. Because that's what family does." ■ –pkc



MAKING A RIGHT TURN

How does an outside sales rep who sells industrial insulation to oil and gas refineries end up being president of a hospitality school alumni association? If you're Michael Alcorn ('07), it's by taking a few "left turns."

At 17, when he first enrolled at the University as a poli-sci major, he had a rough go of it and dropped out after two years. He left to make some money, came back for a spring and summer semester as a business major, left again, but it wasn't until he lost his job that he was forced to decide if he was going to find another job or get a degree. When he did commit to school, he chose Hilton College.

"I was lucky to be a screw-up where I did my four years in 10 because when I *did* take school more seriously, it was a totally different college experience," said Michael, who graduated at 27.

While wandering the halls looking for someone to help him enroll, he ran into Mary Douglas, the now retired director of placement, who offered to take him to the right place.

"I told her, 'No, just point me to where I need to go.' She said, 'Sir, this is the hospitality school. We *don't* point!' And she walked me there!" said Michael. "That's when I knew I had found someplace special."

Michael credits the College – and teachers like Dr. Mary Dawson and Erin Oeser Goodell who "poured into his life" and made him feel important at a time when he felt he didn't fit in anywhere – for making him fall in love with the University.

And it was Gourmet Night that saved his college career.

"When I found out I could be involved with Gourmet Night and help run the event, that's what *really* got me plugged in to other opportunities and made me *love* what we do here," said Michael, who served as director of service in 2007. He hasn't missed the event since.

He was working at The Four Seasons' Quattro as a waiter when he graduated and that's where he took "a complete left turn."

"I had tested for a job at a chemical plant and made a *total* money move," admits Michael. Today, as a sales rep for Distribution International, he attributes his success to embracing the fundamental sales techniques and presentation skills he learned as a waiter.

"I've always been drawn to business and sales, but now I approach my job with

a hospitality mindset – I always treat my clients as if they were my guests," said Michael. "When people ask me why I left hospitality, I tell them I've really just taken the hospitality industry to the oil and gas industry – it's *really* needed there."

Like many alumni, after graduation, Michael just "went off to work." He didn't know what it meant to be an alumnus. It was the alumni-student happy hours that brought him back. Through these monthly mixers, Michael met Randy McCaslin (MBA '80, Hon. '07), then president of the Alumni Association Board, and told him he wanted to get more involved. It was then and there that he made the "right" turn.

At the time, the Alumni Association was looking to expand the board, and Michael became a board member in 2011. Fast forward five years and today, Michael has just completed the first year of a two-year term as president of the Alumni Association Board. In fact, he and Dean Dennis Reynolds "took office" at the exact same time – July 1, 2015.

"Since the Dean and I were both new, we've been able to *not* take the 'This is how we've always done it' approach to things," said Michael. "It's been a fun, interesting experience to take a fresh perspective on how to move forward to *really* start engaging our alumni."

"If we can get more alums to come back and remember what it was that was so great about this College and to see all of the good things happening here, I know they will fall in love with the College and the University all over again."

As president of the Alumni Association Board, Michael has a seat on the Dean's Advisory Board and is "the voice" of the some 7,600 alumni worldwide. He is also the co-chair of the College's 50th Anniversary Committee, which will convene soon to begin discussing plans for the year-long celebration in 2019. He is humbled and excited to be a part of both.

"Being part of the Dean's Advisory Board has been very insightful," said Michael. "To see that at the heart of this College are influential people who really *do* care about this College being the BEST in the world and that they really *do* want graduates to leave here and go out and impact the industry is pretty cool." ■ -dkm

ERIC HILTON DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI CLUB

SHARING STORIES



Eric's Club is an extraordinary group of "industry seasoned" alumni who are "paying it forward" and inspiring the hospitality leaders of tomorrow – one story at a time.

Since 1999, members have shared their personal journeys and the successes and failures that have shaped their careers through the *Eric Hilton Distinguished Chair Alumni Lecture Series* held in Alumni Hall. The club's mission? To build a legacy of student inspiration and alumni connectivity, and provide a network of support and resources to the College.

These stories are at the very heart of Eric's Club; at its core, a rich tradition of philanthropy. Since its founding in 2005, Eric's Club and its members have generated in excess of \$6 million to support such projects as an endowed chair, scholarship endowments and facility renovations like Alumni Hall and the Massad Family Library Research Center.

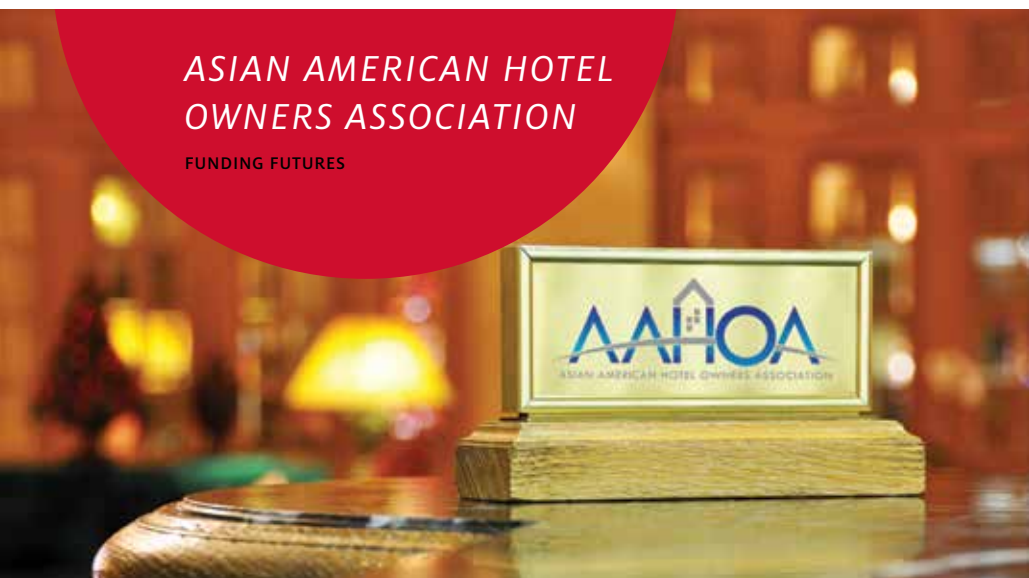
The group's latest gift established the *Eric's Club Rising Senior Scholarship Endowment*. Scholarships will now be available to seniors who are beginning their last two semesters at the College and whose academic records and diversified leadership experiences indicate a high potential for career success.

The ticket to membership? An invitation and being a 20-plus-year alum with executive-level experience, for starters. Inevitably, once an Eric's Club member is tapped to be the next speaker, the experience of networking with students and other members opens the door to reconnect and become personally engaged with the school. And once that happens – and alums see the tremendous strides the College has made since they were students – they understand the increasing value of their degrees and want to give back.

And that's what Eric's Club is all about – and then some! ■ –dkm

ASIAN AMERICAN HOTEL OWNERS ASSOCIATION

FUNDING FUTURES



Graduate assistantships have long been coveted positions at Hilton College. This fall, thanks to the generosity of the *Asian American Hotel Owners Association* (AAHOA), we are now able to fund undergraduate assistantships as well. Rather than "just receiving scholarships," undergrads can now take advantage of opportunities to assist our faculty in the classroom and with research. Studies show that students learn and retain more when they are actively

involved, so it's a win-win for both our students and their teachers.

AAHOA, the world's largest hotel owners association, wanted to expand its educational offerings to not only impact the current generation of hoteliers, but future generations to come. The association was researching universities and their scholarship opportunities when it connected with the College's Jon C. Schultz, assistant dean for business development.

After learning about the *amazing* fund-matching program through the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, and that UH honors in-state tuition for both out-of-state and international students who are awarded competitive scholarships of \$1,000 or more, AAHOA was excited and had to know more.

Today, AAHOA is the College's newest industry partner. Over the next five years, the association will contribute \$125,000, with matching funds from the Hilton Foundation, to create scholarships and assistantships.

"The graduates of the Hilton school are the leaders of our industry," said Chip Rogers, president and CEO of AAHOA. "We are pleased to play a role to help support the next generation of hospitality leaders." ■ –dkm

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— Dr. Dennis Reynolds

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