Career insights gained on learning journey to Phoenix

Earlier this year, Event Management and Tourism students from the Lexington and Louisville campuses attended The Special Events Tradeshow & Conference in Phoenix, Arizona. The Special Event is the largest tradeshow and conference in the world for event professionals. This opportunity is invaluable for students who can meet and make connections with thousands of key event industry notables and colleagues. Students attended conference sessions and training workshops taught by hand-selected speakers, and discovered thousands of event products and services on the trade show floor.

“Nothing was greater! We learned so much about the tourism, hospitality, and event planning industries.”
Ginnefer Harley

Hotel which is within walking distance to the expanded Phoenix Convention Center. After checking in and having lunch, the group walked to the tradeshow. Students saw a great variety of vendors who support the event management and tourism industries. They were also given projects to complete as part of the learning journey requiring them to find certain items to report on when they returned to campus. Most of the students were amazed at the scope of some of the displays and enjoyed meeting and mingling with event professionals.

Students meet reknown guest chef
French Master Chef Bernard Guillas provided instruction to Sullivan Culinary Club students as they assisted with preparation for the Kentucky Governor’s Dinner during the Kentucky Derby weekend. Chef Bernard also provided a copy of his cookbook, “Flying Pans,” for Sullivan’s Learning Resource Center’s Culinary collection. The students have enjoyed the energy of Sullivan’s culinary students and appreciated their enthusiasm to work, learn and exhibit their culinary skills. Chef Bernard is captured in Sullivan’s International Lab with, Nancy LaPoint and Bianca Schnare.

Students and their chaperones pose for a photo before entering the Special Events Trade Show & Conference in Phoenix, Arizona.

Lots of local flavor
Dinner the first night was at Mi Amigos Restaurant, known for their fabulous Southwest cuisine. Students from both campuses dined and got to know one another enjoying sessions and portions of TexMex food. After dinner, everyone enjoyed returning to the hotel in the city’s Touran Trolley, complete with singing and music.

Tour of unique farm
On Friday morning, the group returned to the campus. The tour took them to Maya’s Farm, a sustainable farm, which produces all the produce for their children’s schools. The tour ended with a cooking demonstration.

Behind-the-scenes peek
Saturday morning the group toured the Arizona Biltmore Resort & Hotel. Throughout its colorful history, this acclaimed landmark has been graced by U.S. presidents, celebrities, and world travelers. The Biltmore was definitely an eye opener for students and their chaperones. For instance, there was a tour guide related that a seven day stay for a family of four was nearly $100,000 and that included bringing their own chef! Later, the group visited Old Town Scottsdale and took a walking tour of the many old shops and eateries. Students had fun shopping at the booths and sampling homemade chocolates, cactus salas, and various foods. The group returned to their hotel for some pool-time before dinner at Cooperstown, pop rock star Alice Cooper’s name taking restaurant, where sports and lots of music memorabilia lined the walls. This was a fun place where servers all wore “Alice Eyes” makeup and music blasted all around. The students enjoyed a homemade catered buffet, complete with a “make your own ice-cream sundae” bar. Check out was bright and early Sunday morning for the flight back to Louisville. Students are already looking forward to their next trip in September, they’ll enjoy a five day all-inclusive trip to Bolongo Bay in St. Thomas of the U.S. Virgin Islands.