



People Skills

by Gary D. Praetzel, Ph.D.

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Did you know that your subscription to *The Rooms Chronicle*® helps prepare future hotel managers? Your subscription to TRC contributes to the practical industry applications focus of students in Niagara University's College of Hospitality and Tourism Management. *The Rooms Chronicle*® is published by Niagara University and the profit subsidizes many of the College's programs within the lodging and hospitality industry.

Through the sales of subscriptions, *The Rooms Chronicle*® contributes funding to many of the initiatives listed below that collectively comprise the College's practical industry applications focus. Like businesses, universities face constraints on the availability of resources. If it were not for *The Rooms Chronicle*®, as well as grants secured through a number of private foundations and generous donations designated to our College, it would be impossible for the College to provide its students with an education closely linked to industry.

As we unfold the practical industry applications focus of Niagara University, we want to thank you, the subscribers, for making some of these activities possible. We wish to pay special recognition to Best Western International, Inc. for providing all 2,400 of their North American member properties with a TRC subscription. The support of all TRC subscribers helps to make a difference in the hospitality education provided by Niagara University. Thank you for better preparing our students for the industry!

Niagara University's hospitality program emphasizes an almost seamless relationship with industry, especially the lodging industry. All students must complete 800 hours of approved industry-related experience in order to graduate. Most students have worked hours in the industry far in excess of this amount, either supporting themselves while attending classes and/or throughout each of their three summers in the College.

Forty-five leading regional, national and international companies attend the annual College of Hospitality and Tourism Management Career & Internship Fair. Fifteen of these employers are national recruiters for companies such as Carlson Hotels Worldwide, Hyatt Hotels and Resorts, and Marriott International. Elite properties such as the Waldorf=Astoria, The Carlyle, and Keswick Hall (Orient Express) recruit at our career fair as well. Employers of all kinds return to campus annually because our students have superior industry experiences.

Niagara's students intern nationally and internationally. They work summer jobs at: Disney, The Carlyle, New York Palace, Glacier National Park, hotels on Catalina Island and Bermuda, Chevy Chase Club, and a variety of hotels, resorts, clubs, and attractions across the country. Niagara students also work in luxury hotels in Lake Como, Italy, including the iconic Villa d'Este, and now in Cusco, Peru, the gateway city to Machu Picchu.

Employers commonly state that our students have realistic expectations of the industry. Contributing to this behavior is the College's alumni association which sponsors mentorship and shadow programs. Each October

Pictured below: An aerial view of the Niagara University campus in Lewiston, NY.



alumni and friends participate in a Career Day program that features day-long sessions on careers and networking. The intent of Career Day is to provide the students with a realistic view of the workplace and its expectations.

Each year approximately 60 industry professionals speak in our classrooms. They range from company presidents such as Jay Witzel, President of Carlson Hotels Worldwide, and Joseph McInerney, CHA, President and CEO of AH&LA, to local general managers, event planners, and presidents of convention and visitors bureaus. These industry leaders address case studies, guide students on classroom projects, and bring to life day-to-day operations for the students. Each year on campus we honor elite industry leaders at our annual convocation. Past honorees include David Kong, Jay Witzel, Paul McManus, Mike Leven, and Sue Brush.

The College offers special courses that address particular industry projects. This semester a class is being instructed by the organizer of "Buffalo Old Home Week," a major community event held each July in Buffalo, New York. The focus of this class is clear: students are planning the July 2008 event. Another class has students working on a "green meetings initiative." Students are working with the Buffalo Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau, the local hospitality community, and the Buffalo Convention Center to develop policies that appeal to organizations sensitive to preserving our environment.

Another exciting hands-on course currently offered is a student consulting course conducted at the world-renowned Waldorf=Astoria. Two teams of four students each are analyzing a problem identified by senior management. The students have begun their initial research work. They next leave for New York City to gather data firsthand. Each team of students will report their findings to the Waldorf=Astoria management team in a format similar to The Apprentice television show. The managers will then select the "winning team."

The College proudly organizes between eight and ten student industry excursions each year. We annually attend the International Hotel/Motel and Restaurant Show in New York City, the National Restaurant Show in Chicago, the New York State Governor's Tourism Conference, and the Club Managers Association of America World Conference, as well as custom designed excursions.

Thank you TRC subscribers for bringing an industry relevant education to our students. Please consider a master subscription to TRC and invite others to subscribe to make a difference in the lives of future hospitality leaders. Without subscribers such as you, many of these experiential learning opportunities would not be possible for the hotel leaders of tomorrow! ✧

(Dr. Gary D. Praetzel is dean of the College of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Niagara University. Representing a sixth of the undergraduate enrollment at the university, over 460 students attend the College. Website: www.niagara.edu/hospitality)

