

Planning for success?

Collin College offers new meetings, event management AAS degree

HOW OFTEN DO YOU hear about students wishing they could have taken more classes because they enjoyed a program so much?

At Collin College, this has been the case for the past five years for students who received a Meetings and Event Management certificate through the college's Institute of Hospitality and Culinary Education (IHCE). These students' craving for additional courses has been so intense that beginning in fall 2012, Collin College will offer a new Associate of Arts degree in Meetings and Event Management, in addition to its certificate program.

Breaking into a new field

The Meetings and Event Management AAS and certificate programs, Musa added, also serve as great networking opportunities for students interested in a new field—like former Collin College student Pamela Kerns-Maestas, who earned her certificate a few years ago.

Today, Kerns-Maestas is an operations coordinator for SEI Meeting and Incentives, a party planning company, where she assists in the planning and operation incentive travel programs. This past year, for example, Kerns-Maestas worked on a large incentive travel program that took more than 1,600

participants to Banff, Canada.

"Having the Meetings and Event Management certificate on my resume has provided me with credibility... that I was educated in the field of meeting management and took my career seriously," Kerns-Maestas said. "I wish that Collin College offered the AAS degree in Meetings and Event Management when I went through the program. I believe an associate's degree that specializes exclusively in meeting management enhances the preparation of students wanting to enter this profession.

The information

and contacts obtained by completing either the Meetings and Event Management certificate or AAS degree will be invaluable."

Plenty of options

According to Musa, students who enter the Events and Meeting Management AAS program can expect a well-rounded appreciation for the meetings and event industry and how it operates within the hospitality and tourism industry—the



Students in the meetings and management program study all phases of the industry from party planning to food set up and service.

"We are very excited to offer this program to our students. It gives the hospitality students an option of choosing a different track other than hotel and restaurant management," Professor Karen Musa, ICHE chair, said. "The meeting and event planning industry is a very exciting industry, and I think the certificate program, along with the AAS degree, is successful because of how realistic and relevant the classes are."

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world's largest industry.

Anyone who is highly organized, a creative thinker and strives under stress will enjoy earning the Meetings and Event Management AAS degree, Musa said, adding that students must love working with people and creating memorable experiences for them.

Students who earn an AAS in Meetings and Event Management can obtain positions at hotels in sales or conventions services or work with the social, military, educational, religious and fraternal (SMERF) market. In addition, Musa added, students can work for a professional meeting planner either in a corporation, association, government and or religious organization.

Furthermore, the ICHE also works with several professional organizations to enhance the students' educational experience. One such organization is the Meeting Professionals International, which Kerns-Maestas is a member of, thanks to the advice from Musa to get involved in professional associations.

"I became a student member of Meeting Professionals International and have been amazed at the doors that opened as a result," Kerns-Maestas said. "I obtained a couple of internships through networking at MPI, obtained my current full-time job through its online job board and won a scholarship to attend a student leaders forum at its convention in Vancouver."

And, ultimately, success stories like Kerns-Maestas' is what continues to drive students' appetites to learn more about the events and meetings management industry.

"Our students are very, very happy about the new AAS degree in Events and Meetings Management," Musa reiterated. "We have a well-rounded degree that gives the students an appreciation and understanding of the industry. Several of them have already said they will come back to complete the AAS." ■