

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Hospitality College Partners with Convention & Visitors Bureau
*Telemarketing Research Program Developed***

ORLANDO, May 21, 2009— Industry partnerships are a vital tool to the success of the hospitality industry. The Orlando/Orange County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc. (Orlando/Orange County CVB) and the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management have partnered to increase opportunities for bringing new meetings to the destination. Through a research agreement, the college has created a telemarketing research program utilizing hospitality students to contact approximately 18,000 potential meeting clients on behalf of the Orlando/Orange County CVB. The project expectations include gathering and updating of information from meeting planners on the target market, their needs, expectations as well as their previous experience with Orlando, and qualifying new leads for the Orlando/Orange County CVB sales staff.



Toni Gardner, Hospitality Management Senior, talks to a meeting planner from the call center based at the college.

“This program provides hospitality students who are focused on sales and marketing with hands on experience and instruction, plus it provides an enhanced resource for our sales team to qualify and identify new leads,” said Gary Sain, CEO and president of the Orlando/Orange County CVB. “Having a reputable resource like the Rosen College of Hospitality Management gives us a great community partner that can help grow our meetings opportunities.”

The project was launched April 9 in a Rosen College computer lab. In support of the program, 20 UCF hospitality students and two supervisors were selected and hired for the research program and were trained on marketing research, destination marketing, telemarketing techniques and Orlando as a destination. The program is funded through the Orlando/Orange County CVB’s meetings and convention marketing program.

“This partnership is a wonderful opportunity for our students to get a feel for what research, sales and marketing in the hospitality industry is like. It also will provide them training and experience that can only further the education they receive here at UCF,” said Abraham Pizam, dean of the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management.

The project extends the reach of the Orlando/Orange County CVB while providing UCF students valuable industry work experience and internship credit. The students utilize a research-based phone script and Microsoft Excel database to contact the meeting planners. The call center is convenient for the hospitality students as they can study and enjoy a paid internship in one location.

Call center supervisor and senior Dani Dennison is delighted to bring her past call center experience to the table. She focuses on training and developing the skills of the students and

states, "Our students are learning how to provide a service when they're not communicating with their clients face to face."

The students working in the call center ask the meeting planners questions such as: How was your previous experience with Orlando? Why do you prefer Orlando? What do you like or not like about the destination? What other destinations do you often consider? How can the Orlando/Orange County CVB help you?

The hot button question is about the economy. Dr. Fevzi Okumus, Principal Investigator of this project and also the Chair of the Hospitality Services Department at the Rosen College states, "We are taking a pro-active and long-range approach. Our project has already started providing leads and prospects for 2009 and 2010. However, once the economy turns around, with all our phone calls our goal is to make Orlando the top-of-mind destination for meetings. We hope that after the crisis, they choose Orlando. We are proud to be able to help the tourism industry and Orlando during these difficult times."

Tammi Runzler, vice president of convention sales and services at the Orlando/Orange County CVB works directly with the call center and is fond of the new project. "Overall, we at the CVB are very happy and excited about our partnership. It has been great, it's not only a learning experience for the hospitality students but it's helping us at the Orlando/Orange County CVB bring more business to Orlando. I feel that it is a win/win situation."

How do the students feel about the project? Kelly Hillhouse, a sophomore working in the call center described, "I have found that the meeting planners are very nice people and it's great to learn more about the industry. I've already had a couple sales leads and I feel very good about contributing to the Orlando industry."

Adi Hayat, call center supervisor and graduate student describes that the partnership is beneficial to both fronts, "A big part of Rosen College's attraction is its location in a hospitality hub. If there is no industry, it will be harder to teach and train the future leaders of the hospitality industry. In this sense, the CVB and College are working for a common cause – to bring business to Orlando. I feel this is a great thing to be a part of!"

About the Orlando/Orange County CVB

The Orlando/Orange County CVB is the official sales and marketing organization for the Orlando/Orange County area responsible for generating brand awareness, increasing travel to the area and booking conventions and meetings. For more information, log onto visitorlando.com

About the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management

Located in the heart of the tourism and hospitality industry, Orlando, the Rosen College of Hospitality Management is dedicated to the values of professionalism, leadership and service. The mission of the Rosen College of Hospitality Management is to develop future generations of global hospitality and tourism leaders representing all industry segments in the hospitality capital of the world, through innovative academic programs, cutting edge research and strong industry and community partnerships.

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