



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Rosen College of Hospitality Management

9907 Universal Blvd. | Orlando, FL 32819

Media Contact: Susan Vernon-Devlin

Susan.Vernon-Devlin@ucf.edu | 407-903-8151

hospitality.ucf.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UCF Rosen College Researchers Help Bonaire Become a “Blue Destination”

Environmental and Economic Masterplan approved for Caribbean Island

Orlando, Florida (June 13, 2018) – An island paradise is the last place one thinks there would be concern over the environment and the economy, after all you’re there to get away from it all. But, on the island of Bonaire in the Western Caribbean, that couldn’t be farther from the truth. Researchers from University of Central Florida (UCF) Rosen College of Hospitality Management worked with the island’s government on the creation of a Strategic Tourism Masterplan. On May 30, 2018, Bonaire’s Parliament adopted the Masterplan establishing Bonaire as a “Blue Destination”, the first in the Caribbean. This means the island focuses on “green efforts” such as ecotourism, renewable energy, conservation of the ocean through waste management and the banning of some forms of sunscreen whose chemical makeup, Oxybenzone and Octinoxate, can kill some sea life, damage coral and disrupt the normal ecosystem in the ocean.

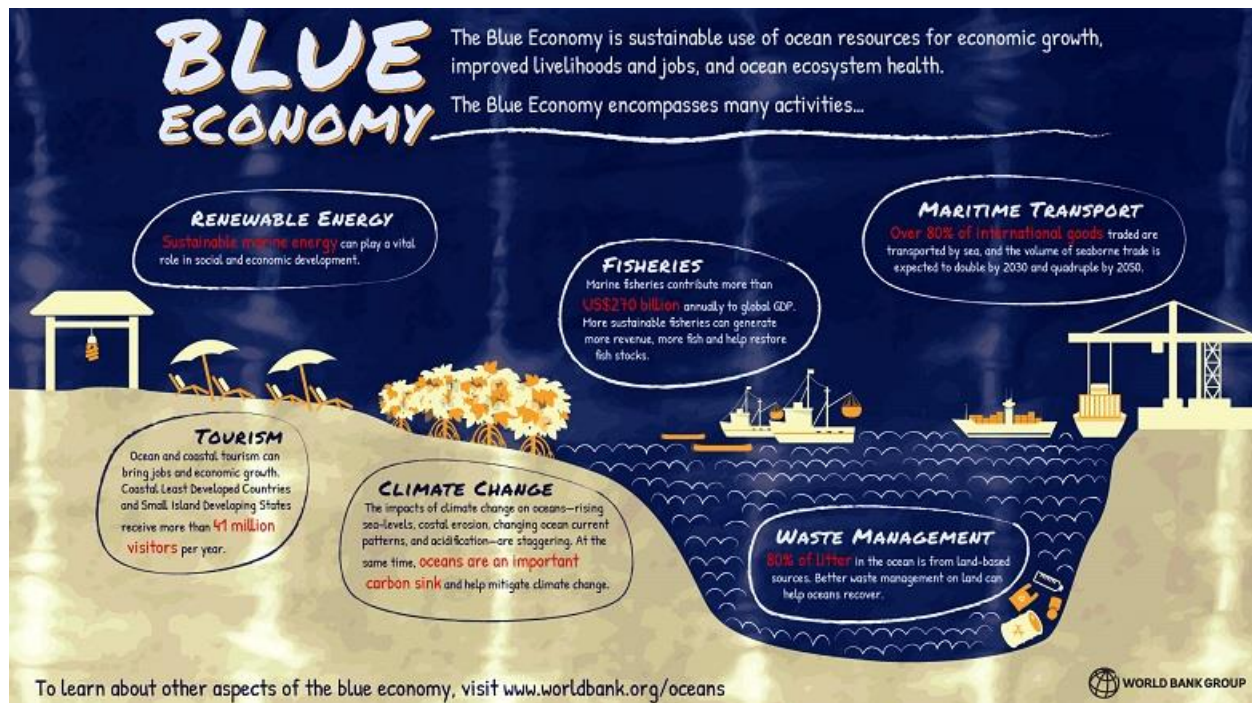
“The tourism Masterplan reaffirms the island’s timeless values anchored on the balance between people and the environment, and suggests moderate tourism growth to keep the island’s authenticity, and to respect the island’s nurturing long history with the ocean as its main livelihood source,” said Dr. Robertico Croes, Associate Dean of Administration & Finance at UCF Rosen College, a researcher on the project. “According to the plan, Bonaire is a true “Blue Destination” with its livelihood closely intertwined with the ocean.”

Under the Masterplan, Bonaire is expected to invest \$150 million into its economy to generate 2,400 new jobs by adding 600 new four-star hotel rooms. This in turn will generate 60,000 new tourists arriving by air and sea. The overall focus is to boost the island’s economy by focusing on the symbiotic relationship of the island’s residents and tourists to the oceans and the conscious effort to sustain them. A new website was launched by Bonaire to mark the “Blue Destination” status:

<http://bluedestination.com/>

Bonaire has been at the forefront of preserving its natural resources since the 1970’s. It is a haven for scuba divers; several fringe reefs offer excellent recreational diving opportunities. Bonaire’s Parliament wants to ensure it stays that way, while still boosting the economy through job growth and increased tourism to the island.

“Bonaire is the first Caribbean island to make an incredibly responsible step to protect and preserve a reef that helps maintain the health of the world’s seas,” said Dr. Kelly Semrad, a co-researcher on the Bonaire Masterplan who also teaches at UCF Rosen College. “Bonaire recognizes that the Earth’s environment is finite and they are making an effort to leave a big footprint for the rest of the world to follow by striving to become the World’s first Blue Destination.”



The term “Blue Destination” is coined from the World Bank’s concept definition of a “Blue Economy”. The principles focus on the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, thus improved livelihoods and jobs, ocean ecosystem health, tourism, renewable energy, fisheries, maritime transport, climate change and waste management. The UCF Rosen College team outlined a set of strategic objectives to ensure that Bonaire would be capable of achieving this environmental and economic challenge over a 10-year period from 2017-2027, with a heavy emphasis on tourism.

“The people of Bonaire understand the importance of tourism in their daily lives,” said Dr. Manuel Rivera, co-researcher and Assistant Dean at UCF Rosen College. “By shifting their economic development strategy towards a “Blue Economy”, an initiative by the United Nations and the World Bank, the Island maintains its compromise to protect ocean resources in order to improve the livelihoods of its people. Bonaire’s Blue Economy will foster economic growth that gives precedence to the sustainable use and conservation of our ocean’s resources.”

The Bonaire Masterplan, developed by UCF Rosen College researchers in the Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies including [Dr. Robertico Croes](#), [Dr. Manuel Rivera](#), [Dr. Kelly Semrad](#), [Dr. Valeriya Shapoval](#), and [Dr. Mathilda Van Niekirk](#), with support from [Dr. Jorge Ridderstaat](#) and other UCF faculty, including [Dr. John Fauth](#), is part of interdisciplinary research for the tourism industry that seeks to protect the welfare of the environment so future generations of visitors to the island will be able to enjoy Bonaire as a “Blue Destination”. With the recommendations in the MasterPlan, Bonaire is

expected to boost its local economy by 2021 from its current 20% to nearly 45%, and in 10 years with an increase of 60,000 tourists receipts should jump from \$229 million to nearly \$400 million by 2027.

About the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management

The UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management located in Orlando, offers students an unrivaled opportunity to learn and work in the heart of hospitality. Ranked #2 among hospitality management programs worldwide, Rosen College has been an educational leader for over 30 years. Uniquely positioned in America's top tourism destination, we educate the next generation of industry leaders through internationally-recognized faculty, innovative academic programs, cutting-edge research and strong industry and community partnerships. To learn more, visit hospitality.ucf.edu.

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