



## Dean's Alumni Advisory Board-2020



**Kennon Adkinson '08**  
**Sonny's BBQ**

Kennon has worked for Sonny's since June 2013 and has over a decade of culinary experience. As the Senior Director of Catering for the local franchise group, iServ BBQ, LLC, Kennon manages a catering team of 13 across Central Florida. He is most passionate about giving back to his community and the many causes he cares about, such as American Heart Association and American Cancer Society.

Kennon's bigger role at Sonny's is the one of Chief Kindness Officer. There he leads the team's effort to amplify kindness in the communities they serve, inspire acts of kindness, and helps his restaurants share their stories.

In his free time, Kennon loves to travel and dabbles in extreme activities such as skydiving, primitive camping and water sports. Kennon is big on family and is happiest riding around on his scooter with his dog, Elijah, in the sidecar.



**David Buckalew '05**  
**Owner, Buckalew Hospitality**

While a student he started his business, Buckalew Hospitality. His business started out by doing mystery shops for hotels and meeting and event management for event planners, they have now transitioned into a nationwide temporary staffing company focused on event management that employs over 500 people every year. In addition to running his business he is very active in the Orlando's Chapter of MPI where he serves as VP of Education, co-hosts Orlando's only meeting and event Podcast - #SwagAndRepeat, and holds the accreditation of Certified Meeting Professional. In his spare time, he enjoys baseball, UCF sports, running and supporting the Orlando hospitality industry.



**Steve Cokkinias '18MS**  
**Senior Vice President, Market Development**  
**FMG Leading**

Steve came to FMG Leading from the hospitality industry, where he held leadership roles for nearly 2 decades at luxury hotels around the world.

He began his hospitality career with Starwood Hotels & Resorts before joining The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company in April 2000 in Jamaica. Steve held various leadership positions at three different properties before becoming the youngest General Manager in the brand's history at The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur at age 29. In addition to his current market development and brand oversight responsibilities at FMG Leading, he has delivered learning programs and keynotes on service excellence, culture, and leadership to a wide range of clients.

While in Malaysia, Steve was elected to the Board of Governors of the American-Malaysian Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM), and he has served on the Steering Committee of the U.S. Embassy-based Overseas Security Advisory Committee (OSAC). In addition, he has assisted with the pre-

opening of five Ritz-Carlton properties worldwide, including The Ritz-Carlton, Doha (Qatar) and The Ritz-Carlton, Guangzhou (China).

Steve earned a Bachelor's degree in History and Sociology from Washington and Lee University, and a Master of Science degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management from the University of Central Florida's Rosen College of Hospitality Management.



**Dominique Greco '11**  
**Nighttime Economy Manager, City of Orlando**

Dominique has a reputation for managing groups at large and disrupting defunct practices that call for innovative change. A proactive leader throughout her time at the University of Central Florida's Rosen College of Hospitality Management, and in her hospitality/project management career, Dominique has led with passion and enthusiasm. She earned the role as the Director of Special Projects for Downtown Orlando's largest ownership portfolios in 2012 and quickly became an indispensable resource in maintaining the success of the group's several entertainment and hospitality venues, all the while building an invaluable awareness of the nightlife industry that fuels the city in which she serves today.

Dominique was offered the role as the first Nighttime Economy Manager with the City of Orlando in 2017 making her one of the first five "night mayors" in the United States. Fostering and enhancing the safety, vibrancy and growth of downtown's various rapidly expanding industries focused on hospitality and the visitor experience is the fundamental objective of this unique role. Serving as liaison between downtown stakeholders and the city, Dominique brings a fresh yet polished perspective to this next chapter of local governance.



**Alexis Johnson '05, '10MS**  
**Executive Director**  
**USTA Florida Foundation**

Alexis Senge Johnson serves as the executive director for the USTA Florida Foundation, where she supports tennis programs focused on under-resourced and adaptive athletes throughout the state. She still finds time to volunteer as the development director for TheatreWorks Florida and freelance with live event production teams for Disney Event Group. After leading everything from tiny horses and performers to a board of directors and dedicated volunteers, Alexis now takes her unique outlook on leadership and uses it to creatively inspire people into action across the nonprofit and corporate sectors.

Alexis has often found herself as one of few women at the table and because of that she sees the importance in giving her time back to the next generation of leaders. She is a proud mentor and presenter for the USTA Florida Leadership Academy, where strives to empower both genders to support and advocate for each other throughout their career paths. Alexis also serves as a Rosen College Alumni mentor in an effort to give back to the community that inspired her to be uniquely different. When not wearing all her other hats, you can find her writing about leadership and life at [21stCenturyGal.com](http://21stCenturyGal.com).

Alexis holds a BS in hospitality management and a masters in nonprofit management from the University of Central Florida.



**Shamir Kanji '07**  
**VP - Investments**  
**Xenia Hotels & Resorts, Inc.**

Shamir Kanji is Vice President - Investments of Xenia Hotels & Resorts, Inc. a NYSE-listed real estate investment trust. In this role, Shamir helps lead the company's acquisitions, dispositions, and business development functions. Prior to joining Xenia in 2012, Shamir was a Senior Financial Analyst with CNL Financial Group, Inc. from 2010-2012 focusing on corporate and debt finance, acquisitions, and asset management. From 2007-2010, Shamir was an Analyst with Tishman Hotel & Realty in asset management for the Orlando & Puerto Rico owned resorts. Shamir received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Hospitality Management from the Rosen College of Hospitality Management at the University of Central Florida. Shamir lives in Delaney Park with his wife, Allison (UCF Class of 2007), and son, Aidan. When not working, Shamir enjoys traveling, watching, and playing sports with his family and friends.



**Dennis Levy '10**  
**Owner, Levy Hospitality (former owner of Night Auditors of FL)**

While completing his internships during the course of his undergraduate studies at the Rosen College, Dennis gained diversified experience with an emphasis on lodging, food and beverage, and accounting operations by working for companies such as Disney and Herschend Family Entertainment. Before he graduated Dennis was named the Director of Business Development for a regional food service management company which he successfully expanded to manage 250 K-12 school cafeterias across the country participating in the USDA's National School Lunch Program. After exiting the business in 2014 Dennis acquired Night Auditors of America and founded his consulting firm, Levy Hospitality. Since that time Dennis has worked closely with hotel managers and business owners of all types to create synergy between departments through management efficiency and custom-tailored business systems. He holds an active Florida Real Estate License and was awarded a fellowship in 2016 by the New Leaders Council, a national organization that develops and networks progressive business and political leaders.

Dennis has a passion for traveling the world and experiencing new and different cultures having visited over 20 countries to date; he hopes to visit many more. He shoots competitively and loves his two cats, Chips & Guacamole. He also serves as the current Vice President of the Heron Cove Community Association and has served the Rosen College previously as a member of the Hospitality Management Curriculum Advisory Board, as well as a Rosen College Ambassador while he was a student. He credits much of his professional success to his time at Rosen, his current active participation as an alumnus, and the network of colleagues he has built through the college over the years.



**Brittany Manzie '09**  
**Corporate Reputation Management Attaché and Asst. to the President**  
**Paramount Hospitality Management**

Brittany Manzie is the Corporate Reputation Management Attaché and Assistant to the President of Paramount Hospitality Management (PHM). In addition to coordinating and managing all day-to-day tasks for the President of the company, Brittany plays an integral role in all departments by stepping in and assisting where needed on an ongoing basis whether it's overseeing social media, assisting with sales and marketing efforts, or coordinating social and corporate events.

Brittany has more than 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry. Prior to her current position, she served as the Lead Guest Services Agent at the 432-suite Floridays Resort Orlando. Previously, she served as the Journey

Ambassador and Front Office Supervisor at the Hilton Fort Lauderdale Beach Resort, where she quickly worked her way up the ranks quickly becoming Assistant Food & Beverage Manager and eventually Catering Manager, where she was responsible for delivering outstanding guest service and financial profitability. During her tenure at this leading property, she increased annual revenue for food, beverage and rental by \$200,000 and increased wedding revenue by 100%.

Throughout her career, Brittany has won several accolades including Manager of the Year, Manager of the Quarter and Rookie of the Year. She is committed to the community and has volunteered with several organizations including The National Association for Catering and Events (NACE) as well as HANDY, providing customized programs for children through adulthood, and the Museum of Discovery and Science (MODS), all located in Ft. Lauderdale, FL.

Brittany has been involved in the hospitality industry in some capacity throughout most of her life. PHM is a family business and learning the business from previous generations has given her the tools needed to succeed in the industry. Brittany loves to travel and explore the world with family and friends. She currently resides in South Florida with her husband and daughter.

**Marco Manzie, Jr. '11**  
**V.P Business Development**  
**Paramount Hospitality Management**

Marco Manzie Jr. is the Director of Business Development for Paramount Hospitality Management (PHM). In his position, he contributes the overall growth of the company by developing and maintaining business relationships, offering expertise in the areas of valuation, asset management, operational evaluation and both marketing and revenue management analytics, while leading a dynamic management team. Most recently he assisted in the acquisition of The Grove Resort & Water Park Orlando an 878 all-suite, full-service, luxury, condo-resort property.

With more than a decade of experience, Marco has proven to be a true leader in the hospitality industry. In addition to his current position, he also serves as the Director of Revenue Management for Floridays Resort, The Point Hotel & Suites, Avanti International Resort and Avanti Palms Resort and Conference Center, each managed by PHM. In this role, which he has held for nine years, he consistently produces weekly 10-day forecasts, monthly 90-day forecasts and annual budgets within 3% accuracy of actualized revenues assisting in the operating efficiencies and the net operating profit of each resort.

Prior to his current roles with the company, Marco was the opening Front Office Manager at Marriott Pompano Beach Resort a 218-room Upper-Upscale, full-service, franchised property owned and managed by Urgo Hotels of Bethesda, MD. During his 2-year tenure Marco was awarded Marriott's "Spirit to Serve" award for achieving consistent, exemplary Guest Service ratings.

Marco began his career as a PHM Management Trainee at Floridays Resort while, as a full-time student at UCF, he had the opportunity to experience all aspects of hotel operations. During his tenure, he worked in all departments and various roles from Front Desk Supervisor, Night Auditor and Reservations Sales Agent to Housekeeping Supervisor, Bartender, Line Cook and Shift Maintenance Engineer, among others.

Marco prides himself on his involvement in the industry and the community and looks forward to growing the family business outside of the Orlando market.

Marco earned his Bachelor of Science degree from The Rosen School of Hospitality Management at the University of Central Florida. He also earned





his Revenue Management Certification from Cornell University's School of Hospitality Management in Ithaca, New York. Currently, he sits on UCF's Rosen College of Hospitality Management's Alumni Student Advisory Board.



**Rick Powell '10**  
**Owner/Operator of the Chick-fil-A**  
**Mt. Dora, FL**

He leads, trains and develops his team to accomplish remarkable results for his business. Before becoming a Chick-fil-A Owner/Operator, Rick worked in a variety of different roles within Chick-fil-A and eventually began managing their corporately owned locations. Rick's restaurants have consistently produced top results in the Chick-fil-A chain and his teams have won Chick-fil-A's highest annual award, Champions Club, twice. Rick has a bachelor's degree in Hospitality Management from the Rosen College at the University of Central Florida and has served on the Alumni Advisory Board of the college for 2 years. In his spare time, Rick loves to spend time with his wife Melissa and his four children Trip, Presley, Collins and Reaves.



**Jason O. Raimondi '00**  
**President & Founder, JOR Hospitality Solutions**

Mr. Jason O. Raimondi has had the distinct pleasure of cultivating a 20-year career in hospitality characterized by dedicated leadership roles and exceptional experience in learning & development. From large resorts to luxury hotels to high-profile theme parks and fine dining establishments, his extensive background demonstrates wide-ranging proficiency across guest services, front office, resort operations, rooms division, F&B, learning and development, and human resources.

Mr. Raimondi began his hospitality career in 1995 at the Walt Disney World Resort as part of the Disney College Program. His time at Disney further ignited passion which led to other tremendous opportunities at Loews Hotels, Hilton Hotels & Resorts, InterContinental Hotels Group, and Forbes Travel Guide. While serving at these world-renowned companies, he oversaw entire training operations and traveled the world as an auditor, consultant and executive trainer verifying luxury services at over 80 hotel, restaurant and spa destinations.

Additionally, he has been privileged to take part in multiple resort and departmental openings and has launched global training initiatives instructing literally thousands on leadership, onboarding, and train-the-trainer programs. With the bulk of his career spent in learning and development, Mr. Raimondi is most recognized for crafting engaging and relevant content and bringing subject matter to life through dynamic delivery. Mr. Raimondi has a Master's Degree in Management & Leadership from Webster University and a strong academic interest in the science of leadership.



**Michael Ridgewell '11**  
**Area Managing Director, The Keys Collection**  
**Key West, FL**

As Michael enters his 13th year in the lodging industry, he has taken the time to develop, motivate and inspire all team members to reach for the stars. Michael began in the lodging industry in the tourism capital of the world as a PBX Phone Operator at the Hyatt Regency in the Orlando International Airport. The love for the business was developed while on an internship assignment through the Rosen College of Hospitality Management. From there, positions included that of front of the house, back of the house, food and beverage, loss prevention, meetings and events, analytics and finance while his heart remains at the forefront of the industry and in operations. Michael has had the privilege to be immersed with some of the best lodging brands including Marriott, Hilton, Hyatt, IHG, Starwood and Best Western. More recently involvement in independent branding and activations.

Currently, Michael is the Area Managing Director for Highgate Hotels at The Keys Collection in Key West, Florida. Michael is responsible for the direct leadership of 4 unique hotels 519 guest rooms, 9 food and beverage outlets, 26 Work Force Housing units, unique event and meeting space, and a fleet of transportation vehicles. The Keys Collection boasts 2 Condé Nast rated hotels as being in the top 15 hotels in the state of Florida. Prior to joining the Highgate team, Michael supported a portfolio of 43 hotels with Peachtree Hotel Group nationally as the Operations Specialist.

Michael earned his BS degree in Hospitality Management from the Rosen College of Hospitality Management at the University of Central Florida in 2011. Michael is also involved with the Rosen College Alumni Association and several local associations in the Florida Keys. Michael enjoys the performing arts and has been seen on some of the largest stages in the country including New York and Disney World. He has even been known to perform in hotel lobbies and continues to create a warm and fun culture while maximizing the experience for guests and teams alike.



**Emily Smith '13**  
**Florida Director for Sales and Events for Tavern Restaurant Group**

Emily Smith continues to propel herself forward professionally, but also takes the time to elevate others along the way. As the Florida Director of Sales and Events for Tavern Restaurant Group - The Pub, she coordinates and sells group events while overseeing a team of sales and event staff throughout the state. Emily is involved with various local networking groups such as the Greater Orlando and Tampa Chapters of Meeting Professionals International and Central Florida TRIBE International. As a proud UCF alumna, and recent 30 Under 30 award recipient, she serves as the current Mentorship Co-Chair of the Rosen College of Hospitality Management Alumni Board, and volunteers as a career fair coach to assist students as they seek career development. Emily recently launched her professional speaking platform, Climbing in Heels where she is dedicated to helping others fit it all in with ways to manage stress, find balance, and help you to achieve your goals with the ideal work-life balance for you. Determined to fit it all in herself, Emily loves to work out and also travel the world. She has run 19 half marathons and 1 full marathon in 12 different states and has been doing CrossFit since 2013.



**Francesco Spinelli '15**  
**Sales Manager, The Breakers Resort**  
**West Palm Beach, FL**

Francesco Spinelli graduated with a B.S. in Hospitality Management in Spring 2015. Francesco has been with The Breakers in Palm Beach since graduation from Rosen. He has held multiple operational management roles during his time there, including Recreation Manager, Guest Relations Manager and Assistant Hotel Manager, but is currently a Sales Manager in the corporate group sector.



**Kristin Wilson '07**

**Founder of 2 all-female companies, Our DJ Rocks and Photobooth Rocks**

Headquartered in Orlando, FL where she leads a team of more than 35 employees who market, sell and produce 800-900 events annually. Her journey into the world of DJing began when she asked a simple question, 'Can chicks be DJs too?' The answer was "YES" and the learning began.

Kristin DJed her way through college and graduated with a BA and Public Relations with a double Minor in Marketing and Education from the University of Central Florida. When Kristin launched Our DJ Rocks in 2010, the goal was to bring her energy and passion for music to every event including weddings, corporate events, and parties of all types. Who knew she would be able to fuse her knowledge of hospitality in the events world with her love of DJing along with Degree in Advertising/Marketing/PR?!

In 2014, Kristin started expanding her DJ team and has more than quadrupled the Our DJ Rocks DJ roster to currently 12 DJs, in less than 5 years. She meticulously trains every DJ in the Our DJ Rocks "DJ University" Training program growing the business to the only all-female DJ multi-operation company in the South East.

Kristin has grown two successful businesses with a rock solid foundation using a combination of creative marketing/branding and building a company culture that people want to connect with.

Something people would be surprised to know about Kristin:

She is a mom by love and heart, through marriage and has two beautiful step-daughters.