



It's been more than one year since the pandemic changed the face of academics at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. In this issue of the Communique From the Dean's Desk, we take a look back as we wrap up the fourth semester that has been impacted by Covid-19, how it's changed the way we educate the future leaders of the hospitality industry, how we engaged with our alumni and how we strengthened our ties to our hospitality industry partners.

Spring semester 2021 has been one where we have seen a more robust return to the classroom for students and faculty. While we still conduct many courses digitally via Canvas, Zoom and other electronic platforms, an increased space capacity to 50 percent meant more students had the opportunity to engage in face-to-face learning. As vaccine rollout continues, the fall 2021 semester should look more like years past, with most of our 3,500 students back on campus, wearing face-coverings of course and abiding by other safety protocols like handwashing and physical distancing when possible. The pandemic has made us aware that there is a digital divide for some of our students. Some don't have adequate Wifi in their homes or even access to computers exclusively for their own learning; they may be sharing with siblings who are also learning online. Many students lost jobs or internships when the hospitality and tourism industry shuttered its doors to stop the spread of Covid-19. The industry is coming back and we are happy to report that our students are once again heading back to their workplaces or have found new opportunities. Students who experienced financial hardships were encouraged to apply for CARES Act funding through UCF. Our Pineapple Pantry, a branch of the Knights Helping Knights pantry, reopened this spring, one day a week and by appointment. We knew our students needed food staples and personal hygiene items, and we were here to help.



Our alumni engagement was significantly boosted during the darkest months of Covid-19. Our P.R.E.P. Connect program, designed to give our students who were displaced from in-person internships a forum to engage with industry professionals, provided meetings each week for student and alumni interaction. Thanks to our assistant director of alumni relations, Susan Boucher, there was a consistent stream of alumni from all disciplines -- lodging, restaurants and foodservice, senior living, entertainment, events, tourism management and more -- talking with students via zoom, connecting with them on LinkedIn, and mentoring them. UCF Rosen College has more than 11,000 alumni, and we're about to gain more with in-person commencement on May 6. Yes, in-person commencement. Some future alumKnights will be participating in a more traditional ceremony this year, limited capacity and Covid-19 safety protocols in place. Other future alumKnights will do Grad Walk. It's not a formal ceremony, but they will get to walk a stage and pose for photos with family members at an appointment booked in advance. Spring 2020 and fall 2020 saw us watching commencement through our computer screens. We will gather this year, a smaller ceremony than in years past, but a ceremony our students deserve.

Industry partners played a significant role this past spring semester and throughout the semesters of 2020 impacted by the pandemic. Thirty-nine employers conducted interviews with our students and alumni during our second virtual career fair on March 18, almost double the employers offering jobs and internships in the fall where we had 22 employers join the first virtual career fair. The hospitality industry is coming back. We launched another progressive internship program in spring 2021, this one with Sonny's BBQ. The first progressive internship program launched in spring 2020 with Longhorn Steakhouse is about to "graduate" its interns, seniors at Rosen College, who will go on to manage restaurants under the Longhorn brand. Our industry partners made videos to assist with recruitment and retention. They spoke to classes via zoom. They helped us create video content to educate, enlighten and entertain our students. The power of partnerships was evident.

As the spring 2021 semester draws to a close, I want to thank everyone who has come together to support the

course work of the future leaders of the hospitality industry. From our award winning faculty, to our dedicated staff, to our alumni and industry partners, my sincere thanks. We came together and the outcome demonstrates that we are all diligent and dedicated stewards of higher education.

Our summer semesters are about to begin in mid-May. Our students will be learning face-to-face, digitally and in mixed-mode sessions. We look forward to the fall 2021 semester, a return to our new normal, back on campus once again, together in hospitality.

Charge On!



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UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management

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