



Partnership between USF and McKibbon Hospitality creates hospitality teaching lab with iconic hotel brands

TAMPA, Fla (Nov. 10, 2021) – The University of South Florida Muma College of Business and McKibbon Hospitality today announced a new partnership that will turn some premier hotel brands into intensive student training grounds.

The new affiliation creates an innovative hospitality teaching lab program designed to give School of Hospitality and Tourism Management students first-hand experience in hospitality management at some of the world’s largest hotel brands, including Marriott and Hilton.

“Student success is our top priority. This partnership between USF and McKibbon Hospitality opens up an important training opportunity and gives our graduates a competitive advantage,” said Moez Limayem, the Lynn Pippenger Dean at the USF Muma College of Business, which is comprised of six schools, including the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management. “We value this new partnership. Educating the next generation of hotel managers requires teaming up with the top brands to teach the latest in hospitality management.”

Students will have access to nearly 100 teaching hotels across the country that are managed by McKibbon.

The new program will offer USF hospitality management students a one-of-a-kind training advantage — the chance to gain valuable insight and hands-on experience at a variety of hotel brand concepts that cater to differing clients. For example, students will have the opportunity to learn management techniques at the select-service Courtyard by Marriott Tampa Downtown or the boutique, full-service Kimpton Hotel Arras in Asheville, North Carolina.

“Students who learn alongside and inside of these global brands will be equipped with much-needed operational skills and hands-on training that the industry needs,” said Cihan Cobanoglu, the dean of the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management.

Leaders from the USF Muma College of Business and McKibbon Hospitality plan to sign the agreement during a special announcement today from 4:30 to 6 p.m. at the Hyatt House Tampa Airport, 5308 Avion Park Drive, Tampa.

McKibbon Hospitality, headquartered in Tampa, manages nearly 100 hotels and over 10,000 guest rooms in over 40 markets for some of the world's largest hotel brands, such as Marriott, Hilton, Hyatt and IHG. The award-winning hotel management company is one of the largest in the country, with 20 prominent brands across the country.

"We are thrilled to partner with USF on this exciting, mutually beneficial initiative, inviting hospitality students to experience hotel operations in a hands-on, immersive setting," said John McKibbon, chairman of McKibbon Hospitality. "Career development and on-the-job training have always been central to our company culture, helping our associates grow within McKibbon and in their careers, and we look forward to continuing that commitment with USF and their students. In addition to providing unique training and development in preparation for their future careers, we look forward to the new perspectives and fresh ideas that students will share with our hotel leadership teams, strengthening not only our operations but the industry as a whole."

In the Tampa Bay area, McKibbon Hospitality operates hotels in Tampa, Clearwater, Sarasota, Fort Myers and Lakeland.

The announcement comes at a time when USF's hospitality management program is on the rise. In July 2020, the school received professional and academic accreditation from the Accreditation Commission of Programs in Hospitality Administration.

USF will expand the hospitality management major to the Tampa and St. Petersburg campuses in 2022. Currently the degree is only offered at the Sarasota-Manatee campus. The St. Petersburg campus also has a hospitality leadership program geared toward managers and team leaders working in the hospitality management industry.

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About the University of South Florida

The University of South Florida is a high-impact global research university dedicated to student success. Over the past 10 years, no other public university in the country has risen faster in U.S. News and World Report's national university rankings than USF. Serving more than 50,000 students on campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg and Sarasota-Manatee, USF is designated as a Preeminent State Research University by the Florida Board of Governors, placing it in the most elite category among the state's 12 public universities. USF has earned widespread national recognition for its success graduating under-represented minority and limited-income students at rates equal to or higher than white and higher income students. USF is a member of the American Athletic Conference. Learn more at www.usf.edu.