

Tourism Management News, 21 August 2007

We have a number of interesting news items to report from the Tourism Management Department as we begin the 2007-08 academic year. A few of these are detailed below.

The Book on the Becker Administration *Finally* Closes

With the start of the 2007-08 academic year, former Tourism Management Chair Cherylynn Becker (shown below) will begin a new stint as a rank-and-file faculty in the CoB's Gulf Coast division. Though Becker chaired TM for just a brief period before stepping down at the end of 2006-07, she presided over what many are calling the USM tourism management program's worst ever period.



Cherylynn Becker

First, Becker presided over the demise of USM's (the CoB's) *Charcoal Room*, a restaurant laboratory run by TM majors for course credit. The *CR* was itself an institution at USM when Becker arrived in the CoB. It was frequented not only by USM students, faculty, and staff, but also by local business officials and civic organization members, etc. Under Jim Taylor's leadership, the *CR* was known for high-quality entrees and excellent service, and it was legitimate competition for local eateries.

Second, Becker presided over the greatest exodus of faculty that TM has seen in quite some time. Much of the collection of faculty departing from the CoB's TM group during Becker's administration have been able to secure high-quality positions since leaving USM. Table 1 below provides a list of the top TM faculty departures, along with their current locations:

Table 1
Top Faculty Losses under Cherylynn Becker's Leadership of TM

<u>Name</u>	<u>Current Institutional Affiliation</u>
Joe Hutchinson	University of Central Florida
Johye Hwang	University of Missouri
Tanya Reutzler	University of Mississippi
Jim Taylor	University of Mississippi

As the table above points out, the CoB's Tourism Management department has lost a significant amount of talent since Becker's arrival. Three of the four above are at "flagship" universities, and all four are now at universities classified by *U.S. News & World Report* as Tier 2 or Tier 3 – one to two levels *above* USM.

These are but two of the many sad chapters of Becker's legacy as TM Chair (in the Doty administration of the CoB).

Though Gone, the Hallabing Continued

With the release of the 2007 merit raise data, it became clear that the CoB's administration had every intent of continuing to shower TM's Zaher Hallab with well above-average raises and benefits. Though he had already accepted a new position with California State University (East Bay), Hallab was slated to receive a 2007 merit raise of \$5,148, which ranks as the 13th largest raise (out of 62) in the CoB. As the *31st & Pearl* column entitled "You Got 'Hallabed?'. . ." alluded to, and the independent report entitled "[Hallabed All Over](#)" spelled out in greater detail, Hallab's salary rose by a whopping 44.8 percent from the end of 2003-04 to the beginning of 2006-07.¹ And, in the 2004 and 2006 merit raise cycles alone, Hallab was awarded merit raises totaling \$15,760! Now we can throw in the \$5,148 from 2007 and make the new total \$20,908 -- all from just three merit raise cycles (2004, 2006 and 2007).² Simply amazing.

After reading this report, some will likely say that Hallab was more appreciated by CoB administrators while a CSU-EB faculty member than they (the readers) have been while on the faculty in USM's College of Business.

¹ The *31st & Pearl* column referred to here is embedded in the independent report that is linked in this report.

² Hallab's SEDONA vita (spring 2007) shows a total of only five journal publications. At the time of his 2004 merit raise of \$11,000, he had published only one.

Green Back in the News

Once again TM instructor Evelyn Green (shown below) is making news. This time Green's participation in the "Partnering with Professionals" program has received the attention of *HQ Hattiesburg* magazine. According to a USM Press Release from 23 May 2007, Green will provide a streaming video series (for an *online* casino



Evelyn Green

management course) that students can use to "network with professionals" and gain "up-to-date, first-hand information [from Coast casino executives] about the gaming industry in Mississippi." A copy of the USM press release (by Jana Bryant), entitled "Southern Miss Develops Casino Management Video Series with Industry Leaders," which forms the foundation of the *HQ Hattiesburg* article, appears below.³

Southern Miss Develops Casino Management Video Series with Industry Leaders



Wednesday, May 23, 2007

Contact Jan May - 601.266.5854

HATTIESBURG, Miss. – The Department of Tourism Management at The University of Southern Mississippi has joined with casino industry leaders to form the "Partnering with Professionals" program, utilizing the latest technology as a way for students to network with professionals and provide up-to-date, first-hand information about the gaming industry in Mississippi.

The first stage of the program is the development of a video series used in an online course for students seeking careers in casino management. Evelyn Green, tourism management instructor and producer of the video series, stated, "Through streaming video and online discussions, gaming industry experts can share their knowledge and experience with students and respond to student questions."

Green continued, "I want our students, the future leaders of tourism, to recognize and capitalize on the wealth of quality career opportunities right here in Mississippi."

Rich Westfall, director of community development at Isle of Capri Casino in Biloxi and an inaugural member in the program, agrees with Green. "'Partnering with Professionals' will provide a clear career path for aspiring gaming and hospitality students and will keep the

³ The article on Green's work with the "Partnering with Professionals" program at USM appears in the latest issue of *HQ Hattiesburg* (Aug '07).

brightest young minds living and working in Mississippi," Westfall said.

"I commend the Southern Miss College of Business and the Department of Tourism Management for taking the initiative to keep the casino management curriculum alive and moving forward in such a new and innovative way," Westfall said. "Evelyn Green has provided her students with a true look into real gaming operations by providing one-on-one access to key professionals in the gaming and hospitality industry."

Kerry Cavanaugh, a tourism management student from Biloxi said, "The 'Partnering with Professionals' video series is exactly what we need to get an edge in the competitive job market. The program has made networking with otherwise unreachable business professionals accessible to us as students. The contacts we're making and the mentoring they offer through this program are invaluable to us in establishing our careers."

Dr. Cheri Becker, associate professor and chair of the Department of Tourism Management, said that with the continued support of the casino resort industry, the 'Partnering with Professionals' program will play a key role in providing valuable experience for students through mentoring and internship opportunities. "Industry support is vital to the long term growth of the Southern Miss tourism program and of our state," Becker said. "We greatly appreciate their contributions."

Inaugural members of the Partnering with Professionals program include Larry Gregory, executive director, Mississippi Gaming Commission (MGC); Rich Randall, director of enforcement, MGC; Christi Davis, enforcement agent, MGC; Eddie Gibson, chairman, Choctaw Gaming Commission; Webster Franklin, president and CEO, Tunica Convention and Visitors Bureau; Rich Westfall, director of community development, Isle of Capri Casino, Biloxi; Mike Cray, director of table games, Isle of Capri Casino, Biloxi; Anne Mockler, director of surveillance, Beau Rivage Casino Resort, Biloxi; Brad Rhines, vice president for marketing and player development, IP Casino-Resort-Spa, Biloxi; Rick Carter, owner, Island View Casino Resort, Gulfport; Rick Quinn, vice president, Island View Casino Resort, Gulfport; Tolby Strahan, director of golf operations, Harrah's Grand Bear Golf Course, Saucier; Bill Lander, director of operational finance, Hollywood Casino, Tunica; Beverly Martin, executive director, Mississippi Casino Operators Association and Michael Cavanaugh, attorney, Biloxi