

A Hospitable Future

More hotel rooms mean more jobs for hotel managers

At a Las Vegas roulette table, a heavy hitter puts down a bundle on number seven. He stares fixedly at the wheel as it spins and spins and finally stops on... seven. The payoff is 34:1, and the lucky gambler collects stack after stack of chips. They're absolutely worthless, but the bettor doesn't complain. That's because he's contentedly raking in college credits in a gaming course that is part of the hotel-school curriculum at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

From the UNLV to the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, hotel-management courses are on a roll. Cornell pioneered innkeeper training in 1921 and has the most celebrated school. As the number of hotel rooms has grown, more schools have offered majors. Nearly 19,000 students are now enrolled in programs at the 140 colleges that award bachelor's or master's degrees in hotel/motel management. Administrators believe that glamorous new courses, such as the University of Hawaii's tourism program, coupled with healthy job prospects, are arousing interest.

Hoteliers compete hard for graduates of the top programs. Florida International University's School of Hospitality Management, for instance, claims a 100 percent placement record. "There is such a shortage of manpower," says Jerome Vallen, dean of the UNLV program, "that the American Hotel Association, the National Restaurant Association and others have just formed a group for joint recruitment."

If hotel majors are esteemed by employers, they don't always get respect in school. At Cornell, for example, they're condescendingly known as "hotelies." Many academics believe that students in such career-oriented programs miss out on the liberal arts. Administrators argue that their students do receive a solid liberal-arts grounding. At FIU, students don't start specialized courses like meat management or hospitality law until the third year. "It's more difficult than people think," says Ed Perne, a senior at the University of Wisconsin's Stout campus; he faces courses in accounting and financial management.

Hi, rollers: Gambling class at UNLV



'It's more difficult than people think': A beverage-management class at Cornell

Those who take UNLV's seven courses in "gaming" get to play in the school's small casino, but they also must master statistics, probability, accounting and gaming law. Still, many hotel courses are far less taxing. Wisconsin-Stout students can minor in tourism; UMass offers a course in cruise-ship management, which meets for a week during spring break—on a ship at sea.

A well-rounded hotelier now must understand computers, personnel management and marketing—and as responsibility grows, so do salaries. Hotel majors can expect to earn \$18,000 to \$25,000 when they graduate, a sum that could double within five years. Workers with flair and showmanship—and who have the stamina to endure long, erratic hours—are promot-

HERB HERPOLD/STIMMER



ed quickly. Some later start their own consulting businesses or work with accounting firms that specialize in the hotel industry.

These days women are checking into the field in increasing numbers. In 1982 only a third of the bachelor's degrees in hotel and restaurant management were awarded to women; three years later they received nearly half. Ten years ago Teresa Schulz, hotel-and-restaurant-management program director at Stout, was one of the few women in her class. Today women make up about 43 percent of the enrollment at Stout and about 58 percent at UMass. "There is not the feeling that a woman can't manage a 1,200-room hotel," says Schulz.

Long haul: By the time they're hired, most hotel students have already put in many hours on the job. At FIU, 90 percent of the students hold part-time jobs, and at UMass, students must fulfill 800 hours of paid-work experience. With 60,000 hotel rooms a mile and a half away, UNLV students must work three separate jobs before they can graduate. Because of this combination, the average Las Vegas hotel student is 26 years old and takes a grueling six and a half years to graduate. It is still possible, of course, to build an innkeeping career without a hotel degree—just like Bob Newhart did on TV. But as the industry grows increasingly complicated, that choice may be a risky bet.

KAREN SPRINGEN with JENNIFER KÖBERSTEIN
in Stout, JOHN YONCE in Amherst and
LISA GIBBS in Miami