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BUSINESS

USF to present free online classes to help hospitality professionals with COVID and aftermath

Staff report

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The University of South Florida School of Hospitality and Tourism Management is offering a free certificate program to help hotels, restaurants and other hospitality businesses navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare for the post-pandemic environment.

The program, consisting of seven free classes and called the Post-Crisis Hospitality Management Certificate program, will be taught virtually and comes with a certificate upon completion. According to a news release from the school, the classes are set to run Nov. 2 through Dec. 18. Visit m3center.org/certificate to register and learn more.

“This was something that we felt was necessary given what is happening in the hospitality industry and from what we are hearing from our industry partners,” said Cihan Cobanoglu, director of the M3 Center for Hospitality Technology and Innovation (M3 Center), which is organizing the program.

The release noted that the National Restaurant Association reports that nearly one in six restaurants have closed permanently or long-term, with nearly 3 million employees still out of work and the industry on track to lose \$240 billion in sales by the year’s end.

A separate survey by the American Hotel & Lodging Association showed that nearly 68% of hotels have less than half of their typical, precrisis staff working full time, and without further governmental assistance 74% of respondents will be forced to lay off more employees.

“This crisis is one of the most devastating that all sectors of the hospitality and tourism sector have faced in a century,” said Pat Moreo, dean of the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management. “Now is the time to prepare for emerging and moving into a position of strength. Our program will be very important in preparing all members of the industry to move forward with excellent preparation.”

Faculty from the hospitality school, which is part of the USF Muma College of Business and based at the USF Sarasota-Manatee campus, will volunteer to present the seven virtual courses. Participants can attend the interactive sessions live or visit youtube.com/m3center to view recorded sessions.

No books or materials are required for the sessions, which will run on Mondays at 5 p.m. starting Nov. 2. Each module will last about two hours and include opportunities for participants to ask questions of the facilitators.

The program will explore such topics as marketing, human resources management, technology management, hospitality law and contracts, financial management and hospitality operations.

The sessions are intended for anyone working in the hospitality industry, including hospitality professionals who lost their jobs and are looking to add new skills, mid- and senior-level professionals who want to prepare for a successful “reopening” of the economy, team leaders who want to become more effective, junior employees who want to position themselves as leaders, and entrepreneurs and small business owners who want a fresh perspective toward managing their businesses.

“Our faculty members are donating their time to do this, and they are all doing this with one goal in mind, to help this important industry to recover,” said Cobanoglu, also a professor in the USF Muma College of Business.