

ACOM Awards Student With Conference Scholarship

By Jonathan Trager

The Association for Convention Operations Management (ACOM) has awarded a University of Alabama senior, Jennifer Matthews, a scholarship to attend its annual conference on Jan. 8-10. ACOM will honor Matthews, winner of the Donald S. Freeman Jr. Conference Scholarship, at a luncheon on Jan. 9. The meeting will take place at the Westin City Center in Dallas.

Matthews will participate in the inner workings of the conference, including room and audio visual set up and hotel communications.

"Programs like the Freeman Scholarship enable students such as Jennifer to immerse themselves in the industry," said Lyan Tassier, president of ACOM. "They are able to learn about current industry trends, connect with meetings professionals from across the U.S. and Canada and participate in sessions, providing them with tools that will help them succeed in their future careers."

Matthews was selected by a panel of ACOM members, which judged applicants based on academic accomplishments, work experience that demonstrates a strong interest in convention services/meeting planning as a career path, and an insightful essay.

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up and hotel communications. A representative from Freeman will also mentor Matthews before, during, and after the conference.

"I was ecstatic to receive the news that I was selected for the conference scholarship," said Matthews. "I look forward to extending my knowledge and experience in the meeting planning industry. I would like to thank ACOM for giving me the opportunity to have one-on-one mentoring during the process and allowing me to assist in the overall production of the conference. I am very excited and look forward to this experience!"

Matthews is majoring in hospitality management with a concentration in event coordination. She has obtained experience in the meetings industry through her work with the University of Alabama College of Business Events Department and the American Hospitality Academy/Sea Glass Towers Hotel.

Matthews also recently passed the American Hospitality & Lodging certification test and is now certified as a hospitality supervisor. According to Matthews, her passion for the meetings industry started at the age of 14, and she plans to begin her career upon graduation in August.

"Jennifer's wealth of experience in the meetings industry and drive to succeed were evident in her application and essay," said Eric Blanc, CWP, senior sales manager at Freeman and first vice president of ACOM. "We look forward to providing her with a unique experience that she will take with her as she embarks on her career."

DMO Foundation, Purdue University Offer Student Work Program

By Jonathan Trager

The Destination & Travel Foundation has partnered with Purdue University's Hospitality and Tourism Management Program to offer a new pilot program geared toward students interested in a career in the destination-marketing industry. Under the program announced in December, a participating DMO will provide a two-page case study to students describing a particular business issue. Students will discuss the scenarios and return a written analysis of the issue to the organization based on the student's research and perspective.

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"I have heard of some DMOs working with their local universities on internship programs, but this is the first national program I am aware of linking students to DMOs in a classroom setting," said Karen Williams, executive vice president of the Greater Louisville CVB and chair of the Destination & Travel Foundation. "We're excited to be piloting this important program with one of the top university tourism management programs in the country."

The program will help "expose college students to the destination-marketing industry for consideration for

future career opportunities," according to a foundation press release.

Students will also benefit from analyzing real-life work situations and collaborating with potential future employers, while participating DMOs get the benefit of an outsider's perspective on their business.

In many cases, the foundation says, students are better equipped than some professionals to provide guidance on topics such as technology, social networking, social responsibility, and consumer habits for young travelers.

"A new generation of tourism managers is currently preparing for their careers in destination marketing and we are delighted to be working with Destination & Travel Foundation to be able to introduce them to the 'real world' issues of DMOs," said Jonathan Day of Purdue University's Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management. "This project is designed to provide experience for students and actionable information for DMO management—it's a great win-win—for the foundation, the students and the participating DMOs."

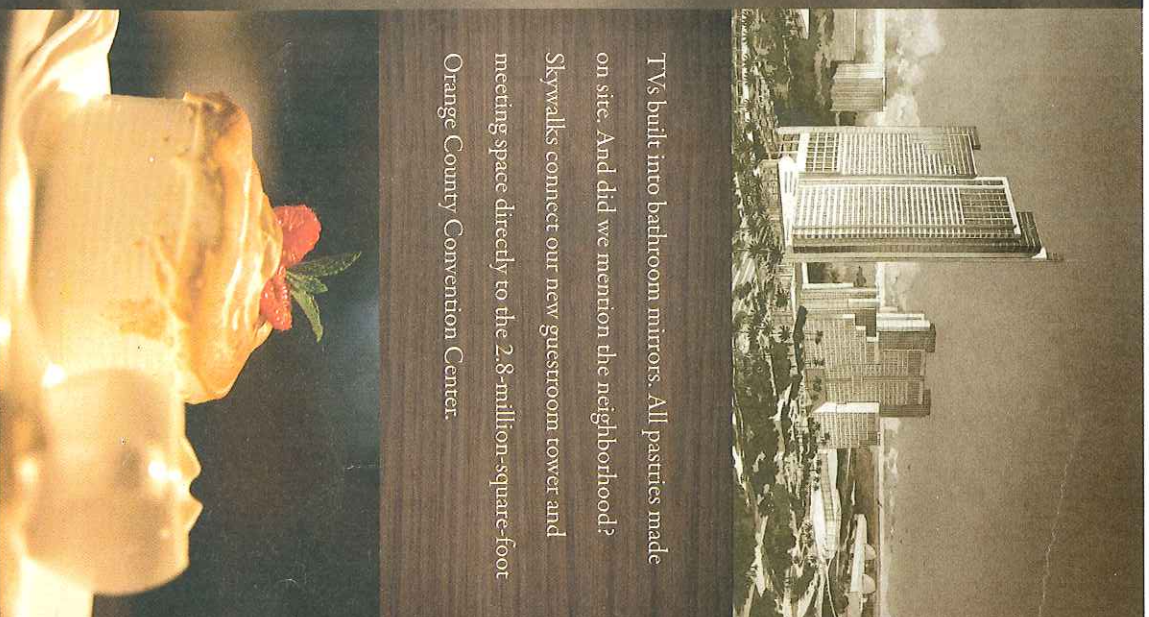
Purdue will use the DMO-submitted case studies in two courses including "Introduction to Tourism" and "Introduction to Management and Organization Behavior." Topics may include current trends in sustainability, user-generated content on websites, best practices in strategic alliances, and how to influence customers.

The Destination & Travel Foundation hopes to extend this program to include other universities where there is a dedicated focus on destination marketing, hospitality, or tourism.

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