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State Approves MSCC's Hospitality Program; Mid-South Partnering with University of Memphis for Transfer Scholarships

Mid-South Community College's Hospitality Management program has received approval from the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and classes will be offered beginning this fall.

In anticipation of state clearance, MSCC has been working with The University of Memphis and has already established a transfer/scholarship agreement that will be a major boost for students.

"Hospitality is one of the world's most dynamic and growing industries, and our program will give students an opportunity to pursue an exciting career in a broad field of service-industry professions," said Claudine M. Cooper, MSCC program designer and lead faculty.

"According to the World Trade Organization, industry growth is expected to triple by 2020. If that growth is realized, many new workers with knowledge and skills related to the industry will be needed to meet the demand. Our program is not about cleaning hotel rooms. We will be training our students for supervisory and management roles."

MSCC established the program with the help of a million-dollar pledge from Delaware North Companies and Southland Park Gaming & Racing. The Jeremy Jacobs Hospitality Management program is named in honor of Delaware North's chairman and CEO.

MSCC's program will support the hospitality industry through real-world coursework, internships, and programs that are designed to advance and renew the education of those practicing or seeking to enter the profession.

“As our business evolves and expands, our need for well-trained and highly-skilled employees continues to escalate,” said Troy L. Keeping, Southland Park regional general manager, president, and general manager. “We are looking forward to the launch of this program in August and anticipate that it will generate a deep pool of qualified hospitality workers who will strengthen the tourism and entertainment efforts of Crittenden County and our region.”

Dr. Radesh Palakurthi, Director of The Kemmons Wilson School of Hospitality & Resort Management at The University of Memphis, said MSCC’s program will be a valuable addition to the regional hospitality effort.

“I am thrilled with the prospect of having a high-quality feeder program,” Dr. Palakurthi said. “From its inception, our School has very closely worked with Ms. Cooper and other MSCC administrators to develop an articulation agreement that will give graduating MSCC Hospitality majors full transfer credits for all 61 hours that they complete in their Associate Degree.”

“KWS is also offering special transfer-student scholarships of up to \$3,000 a year to qualified MSCC students that graduate with a minimum GPA of 3.0 in their associate degree program in Hospitality Management. We believe that the rich heritage and the outstanding reputation of The Kemmons Wilson School combined with the exceptional track record of MSCC for developing education programs that have definite economic impact will result in immense benefits to the students and the hospitality industry in general. We look forward to a wonderful and mutually-beneficial relationship.”

Students who graduate with higher GPAs will have the opportunity for even more generous scholarships.

Cooper said the collaboration with U of M is exciting.

“We’re the first community college to have an articulation agreement with The Kemmons Wilson School,” she pointed out. “We originally planned to offer only an associate of applied science degree to assist students in securing industry employment.”

“But when I contacted The Kemmons Wilson School to find out what other two-year colleges were doing about transferring courses, I learned that no other college was offering courses that meet their transfer standards. That gave us a great opportunity to create this partnership. The scholarship they are offering is absolutely great.”

Kevin Kane, president and CEO of the Memphis Convention & Visitors Bureau, agreed that the hospitality industry will reap significant benefits from MSCC's program and the collaboration with U of M.

"We are excited about Mid-South Community College's Hospitality program and believe it will provide a great benefit to our region," Kane said. "People in the hospitality industry are always looking for educated and skilled employees, and we think MSCC will help create a significant number of talented and knowledgeable workers for hotels, restaurants, and other area attractions."

"I am very happy that the college is collaborating with The Kemmons Wilson School of Hospitality and Resort Management to survey industry professionals, business owners, and employees to identify specific skills that are most needed in the Memphis Metropolitan Area. This approach will help MSCC tailor its hospitality management curriculum to meet our greatest needs and will also provide valuable information that will help us boost the regional economy."

MSCC will offer Associate of Science and Associate of Applied Science degrees, a Technical Certificate, and a Certificate of Proficiency. Industry certifications will be embedded in the curriculum, and students will have the opportunity to earn up to four widely-recognized certificates.

"That will give our students a major advantage over others seeking to enter the industry," Cooper said.

The associate degree program also includes a 320-hour internship which exposes student to the different facets of the industry such as tourism, hotels, events, conventions and resorts.

"The industry has been very supportive of our efforts," Cooper said. "We have already done a lot of research to make sure that our program is unique and responsive to our region, and we will continue to assess regional needs. We have a massive lack of skilled people in hospitality, and we intend to design our classes to provide what's lacking."

For information about Hospitality Management or other instructional/training opportunities at MSCC, visit the college at 2000 West Broadway in West Memphis, call

(870) 733-6728, email admissions@midsouthcc.edu, or see the website at www.midsouthcc.edu.