A new institute at the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management (STHM) is gaining attention among the world’s top academics and professionals for its commitment to developing innovative programs and promoting values-based education. The Tourism Education Futures Institute (TEFI), co-founded by STHM’s Dr. Daniel Fesenmaier and the University of Hawaii’s Dr. Pauline Sheldon, began during a 2006 conversation between the two at a conference in Ireland and officially launched a year later during a meeting of tourism educators in Vienna, Austria.

Since then, 100 scholars from more than 15 countries have collaborated to identify a set of core educational values—stewardship, mutual respect, knowledge, ethics and professionalism—that provide an essential foundation for the future of tourism education.

TEFI is broadly defined as a community of tourism educators working in partnership with industry and other stakeholders to provide leadership and responsible stewardship through new paradigms of values-based education.

From May 18 to May 21, STHM will host the 2011 TEFI World Congress, Activating Change in Tourism Education, to provide a venue for some of the world’s most prominent tourism educators and professionals to deliver presentations, discuss the future of the industry, take experiential tours of Philadelphia and break into smaller working groups to devise solutions in line with TEFI’s core values.

“There are a litany of challenges for us at the university level, and particularly us in tourism, so we involved the smartest and most flexible people to talk about the future,” said Fesenmaier, who also directs STHM’s National Laboratory for Tourism Research.

“TEFI is a groundbreaking initiative in tourism education, breaking the inertia that has characterized the field since the 1970s. Pauline and Dan are to be congratulated on this forward-looking initiative that will transform tourism education in the future. I, for one, am privileged to be involved.”

— Chris Cooper, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean, Faculty of Business, Oxford Brookes University, Wheatley Campus