STHM program recognized as world’s finest

For the fifth time in the last six years, the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management’s Event Leadership Executive Certificate program has been recognized as the world’s best.

The program earned the 2014 Haas & Wilkerson Gold Pinnacle Award Sept. 29 at the annual International Festivals and Events Association (IFEA) Convention and Expo in Kansas City, Mo.

The accelerated certificate program, which can be completed in as quickly as six-to-eight months, is designed for professionals who are looking to grow their credentials in the special events-planning industry.


“It is extremely gratifying that this specialized program continues to be recognized by the International Festival and Events Association, one of the preeminent associations in our industry,” said Dr. Elizabeth Barber, Associate Dean of the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management. “Receiving the Gold Pinnacle Award is a tremendous honor, and a demonstration of our reputation among the world’s top schools.”

STHM’s Event Leadership Executive Certificate program differentiates itself from others like it through its distinguished instructors. Industry professionals with more than 20 years experience teach the program, which requires no previous college education. About 90 percent of its enrolled students hold at least a Bachelor’s degree, however, and more than 70 percent of its students are already employed in the event-planning industry.

–Christopher A. Vito

PhD student Christine Wegner wins Best Student Abstract Award

More than three-quarters of black women aged 12 to 74 are considered clinically obese.

For Christine Wegner, a Fox School of Business PhD student and a research assistant in the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, that statistic was a key component in her award-winning research that investigated how social stigmas keep black women from participating in physical activity.

Wegner received the Best Student Abstract Award at the National Recreation and Park Association’s Leisure Research Symposium, held Oct. 14-16 in Charlotte, N.C. The competition selected the best student research in the leisure industry, as it related to current cultures.

Wegner’s work with Black Girls Run! (BGR!), a national organization that uses running to promote physical fitness and health among black women, while combatting stereotypes surrounding the activity, spurred her research. She reacted to how few black women engage in running because of social stigmas surrounding the sport, which she concluded have contributed to illness and increased body weight among black women.

Wegner reached out to 63,013 black women through BGR! Their responses identified confidence, skill, health, time, preference and hair management as six key areas when breaking down the barriers between black women and their athleticism.

Wegner, whose PhD studies include a concentration in Tourism and Sport Management, concluded that participating in BGR! changed the mindset surrounding running in the black female culture to increase the number of women who now identify as black, female and runners. Their increased physical activity has helped reduce the risks of Type 2 Diabetes and other obesity-related illnesses among black women, and has provided a sense of empowerment.

–Lora Strum