Students earn competitive edge with hotel analytics certification

Emma McAfee has always been one to follow her heart, as opposed to a detailed plan. Sean Macauley has always set his sights high. Parker Schroeder? He was inspired, in a sense, by his mom’s cooking.

They crossed paths as part of a larger group that attended an eight-hour workshop in hotel analytics on the eve of the Graduate Education and Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality and Tourism, held Jan. 7-9 and hosted by Temple University’s School of Tourism and Hospitality Management.

A month later they sat for an exam that allowed them to earn their certification in Hotel Industry Analytics.

According to Assistant Professor Michael F. Sheridan, STHM’s Director of Programs, some three dozen students — the bulk of them undergrads — attended the workshop, which was run by Duane Vinson, vice president for Smith Travel Research and assistant director of the SHARE Center (Supporting Hotel-related Academic Research in Education). Of those students, 26 sat for the exam, sponsored by the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute. All 26 students passed the exam.

The workshop, he explained, allowed STHM’s students to study analytics like average daily room rate, revenue per available room, and occupancy. They also reviewed the STAR Report (i.e., the Smith Travel Accommodations Report), a widely used metric throughout the industry.

“It trains them on how to read and understand it,” Sheridan said, “and how it plays into different things.”

A Master of Tourism and Hospitality Management student, McAfee said Vinson was “really engaging and kept the class momentum going through a long day.” Perhaps not coincidentally, the exam was “quick and painless,” she said.

And so worthwhile, Schroeder pointed out.

“It is common to hear students ask, ‘When am I ever going to use this in life?’” said Schroeder, who in 2016 earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Tourism and Hospitality Management.

“This designation is explicitly created for real-world application.”

Schroeder, a native of Dresher, Pa., said he was drawn to his major because his mom “is the worst cook in America.”

“I love the woman,” he added, “but as a child I was tortured by friends and classmates who spoke about their extravagant family meals.”

He often found himself watching the Food Network in high school, and one Christmas his older brother booked reservations at a Daniel Boulud restaurant.

“The experience,” he said, “was mesmerizing.”

Macauley, from Mickleton, N.J., took a course in revenue management during the 2014-15 school year and liked it, having always been drawn to numbers and problem-solving. Like Schroeder, Macauley earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Tourism and Hospitality Management in 2016.

McAfee’s route was more circuitous. She graduated from her hometown University of Pittsburgh, in 2010, having double-majored in French and philosophy. As an undergrad she had interned at Daloz Farm in New Hampshire, which used no machinery; everything was planted and harvested by hand. After graduation she worked for the Pittsburgh AIDS task force, organizing fundraisers and galas, and also doing grant writing.

“I guess I’ve just always tried to pursue whatever interested me and not really seen it as a ‘career path,’ as in one thing leading to another,” she said.

“I think I’m happiest doing something new and different every day.”

Macauley, for his part, hopes one day to be a regional director of revenue management.

“I am a firm believer that you have to have large goals and go for them,” he said.

–Gordie Jones