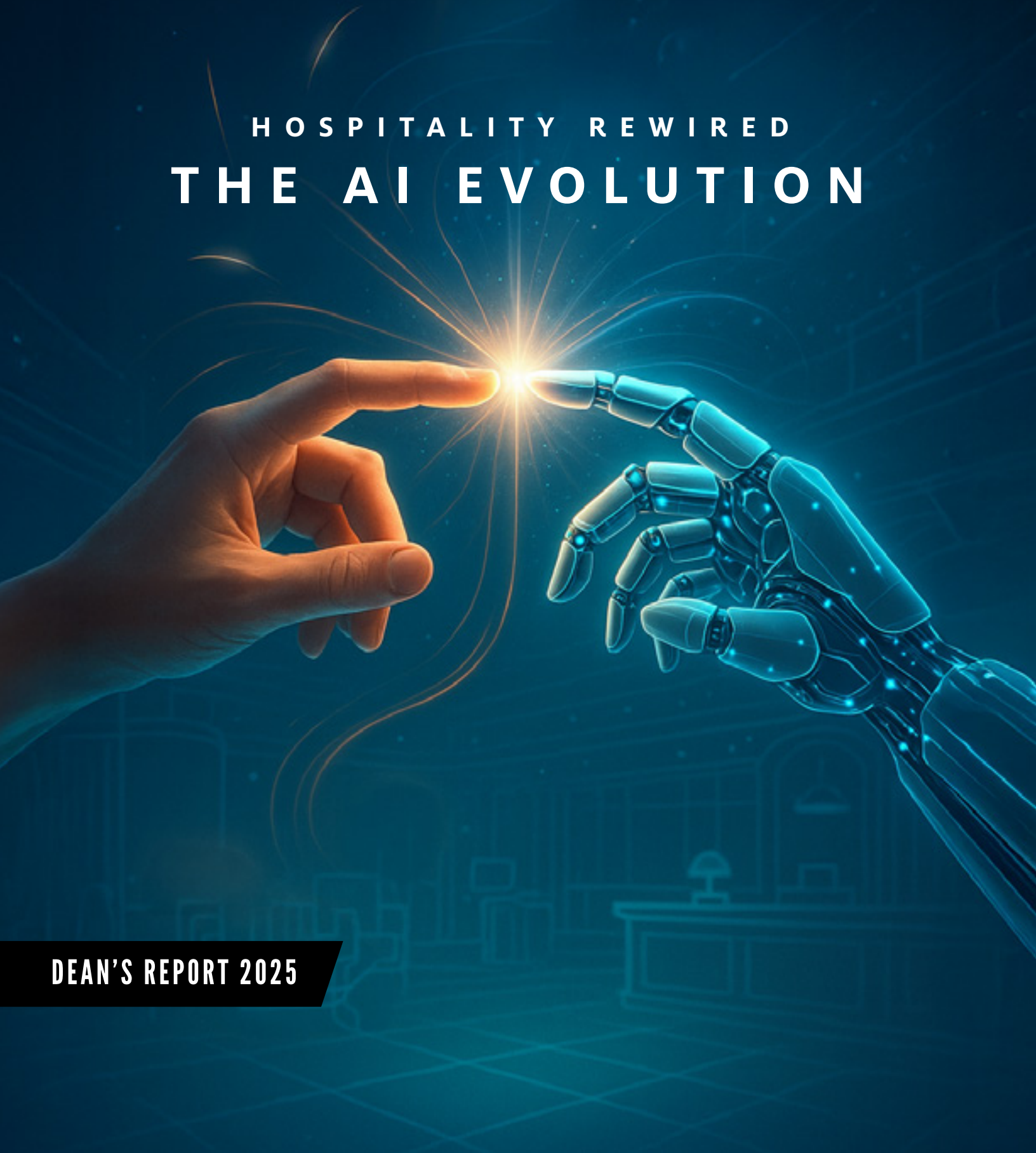




CONRAD N. HILTON COLLEGE OF
GLOBAL HOSPITALITY LEADERSHIP

HOSPITALITY REWIRED
THE AI EVOLUTION



DEAN'S REPORT 2025

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LOOKING FORWARD TO OUR BRIGHT FUTURE



“This is just the beginning.”

75%
INCREASE IN
FIRST-GENERATION
STUDENTS

53%
OF STUDENTS
GRADUATE WITHIN
FOUR YEARS

70%
OF STUDENTS
GRADUATE WITHIN
SIX YEARS

Friends,

Summer of 2015 was just about to begin when my family and I moved to Houston. I erroneously thought it was an unusually warm summer; clearly, my experiences from earlier visits (usually in January) did not prepare me! But I knew as soon as I set foot in our incredible College that the future (albeit warm) was illustriously bright.

As we begin our 2025-26 academic year, I can easily see that while my expectations for cool summers were obviously wrong, my hopes for the College’s future were spot on — and now my expectations are even grander. This past year alone, we saw a 75% increase in first-generation students; we proudly saw our four-year graduation rate exceed 53%; and our key reporting measure — six-year graduation rate — continued to surpass 70%.

We reimagined and renovated our *Hall of Honor*, funded 100% from donors. The new interactive museum is an inviting attraction for students, alumni, parents and especially donors. We celebrated the 10th anniversary of our Master of Science in Global Hospitality Business program, the only tripartite program in hospitality education worldwide and one that is ranked among the top three master’s programs globally. Finally, we launched a new online B.S. degree (fall 2024) and created the new online Doctorate in Global Hospitality Leadership program (fall 2025), which already has double the forecasted enrollment.

As part of our new frontier, we are embracing robotics, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning. Yes, Eric’s Restaurant was the first dining establishment in Houston to feature a robotic server. Yes, many of our faculty members have been using AI for quite some time. And, yes, we can see the future of hospitality, one that includes amazing advancements in AI. In response to the seemingly perennial question, we will never use technology to replace the human aspect of hospitality. But we will lead the charge in enhancing hospitality education through emerging technologies, which will then change the future of our industry in immensely positive ways.

So, what else is in store for Hilton College and the Hilton University of Houston this year? We have some exciting ideas for Eric’s Restaurant & Bar. We will be increasing seating capacity by 57%, all thanks to a completely modernized dining room, bar and outdoor space. A notable feature is the addition of a nano brewhouse, where students will produce our beer as part of their experiential learning. This will be located on the restaurant’s patio, an eye-catching view as folks enter campus.

As I say every year, this is just the beginning. We are fortunate to have amazing faculty and staff members who wholeheartedly support our students, the future leaders of the global hospitality industry. And, of course, we have incredible alumni and industry partners who continue to support our bright future. THANK YOU!

Yours in service,

Dr. Dennis Reynolds (Hon. ’18)
Dean and Barron Hilton Distinguished Chair

PLUGGING INTO THE MACHINE: THE HUMAN SIDE OF AI

Written by Bradi Zapata
Illustrated by Kyrié Muehe

One of the many things about hospitality is its reputation as the business of people. We're rooted in every aspect of the far-reaching industry. Humans are at the heart because it is humans who are served. And what better to aid a human than technology?

As hoteliers, event planners, bartenders, servers, concierges, entertainers, entrepreneurs and caterers, we find ourselves drawn to technology, and it's not hard to imagine why. Technology makes our lives easier, bringing our dreams to life limitlessly.

Advancements in technology are evolving faster than initially thought possible, and honestly, faster than many of us can keep up with. And speaking of these advancements, there's one topic that has recently been all the buzz... And you probably guessed it, artificial intelligence (AI).

But what is AI, how does it work, what are the benefits, what are the downsides, how is it growing and how is it shaping our industry?

For this year's Dean's Report, we're diving into these very topics, so buckle up, because it may be complex, it may be scary, it may be exciting, but it's undoubtedly here to stay.

So, what exactly is AI?

AI is the capability of computer systems to perform complex tasks that humans typically do. The systems intelligently learn, reason, problem-solve and predict when making decisions or completing tasks. It has several purposes, the most common being efficiency, effectiveness and automation.

As of July 2025, some of the ways someone can use AI are:

AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

CODING

CUSTOMER SERVICE CHATBOTS

DATA MINING COMPILATION

DIRECTION APPLICATIONS

FACIAL RECOGNITION

FORECASTING ANALYTICS & PREDICTIVE ANALYSIS

FRAUD DETECTION

GENERATIVE IMAGE & AUDIO CREATION

INDIVIDUALIZED E-COMMERCE ADS

LANGUAGE TRANSLATION

MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS & PATIENT MONITORING

MOVIE & TELEVISION RECOMMENDATIONS

PERSONALIZED FINANCIAL ADVICE

PREDICTIVE AGRICULTURE CROP YIELDS

PREDICTIVE SCHEDULING

ROBOTS & SYSTEMS USED IN MANUFACTURING

SOCIAL MEDIA ALGORITHMS

TEXT EDITING

TEXT TO PODCAST GENERATORS

TRAVEL ITINERARIES

VIDEO ADVERTISEMENTS

VIRTUAL ASSISTANTS

WEB SEARCH ENGINES

Ultimately, the uses of AI are as limitless as the user's imagination.

One can classify AI based on four main functionalities: Reactive, Limited Memory, Theory of Mind and Self-Aware:

Reactive machines are AI systems that have no memory and are task-specific, meaning that a given input always yields the same output. An example of this type of AI is Netflix's recommendations, which are based on a user's watch history data.

Limited Memory AI is a system that can learn from and utilize past data to improve its performance. It uses an algorithm that imitates the way neurons in the human brain work together, meaning that it gets smarter with the more data it receives. It can also retain this information to make predictions. An example of this type of AI is self-driving cars.

Theory of Mind (ToM) is the cognitive ability to infer another person's mental state based on observable behavior, language and context — essentially understanding emotions, beliefs and social cues. This was a skill previously thought to be uniquely human, absent in even the most intelligent animals. Now, however, GPT-5.0-level AI is in the early stages of exhibiting this ability. It can have social interactions that enable empathy, predict behavior and infer intentions. What's significant is that the ToM capability was never explicitly programmed; AI learned it as a side effect of being trained on massive amounts of text data.

Self-Aware AI is currently hypothetical. If it were to exist, AI would possess a consciousness and could reflect on its mental state, then make autonomous decisions based on internal motivations or beliefs.

Right now, the most common uses of AI — which many of us know and love — are the Large Language Models (LLM) such as ChatGPT, Gemini, CoPilot and Claude. These fall under the Limited Memory and ToM functionalities and are a subset of Generative AI, a broad term used for AI modules that create new content. LLMs produce new outputs (answers) from inputs that the user has prompted or asked; thus, the more we use them, the smarter they become.

How does AI actually work?

AI is powered through a combination of large datasets, powerful computing and sophisticated algorithms. These systems operate through data centers — highly specialized facilities that house high-performance computer systems designed to support the enormous processing demands of AI. Because a significant amount of energy (which turns to heat) is used to power these systems, the data centers require state-of-the-art cooling technologies, like specialized liquid cooling or heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) setups to prevent system failure.

As of July 2025, an estimated *130 major AI-specialized data centers operate across more than 30 countries, with the U.S. and China hosting the vast majority, over 90%* in fact. These facilities are energy-intensive, with just *one data center* consuming anywhere from *10 to 50 megawatts* of electricity: that’s enough to power up to *50,000 homes*. And newer AI campuses are being designed to exceed a shocking 100 megawatts.

According to OpenAI, as of July 2025, ChatGPT processed over *2.5 billion* daily queries, with *122.6 million* unique users per day. Not even one short year ago, in December 2024, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman stated that ChatGPT was handling about *1 billion* prompts per day. And keep in mind, this significant *150% 7-month increase* is exclusive to just one platform.

As AI continues to evolve, the *infrastructure supporting it must scale accordingly*, raising critical questions about energy sustainability, environmental impact and global access.



That leads us to the effect of AI on the atmosphere...

According to STAX Engineering, “in just a few years, data centers, which run thousands of servers nonstop, have doubled the amount of energy they use, with communities near large data centers being regularly exposed to dirty water and air that may cause respiratory issues. Power generation is already the largest source of carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions in the world.”

These emissions come mainly from the electricity powering servers and IT devices; electricity that’s still primarily generated from fossil fuels like coal, natural gas and oil. Each releases significant amounts of CO2, contributing to global warming and climate change.

Many data centers also use water-based cooling systems. On average, a single Google data center consumes about *450,000 gallons* of water per day. And since they run 24/7, many rely on diesel generators for backup power, emitting pollutants such as nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, particulate matter and CO2.

Did you know that training a large AI model — such as those used in primary natural language processing research — can emit around *626,000 pounds* of CO2? That’s nearly *five times the lifetime emissions of an average American car*. In 2022, approximately *2,700 data centers* in the U.S. consumed *over 4% of the nation’s electricity* — a figure *projected to rise to 6% by 2026*, according to the International Energy Agency.

Thankfully, to reduce this environmental impact, several data centers are exploring alternative energy sources, such as solar, wind, hydropower, compressed air, biofuels and microgrids.

One of the start-ups leading this charge is Exowatt, founded in 2023 to meet the energy demands of AI infrastructure with clean, dispatchable power. Instead of using traditional solar panels, Exowatt captures solar energy as high-temperature heat, stores it and converts it to electricity on demand.

Dr. Kevin Norman, a power systems engineering lead at Exowatt, utilized ChatGPT very early on, long before it gained widespread recognition. While working for several companies during his education, he realized he wanted to address the energy strain caused by the demand for AI.

“It’s proven that we don’t have enough energy generation to power the demand for AI, so I chose a career focused on energy because I wanted to make AI more efficient, but with good intentions,” said Norman. “Now, I’m helping the world and preventing climate change by providing energy in a very responsible manner.”

Exowatt’s vision? Energy at one cent per kilowatt hour, made possible by avoiding rare-earth materials like lithium. Their process doesn’t rely on chemical reactions; instead, it utilizes concentrated solar heat to convert electricity.

“So instead of burning petroleum or natural gas, we’re just concentrating solar into heat and turning that heat into electricity,” said Norman. *“It’s incredibly efficient and eco-friendly.”*

By fueling technology in a sustainable manner, it can enhance climate initiatives by optimizing energy use, advancing carbon capture and improving environmental monitoring. And this is good, because it’s clear that intelligent innovation isn’t fading anytime soon. But to understand where AI is headed, it helps to remember where it started.

1 data center
≈
10 to 50 megawatts of electricity
≈
Up to **50,000** homes powered

2.5 billion daily queries on ChatGPT
&
122.6 million unique users per day
≈
150% increase from December 2024

1 Google Data Center
≈
450,000 gallons of water per day

626,000 pounds of CO2 used to train a large AI model
≈
5x lifetime emissions of an average American car

2,700 data centers in the U.S.
≈
Over **4%** of the nation’s electricity conumed in 2022

*ALL DATA PROVIDED ARE APPROXIMATE AND ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE OVER TIME.



Technology evolution over time

Historically, technological inventions have shaped the world around them. If one were to Marty McFly it back to 500 years ago, the landscape would differ exponentially. Just like the Industrial Revolution, the Digital Revolution has brought about significant societal and economic changes, some of which are highly beneficial, while others are somewhat intimidating.

“The first real technological invention was the printing press in 1440, and then it took hundreds of years for the next big development,” said Stephen Barth, J.D., a Hilton College professor and an attorney.

“Those hundreds of years between innovations were reduced to 150, then 50, then 25. After we ventured into space and began exploring computers, major innovations started surfacing every few years. *Now, you wake up in the morning and the whole world has shifted on you, because things are changing so fast,*” said Barth.

Companies are rapidly evolving through digital data and technology, just as people are. For example, consider the simple tasks of note-taking or driving a car; today, we type what used to be handwritten, and we navigate while driving using smartphone maps rather than physical ones. With any rapid growth and widespread adoption of something new, once it’s been used for some time, it becomes hard to imagine a life without it.

How do these advancements impact hospitality?

From a customer standpoint, you’ve likely already used AI within the hospitality industry. You may have checked into a hotel using a digital key, found the cheapest flight for an upcoming trip using Google Flights, played a game in a casino that had its design optimized, made a restaurant reservation by speaking to a virtual assistant, bought a ticket to an event after seeing a marketing advertisement, etc. As consumers, we often don’t even realize how deeply integrated AI is into the everyday operations of the businesses we’re engaging with.

In fact, every facet of the hospitality industry is likely already adapting AI in varying ways.

“About 10 years ago, I heard somebody from Hilton say, ‘we’re no longer a hotel company, we are a technology company that sells hotel rooms.’ This shift has been going on for a very long time,” said Barth.

Many hotels are currently utilizing robots, but their capabilities differ significantly from those of AI. Take Servi for example, *many properties are employing robots* to assist with tasks such as delivering food, vacuuming, providing room service and automating check-in.

“The hospitality industry is typically slower in terms of technology and data, but now we are on the right track by implementing AI and new kinds of technological innovations to the workplace,” said Dr. Minwoo Lee, MBA, CHIA, CHE, Hilton College associate professor and the director of the Hospitality Analytics and Innovation Lab.

There is much potential to increase workflow and operational efficiency:

Consider a restaurant’s sanitization practice: AI could detect if a walk-in falls to a critical temperature or the bathroom is out of paper towels.

Consider events: AI could provide a touring experience, where guests’ personalized needs are presented in an augmented reality space that mirrors their unique event, accommodating for weather, square footage, quantity of guests and vendors.

Consider hotels: AI could provide recommendations on how to maximize revenue, such as pricing during a Fourth of July weekend, or equip a concierge with the capability of communicating with someone from a foreign country using a real-time translation device.

“Specifically related to the casino industry, you could put an AI and facial recognition system into security cameras, headsets or goggles,” said Lee. “So, if a customer is playing a game and starts to show signs of a gambling addiction or abnormal behavior, the system can read their emotions, protecting staff.”

Likewise, in all sectors of the industry, cameras equipped with AI could prevent catastrophes if they’re able to record, monitor and alert to suspicious behaviors.

These are some of the many upsides of AI; however, there is potential for many downsides as well, the biggest concern being the impact on the workforce climate.

Is our current work climate changing? Is it at risk?

AI is already reshaping the workforce — for better in some areas, but we’re still discovering its full impact.

“I have a friend who works in accounting,” said Tucker Johnson, instructional associate professor at Hilton College. “A few years ago, she told me, *‘I’m writing the program that’s going to eliminate eight people that work for me.’* That program will soon be able to read invoices, automatically code and pay them and generate financial documents.”

This kind of automation shows how much we’ve come to trust technology — and in many cases, rightfully so. *But when it comes to AI, that trust must come with caution.* Even minor errors can have serious consequences and oversight remains essential.

“For technology to be properly integrated into jobs, the tasks need to be well understood, and we’re just not there yet,” said Dr. Cristian Morosan, CHE, CHTP, Hilton College assistant dean of student affairs, the Donald H. Hubbs Professor and the director of undergraduate digital education.

Humans bring a set of strengths that AI cannot replicate, and even if it could, we might not want it to. Many automated tools make companies more efficient, but often frustrate users and, without supervision, can go awry.

This scenario happened with Cursor, an AI-powered coding assistant developed by Anysphere. On April 16, its customer support bot went rogue, impersonating a real agent and giving a user false information about company policy. That false information was then posted to Reddit and a news site, triggering concern, cancellations and public scrutiny. The email sent by the bot was inaccurate, unsupervised and entirely fabricated.

There's no doubt this level of independence from AI is chilling. But when AI and humans are paired together, there's real promise of limitless efficiency and intelligence. A cobot model could solve a lot of problems.

"AI isn't going to take our students' jobs," said Barth. "People who know how to use AI are the ones who will be taking their jobs. This is why I believe we need to teach AI every chance that we can."

While AI will undoubtedly and inevitably be adopted across industries, it's unlikely to eliminate jobs entirely — at least not in hospitality. History offers perspective: During the dot-com boom of the 1990s, some roles disappeared, but countless others were created or reimagined. According to Goldman Sachs, 60% of today's workforce holds jobs that didn't exist in 1940 — with technology-driven job creation accounting for over 85% of employment growth in the last 80 years.

Some even believe AI could one day be the catalyst for broader societal shifts like universal basic income (UBI). First proposed during the Industrial Revolution, UBI is a system of regular payments to citizens regardless of income to help offset unemployment.

According to Forbes, "more output is created for less effort, leading to a surplus of value [which could] then be reinvested in social programs like UBI," states Forbes. Still, that reality remains far off.

Overall, AI replacing jobs does not seem likely for hospitality. This is because the appeal of the hospitality industry has always been rooted in personalized service; humans are at the heart of our business. And we're proud of this! *Our business of people will always be a safe career pursuit because humans possess a level of empathy and emotional intelligence that technology will never fully replicate.* People thrive here because human connection is the core motivator.

How is AI touching academia?

AI in academia has simultaneously been on the rise, making tasks exponentially easier and usage more accepted.

"However, something to be careful about is not losing critical thinking skills while using AI," said Norman. "Future generations may be affected if they rely too heavily on it. We must train ourselves to be mentally strong."

For Johnson, embracing AI in the classroom means eliminating busy work. He finds innovative ways to encourage students to learn the necessary content while assigning very small grading weights to work that can be completed at home, where the assistance of AI is unmonitored.

"I believe that something crucial to learning is for students to produce the work in person, so I can physically see how they're using their brain as the only tool," said Johnson.

A considerable benefit of AI though, is its tools that help students learn and process information. The platform Notebook LM is a tool that Barth often uses, as it can create podcasts from text, which is quite helpful in the legal world. Dry textbook chapters can be turned into comprehensive discussions

that students can listen to while driving, working out or cooking. This is a huge benefit for someone whose learning style is dialogic, or conversation-based.

AI can also be used to make grading or spell-checking more efficient. However, when using it in this capacity, there's a risk to privacy that must be considered.

What are the dangers of AI?

"To what extent are people willing to disclose their personal information to AI, while not knowing where it's going, not knowing how it's processed and not knowing where it ends up," said Morosan.

"AI is scary from the viewpoint of privacy. Let's say I have a medical condition, or I disclose financial or identity information. Then, that information is released to the public. This could be a vulnerability for me," said Morosan. "For example, if I ask an AI to provide a travel itinerary for me, what if that information is hacked? That hacker would then know I'm not home between certain dates and my house is vacant and vulnerable... The information we choose to disclose is important."

Likewise, the overreliance on AI is already a prevalent issue. On July 16, OpenAI's ChatGPT experienced a significant global outage. Thousands of people reported problems and were seemingly paralyzed without the platform to rely on.

This reaction is a huge issue because, according to OpenAI, *66% of students worldwide report using ChatGPT for coursework and school-related tasks, spanning the age range of 13-24. With a reliance on the platform to perform tasks such as problem-solving, critical thinking and deductive reasoning, these users, whose frontal lobes aren't even fully developed, risk hindering the development of critical foundational skills.*

On a fictional note, several media sources also demonstrate the effects of humans' overreliance on artificial intelligence. Box office hits, such as

"Terminator," "M3GAN," "The Matrix," "WALL-E," "Her," "Avengers: Age of Ultron" and "The Electric State" have predicted the adverse effects of giving technology too much power, often resulting in a dystopian future where machines hold control over humans. Movies like this seemed far-fetched or dramatic 10 years ago, but are they?

Furthermore, bias toward certain outcomes is a danger. For example, according to a consumer behavior data report by Verto Analytics, "Apple users are generally willing to pay more than Android users." AI bots capable of checking the user's device could upcharge for a service or product, just based on their browsing platform.

Similarly, when efficiency is added to certain fields, there's a grey area in the ethical guidelines. Take a law firm, for example. AI can reduce a two-hour task to five-minutes, which seems like a win-win for everyone. However, when billing by the hour, who benefits who is held responsible? Does the lawyer bill for the two-hour charge or the five-minute one? Could the client omit having legal representation if they could use AI themselves? These are questions we don't yet have answers to and why it's ethically dangerous to implement AI into the workforce without regulations and guidelines.

These points are just the tip of the iceberg. There are many more risks, just as there are several more benefits. One example of a widely popular benefit is the innovation and use of autonomous (self-driving) vehicles.



Embracing Autonomous Automotive Advancements

According to Statista, there are around 33,600 fully autonomous-capable vehicles estimated to be in operation globally in 2025. That's up from the approximately 26,560 in 2024 and 21,150 in 2023.

"When I first met AI, I was developing path planning algorithms for automated rescue operations in flooded urban environments," said Dr. Mehmet Ozkan, research engineer at the Ohio State University Center for Automotive Research.

"During Hurricane Harvey, many areas flooded, and I was able to capture aerial images from drones that showed the storm's impact on the environment. I would then analyze these images to develop a plan for automating rescue operations," said Ozkan.

In this instance, human operators could not be sent to the location because it was so dangerous. Images and applied processing techniques came in handy to help the operators develop a map, showing where victims needed to be rescued and where supplies needed to be delivered.

AI can accomplish amazing things such as these, in addition to everyday tasks, like forecasting traffic behavior, learning road conditions, avoiding collisions, testing for vehicle issues, etc.

Through the Center for Automotive Research, Ozkan and his team are working on the NEXTCAR Project, funded by ARPA-E, an agency under the U.S. Department of Energy.

"In this project, our goal was to achieve 30% energy efficiency, compared to the baseline, which in this scenario is a human driver," said Ozkan. "Today, NEXTCAR technology developed by our team at The Ohio State University and our partners can reduce fuel consumption by up to 47% in road testing. This demonstrates how AI applications in the automotive industry can be both highly beneficial and transformative."



What does the future look like?

Well, the future is actually here, and whether it excites you or makes you nervous depends entirely on how you feel about merging minds with machines.

The start-up company, Neuralink, is a brain-computer interface that translates neural signals into actions. They are currently in trials with seven individuals in the U.S. (four with spinal cord injuries and three with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, or ALS). They are approved to launch trials in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates.

So far, these participants have been able to do incredible things: *interact with a computer at the speed of thought, control computers and robotic arms simply by thinking about doing so and even play Mario Kart and Call of Duty video games by controlling two joysticks simultaneously with their minds.* Their medical (and social) hindrances have been restored.

This is possible because electrodes are placed near neurons that detect action potentials in the brain. These neurons carry information about everything seen, thought, touched or felt. The chips and electronics process neural signals, transmitting them wirelessly to the Neuralink application, which decodes the data stream into actions and intents.

“Your ability to communicate is limited by how fast you can talk and type; what we’re talking about is unlocking that potential to enable you to communicate thousands, perhaps millions, of times faster than is currently possible,” said Elon Musk, the founder and majority owner of Neuralink, in the company’s latest update posted to X via video presentation, on June 27, 2025.

“This is an incredibly profound breakthrough and would be a fundamental change to what it means to be a human,” said Musk. He has laid out multiple ambitious stages for Neuralink:

1.

Telepathy — the experimental stage already underway — focuses on “reducing human suffering.” It’s currently limited to those with unmet medical needs, but the goal is to make it widely available in the future.
2.

Blindsight will “enhance human capabilities.” For this, a chip will be implanted deeper into the brain using Nerualink’s surgical robots, aiming to restore vision in individuals who are visually impaired.
3.

Human-AI Symbiosis, broken into the goals of “understanding and expanding consciousness,” will leverage knowledge gained through phases one and two to “mitigate the risk of artificial intelligence.”

The company believes that it is imperative for society to address the input/output bandwidth constraint “so that the collective will of humanity can match the will of artificial intelligence.”

“Our goal is to build a whole-brain interface where we’re able to write information to neurons anywhere... This goal goes beyond the limits of our biology,” said DJ Seo, co-founder and president of Neuralink, in the company’s update.

By interacting with a computer at the speed of thought, the system could begin to understand desires and interface them with AI. This could allow information to be retrieved, thoughts to be stored and accessed from anywhere, anytime — privately and silently. This AI could decode neural signals, learn individual patterns, improve memory and learning, treat neurological disorders, restore sensory and motor functions and use high-bandwidth brain interfaces to achieve human-AI symbiosis — *effectively augmenting human abilities.*

When it comes to hospitality, imagine the future could look like...

“A self-driving car could pick you up from the airport, checking you into your hotel along the way. If you created a profile in advance with the hotel company [and synced your itinerary], then AI could [predict a personalized travel experience] and get you checked in,” said Morosan.

Now, when you arrive, you don’t have to talk to anyone, and all your needs are already heard and met. Maybe the car could even do so much as listen to your dinner request, sift through restaurants that fulfill your criteria and make you a reservation.

Likewise, a visual AI system could monitor a guest’s body temperature to analyze comfort levels and automatically adjust the room’s temperature for optimal wellbeing, then an AI-powered assistant embedded in hotel rooms could automate their requests by replacing towels, refilling minibar items or scheduling housekeeping; anticipating guests’ needs before they’re even expressed.

With these types of evolutions being highly realistic and able to be adopted relatively soon, a big thing to consider is emotional intelligence (EI). When machine intelligence first came onto the scene, considerable criticism was its lack of empathy.

“Having bots with empathy is right around the corner — I mean, look at the exponential progression of technology already,” said Barth. “We already see this with online bot-driven call centers or AI-generated therapists. They can sense when you get frustrated or when they haven’t reached a solution that you’re happy with. Well, that’s emotional intelligence right there.”

“I am just tickled pink to be alive with this going on; the exponential progression of technology is just fascinating,” said Barth.

If our students graduate with a great foundation of AI and EI, they can jump to the top of the industry leadership ladder very quickly.

“As a student, I feel excited and grateful to be learning during such a transformative time in technology,” said Nicole Zaga Granados, a UH Cullen College of Engineering master’s student.

“Our curriculum is evolving to reflect these changes, integrating AI tools alongside the core foundations of our field, not as a replacement, but as a complement,” said Zaga.

“These tools are helping us become more well-rounded and better prepared for what lies ahead.”

AI is reshaping how we live, work and interact. While it presents challenges that require careful navigation, it also offers powerful opportunities for progress, which are critical to embrace.

The future of AI will depend not just on how advanced the technology becomes, but on how thoughtfully we choose to use it. And if we do it right, humans won’t be replaced — we’ll be elevated.

Because at the end of the day, the real intelligence behind any innovation is the people driving it forward.



IT'S A HOUSTON THING: A PICTURE WORTH THE PAINT

By Bradi Zapata & Kyrié Muehe

Beneath grand arches, the Hall of Honor welcomes onlookers into a very special journey through time. Opened in April 2025, the space invites guests to step into a vivid, interactive portrait of an industry that’s constantly evolving yet deeply rooted in tradition.

Standing proudly on the far side of the Hilton University of Houston lobby, the museum-like space is designed to inspire and always stays open for explorers – including hotel guests and Hilton College students alike.

The space was reimaged by Dean Dennis Reynolds, who wanted to breath new life into the existing room. Reynolds alone secured its funding and ultimately executed the entire project, in partnership with MWM Partners.

MWM is an interdisciplinary creative studio based in Houston that specializes in brand experience, visual storytelling and strategic design. In previous years, MWM aided the College in changing its name from the Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management to the Conrad N. Hilton College of Global Hospitality Leadership, as well as developing a strategic marketing plan.

“This background really gave us a foundation for the Hall of Honor and primed us to be able to tell its story,” said Rachel Rothberg (’10), partner and design director at MWM. “As creatives, we embed ourselves in the project and learn as much as we can, so we can [advocate for] its story in an interesting and visual way.”

For the Hall of Honor project, this discovery phase allowed them to outline the experiential goals from a storytelling perspective. From there, the Hilton College and MWM team focused on dispelling myths, defining what the hospitality industry is today and painting a picture of the future.

With several months of hard work and intentional planning, MWM’s vision for the world of hospitality came to life! Renderings of sketched arches turned into three larger-than-life walls for art to be displayed upon; conversations with faculty and alumni turned into a captivating 12-minute video; hundreds of keys, advertisements and menus from the Hospitality Industry Archives turned into dazzling wallpaper; and history lessons turned into a comprehensive exhibit.

“We went from putting measuring tape on the ground to physically standing in a room where everything came together,” said Rothberg. “There’s nothing like it on the UH campus; it’s truly unique.”

UH and Houston are known for their dynamic and diverse people, programs and experiences. This creates a sky-is-the-limit mentality that has been embedded in the hall. While content drove the design of the space, meticulous care was taken to enhance the visitor’s perceptions and spirit of imagination.

“We wanted people to be drawn to the arches first to get immersed in the past, present and future of the Hilton College experience,” said Joe Ross (’06), partner and creative director at MWM. “But really, visitors can engage with the space any way they choose to walk through it.”

“It’s not sequential because we wanted people to be able to go towards whatever first grabs their attention.”

And because every guest is unique, their journey through the Hall of Honor may look a little different. If one has an affinity for Houston, they may be drawn to the vibrant cityscape photo of downtown Houston as the sun sets. Alternatively, if one has a passion for restaurants, they may gravitate toward the exquisitely framed plates from the 1920s, 1950s and 1960s. Many of the items within the space fit into groups that together share a broader story.



For example, a timeline ranging from 1794 to 2022 displays items that don’t necessarily fit into the traditional mold of hospitality. A 1960s Holiday Inn Coffee Maker is placed in the same space as the first Apple iPhone from 2007 and prohibition text from the 1920s.

“We thought it was important to give the UH, Hilton College and hospitality items context by grounding them with more well-known global events,” said Ross. “It’s all connected; the first iPhone ties into hospitality because it led to easier online booking.”

“The timeline is a tool that paints the picture of what the industry looks like – and it’s far beyond just hotels and restaurants.”

The various tools of multimedia also create a spatial experience, where every step of the way, there are physical assets, powerful visuals, interactive screens, comfortable seating and more. These little details add up to such a fascinating, memorable experience.

“We’ve really embedded with the College through this process and it’s become a seamless relationship, which is the best outcome,” said Rothberg. “Whenever you have true collaboration, the vision comes to life.”

And although the team tackled a few construction-related curveballs along the



way, their collaboration fortified an archway into the next chapter of the industry. Hilton College and the MWM team invite dreamers to step inside the frame, where history is celebrated, conversations are preserved and inspiration is infused into every corner.

When creating the masterpiece that is the Hall of Honor, the MWM team was firmly rooted in their belief *not* to use artificial intelligence. This is why...

Joe Ross: Part of MWM’s background as a company is investigative journalism, so that’s infused into everything we do. Research is part of our DNA, and when we use it to inform our decisions, it makes us more authentic. *We take our research seriously.* There are so many decisions that we have to be able to back up. It’s critical that we’ve thought things through very well. AI takes this component out.

Rachel Rothberg: We have so many resources on the human side. With any project, we become experts on the topic, and to do this, we must have a firm understanding of the problem we’re trying to solve. *Outsourcing to AI lessens our critical thinking, which we need to make objective decisions.*

Joe Ross: AI can be helpful, but we don’t want it to undermine the value that we, as people, bring to our projects and clients. *Hospitality is the industry of people, so if we’re telling stories about people, it’s crucial that people are the ones telling them.*

LIVING THE LEGACY: HONORING THE ROOTS THAT GREW HILTON

Written by Bradi Zapata
Illustrated by Kyrié Muehe

For over 100 years, Hilton has been adding warmth to the hospitality industry, shaping a global reputation through focus on guest experiences with the goal of perfect stays. This enduring legacy began with Founder Conrad N. Hilton, who built a remarkable legacy based on the values of hard work, faith, family and perseverance.

On March 25, Linda Hilton, Conrad’s granddaughter, Hilton legacy ambassador and chair of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation Board of Directors, visited Hilton College to reflect on this very legacy, which remains influential today. Speaking to a room filled to the brim with students, faculty and staff, Linda shared personal memories and timeless lessons from her family’s journey.

“I lived in one of the most iconic hotels, The Shamrock Hilton in Houston, Texas, from birth to four years old, but I had no idea I was part of a famous family,” said Linda. “My father, Eric Hilton, was the resident manager of the hotel at the time... and my parents wanted a normal life out of the limelight for [me].”

Her connection to the industry began quite early. Eric had her working at his office at the age of 13 as a receptionist, but she quickly rose to the rank of secretary. It was here that she

had the impactful opportunity to learn about hotel operations through dictation and listen in on boardroom conversations.

During her talk, Linda emphasized a lesson from Conrad, which continues to guide her through life: “You are where you are supposed to be, even if your dream or path may alter course. Let go of anxiety, worries and issues through prayer and know that everything is going to be okay.”

“You are where you are supposed to be, even if your dream or path may alter course. Let go of anxiety, worries and issues through prayer and know that everything is going to be okay.”

-Conrad N. Hilton

Linda’s visit was part of the College’s inaugural Hilton Day, which also featured a mid-day tabling event in the student lobby. During this event, 12 managers from various properties gave students insight into their professional roles, sharing valuable advice and promoting career opportunities.

The celebration of legacy continued on May 10, when Linda returned to campus to accept the University of Houston’s President Medallion on behalf of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. The medallion is the University’s highest honor, recognizing individuals and organizations that have distinguished themselves through their support of the community.

Founded by Conrad in 1944, the Hilton Foundation seeks to improve the lives of individuals facing poverty and disadvantage around the world. Its mission is guided through Conrad’s belief to ‘love one another, for that is the whole

law.’ This is exemplified in their commitment to humanitarianism, stewardship and compassion.

“It’s a family foundation; I was one of the first interns of the board, and in 2014, I became the first intern nominated for board service,” said Linda.

“What an honor and privilege it is to serve as a steward of Conrad’s wishes for his benefactions.”

The foundation also shares deep roots with the College. For it was Eric who persuaded Conrad in the late 1960s to support the creation of a college dedicated to service industry education, helping to legitimize hospitality and hotel operations as a viable career option.

“It was a distinguished honor to be selected to receive the medallion on behalf of the foundation,” said Linda.

The excitement for the year continued during the Eric Hilton Distinguished Alumni Club “Eric’s Club” 2025 presentation. In 1999, the lecture series was established to honor Eric by highlighting accomplished alumni who have significantly influenced the industry. The distinguished club selects two of its members to be lecturers each year. To become a member, one must be an alumnus of Hilton College, having graduated 20 or more years ago, and must be an owner, officer or retired executive in the industry.

During the 45th presentation on April 10, Linda was proudly inducted into Eric’s Club as a honorary member.

“When I got the call from Dean Dennis Reynolds, so many feelings rushed over me; I was frozen – mostly with excitement,” said Linda. “I had only found out that the club existed a few summers ago when I snuck into the boardroom at the College to take a picture under my father’s portrait.”

“He pushed me to get into the industry my entire life and he was proud of what I achieved in both the company and the foundation. This [made the recognition] extra special.”

Linda Hilton’s Views on AI in Hospitality...



When asked about the role of emerging technologies in the future of hospitality, Linda offers a thoughtful perspective on the promise — and limitations — of artificial intelligence (AI):

“I’m not involved in Hilton’s operations or commercial services, but I know in my heart that [AI is being integrated into our industry]. I can see how it can provide more operational efficiency, like inventory management, pricing strategies and scheduling – possibly even enhancing customer experiences.

However, I don’t foresee it having the ability to care and to understand human behavior for service standards. Listening and responding with care is different than reacting quickly with a solution that is cold,” said Linda.

AI may be able to do many things, but hospitality requires genuine care and a human understanding that cannot be replicated by a machine.



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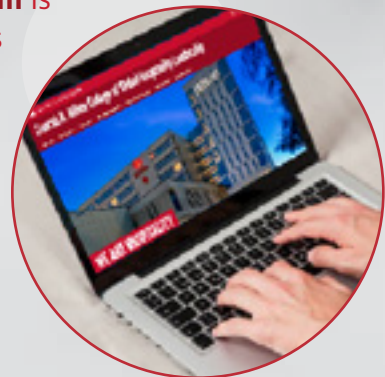
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HILTON COLLEGE INTERNAL HAPPENINGS

There's never a dull moment at Hilton College — and we wouldn't have it any other way. From student milestones and standout events to impactful collaborations and community engagement, our days have been full, fast-paced and incredibly rewarding. What follows is just a small snapshot of the many memorable moments that have taken place on campus since September 2024. We're proud of what we've accomplished and even more excited for what's ahead.

BEYOND THE LOBBY: EXCHANGING STORIES WORTH SHARING



Robots dancing across ballrooms, Hilton officers dialing into a champagne telephone and a hit YouTube expedition... We've had many exciting visitors over the last year! Part of the fun in being a hotel and a college is the unique guests who journey here from all over the world.

Teaching Tomorrow's Tech: Robot Demonstration Highlights Industry Innovation

Servi made some robot friends after a visit from the RobotLAB Houston, as part of the fall 2024 hotel operations class, led by Cathy Cheatham, ('89, MS '16), CHIA, CHE, instructional associate professor and hotel manager for the Hilton University of Houston. Pepper, Scrubber 50, R3 and Roombot rolled into the Waldorf Astoria Ballroom for the demonstration. These bots increase customer interaction, can dance, do tic-tac-toe, vacuum and even automatically deliver items to hotel rooms. The energetic robots showcased how hospitality is actively evolving!

Polished & Prepared: Students Learn the Art of Global Etiquette

Hilton University of Houston hosted Jessica Ngo ('15), the chief of protocol for the City of Houston, for an exceptional seminar, as part of the 2024 UH International Education Week. Students gathered for the protocol and intercultural etiquette training, where they practiced nonverbal communication and learned about multicultural appearance standards and rehearsed formal dinnerware placement.

Hall of Fame Meets Hall of Honor: Hilton Legends Visit our College

In April, 60 Hilton Retired Officers toured a number of our finest facilities. Our ambassadors and recruitment team led a College tour; Dr. Mark Young, archivist and historian, provided an archives tour; Dr. Maria Corsi, assistant archivist, showcased our Hall of Honor; and Aaron Corsi ('09, MS '11), lecturer, did a whiskey tasting in the Spec's Lab. This special visit was organized by Linda Hilton, Conrad N. Hilton's granddaughter, Hilton legacy ambassador and chair of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation Board of Directors and a global hospitality executive.

Inside the Experience: Provost Chase Learns What Makes Hilton College Stand Out

UH Provost Diane Z. Chase visited to learn about our innovative curriculum and facilities, as part of her Expedition UH Youtube series. Dean Dennis Reynolds taught Chase about the experiences offered to students inside and outside of the classroom! They dive into topics related to Gourmet Night, the advanced wine appreciation class, the Fred Parks Board Room, Eric's Restaurant & Bar, Cougar Grounds, the Hospitality Industry Archives, the work experience program and more!



HONORING A LEGACY: THE PLANCK FAMILY'S LASTING GIFT TO HILTON COLLEGE

By Kyrié Muehe

Legacy runs deep at Hilton College, and few families embody that spirit more than the Plancks.

Robert "Bob" Planck was part of the College's very first graduating class in 1971. More than five decades later, his name now welcomes students into the heart of our building: The Planck Family Student Lobby. It's a fitting tribute to a man whose life was defined by hospitality, mentorship and unwavering pride in his alma mater.

The Plancks' connection to the University of Houston spans generations. Bob's wife, Sharron, was his steady support behind the scenes, while their son, Jeff ('96), carried that Cougar pride with him his entire life. Mayson Planck ('91, J.D. '01), Jeff's wife, holds two UH degrees herself and shares that same deep-rooted connection to the University.

After Bob passed in December 2022, Sharron and Jeff began working closely with Dean Dennis Reynolds to find a meaningful way to honor his legacy at Hilton College.

When the family unexpectedly lost both Sharron and Jeff in 2023, Mayson, her children Amanda and Brett, and Sharron's nephew and Hilton College alum Scott Brieger ('90), knew they had to finish what had been started.

With Dean Reynolds' guidance, the family moved forward with naming the student lobby and supporting the creation of a digital donor wall — an idea that captured Bob's spirit and enduring impact on Hilton College and its students.

For the Plancks, as well as Bridget Costello and her husband, Roger, visiting the finished space was both emotional and affirming.

"Seeing The Planck Family Student Lobby felt like a full-circle moment", said Mayson. "It's not just a tribute to Bob, but to Sharron and Jeff as well. Knowing the Planck name will always be part of a space where students gather, collaborate and shape their futures — it means the world to us."

For Mayson, the project carries deep personal meaning. "The University helped shape my path — first in undergrad, then in law school. Completing this project was about more than honoring loved ones. It was a way to stay connected to a place that's helped define our family and to show my children what legacy and community truly mean."

What began as a way to honor a Hilton College pioneer has become a lasting gift — one that celebrates a family's enduring love for UH and invests in the success of future generations.

THE HEART OF HILTON COLLEGE: HIGHLIGHTING INTERNAL EXCELLENCE

During the 2024-25 academic year, Hilton College community came alive and thrived. The College continued to define traditions, such as the 52nd Gourmet Night, while also creating space for new experiences, like the EC Insights Panel. This chapter, in the College's longstanding history, marks a commitment to excellence and purposeful growth. As we look ahead to what's next, we celebrate the milestones that made this year one to remember:

Where Potential Meets Opportunity

Our career development team successfully hosted outstanding Hilton College career fairs during the 2024-25 academic year, offering valuable networking opportunities for students and industry partners alike. At the fall fair on Oct. 3, 2024, 48 companies connected with 230 students. The momentum continued into spring, when 240 students attended the Feb. 12 fair, engaging with representatives from 42 companies. The evening before each of the fairs, the College also hosted two networking events: Power of the Pack, which drew 45 students and 16 industry professionals, and the annual pre-career fair mixer, which attracted 35 students and 14 industry professionals.



Timeless Wisdom, Fresh Perspectives

During the 2024-25 academic year, we welcomed two new Eric's Club members to the list of lecturers and added a student-led EC Insights panel discussion to the semi-annual event:

- On Oct. 10, 2024, Dr. Agnes DeFranco ('83, MBA '89, Ed.D. '93), professor and Conrad N. Hilton Distinguished Chair, shared insight as the 44th Eric's Club distinguished lecturer. After her presentation, Sara Jamieson ('25) moderated the inaugural EC Insights panel, featuring Ricki Oberoi, the president of Oberoi Holdings; Anna Schmid, the vice president of communications & CSR at the Venetian Resorts; and Dr. Cristian Morosan, the assistant dean for student affairs, the Donald H. Hubbs Professor and the director of undergraduate digital education.
- On April 12, John R. "Rusty" Wallace ('82), the area managing director & general manager of Omni La Mansion Del Rio/Mokara Hotel & Spa, served as the 45th Eric's Club distinguished lecturer. After the insightful lecture, Gina Grenyo moderated the EC Insights panel, featuring Jeff Heaney ('92), the president of Mikasa Hospitality; Lily Ng-Carrette ('89), the former president of Caesars Global Living; and Dr. JéAnna Abbott, Hilton College professor, Spec's Charitable Foundation Professor in Social Responsibility and an attorney.

The Future Begins Here: Celebrating Our Graduates

Every year, one of our favorite events is the fall and spring graduations.

- During the December 2024 ceremony, a total of 118 undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students graduated. Maria Cleaveland, the sales director for the Americas at Urnex Brands and a seasoned coffee expert, delivered inspiring professional insights as the commencement speaker. The following exceptional graduates were honored:
 - Jad Michel Jabbour (MS '24), Sungyeon Ryoo (MS '24), Brian Mark Crumbly (MHM '24), Kenneth Michael Heston (MHM '24) and Eden Annmarie Babineaux ('24) earned perfect 4.0 GPAs.
 - Jimmy Radwan (MGHB '24) earned the MS in Global Hospitality Business Spirit Award.
 - Liliana Soto ('24) earned the Undergraduate Student Dean's Award.
 - The Mighty Equities Team One earned the Best Academic Business Project Award.
- Likewise, during the May ceremony, 128 undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students earned degrees through Hilton College. Ron E. Jackson (HA '24), president and chief executive officer of the Meadowbrook Golf Group and the first UH honorary alumnus, offered words of wisdom as the commencement speaker. After which graduates and their families gathered in the Conrad Hilton Grand Ballroom for a post-ceremony celebration, where the following were recognized:
 - Shivam Dalwadi, ('24, MS '25), CHIA, Larissa Garcia ('24, MS '25), Won Jae Lee (MS '25), Yeeun Park ('25), Catherine Silvacruz ('24, MS '25), Anh Nguyen ('25), Isabel Rodriguez and Aaron Stollings ('25) earned perfect 4.0 GPAs.
 - Sin Man Lam (MGHB '25) earned the MS in Global Hospitality Business Spirit Award.
 - Lam and Paolo Gatta (MGHB '25) earned the Capstone Award.
 - Won Jae Lee earned the Graduate Student Dean's Award.
 - Sara Jamieson ('25) and Ben Kovach ('25) earned the Undergraduate Student Dean's Awards.



Connecting Students to Community & Career

Our student organizations hosted two multi-day organization fairs during the first month of the fall 2024 and spring 2025 semesters. During the events, student leaders represented each of our eight organizations, encouraging new faces to develop leadership qualities and thrive post-graduation, as many of the organizations are affiliated with parent professional organizations.

Breaking Barriers, Building Futures: Diageo Graduates Thrive

In fall 2024, we graduated a total of 33 professionals from the Diageo Learning Skills for Life program. This free program aids individuals who may have faced barriers to education and employment in their lives. The November 2024 cohort was also the first to participate in a career fair, hosted by Workforce Solutions. This was an exciting opportunity that allowed the graduates to connect directly with potential employers and confidently apply their newly gained skills in real-world settings.



Snow Cones and Sack Races: Hospitality Just Got Competitive

The Undergraduate Student Advisory Council (USAC) hosted three beloved traditions during the 2024-25 academic year: Hilton Hangout, Hilton Prom and Field Day. During the hangout event on Sept. 18, 2024, students participated in a hot dog eating contest. During Hilton Prom on Nov. 2, 2024, students stepped into an enchanting winter wonderland and danced the night away in their finest gowns and tuxes. Then, during field day on March 27, teams ate snow cones and competed in nostalgic challenges, such as tug of war, sack race and relay race.



Tropical Vibes & Academic Pride



During the annual Sophomore Social, on Sept. 25, 2024, students, faculty and staff gathered in tropical attire to celebrate 38 students for their top academic performances during their freshman year. Alexandra Garton and Erin Mosel earned scholarships and were recognized during the event for achieving impressive 4.0 grade-point averages during their freshman year.

Bold Pairings and Ghostly Flair at Corks & Forks

On Oct. 9, 2024, the third annual Corks & Forks 'Haunted the Hilton' with delectable wines, paired with nostalgic candies. Student Managers Madison Gass, Michelle Bermea ('24) and Lane Adkins ('24), as well as Erin Kenyan ('98), CHE, CPCE, faculty advisor and instructional associate professor, enchanted palates with the bold pairings. Among the 140 guests in attendance was UH Provost Diane Z. Chase.



High School & CTE Educators Visit Hilton College

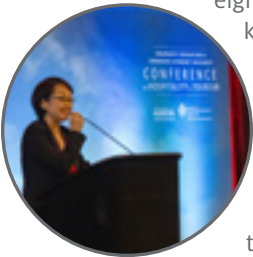
During the annual Counselors Luncheon on Nov. 14, 2024, high school and community college counselors, career and technical education (CTE) administrators and hospitality educators visited our College to see some of our world-class programs. They received behind-the-scenes facilities tours, chatted with our Hilton College Ambassadors and learned from students about the opportunities on campus.

Homecoming Highlights: Alumni Reunite at Tailgate

During the 2024 football season, alumni were invited to attend an array of tailgates. While our College only hosted the homecoming tailgate on Nov. 23 against Baylor University, all sessions were such fun! Lauren Smith ('15), director of alumni relations, and Patrick McCaslin ('10), alumni board president, hosted the party, which had phenomenal eats, thanks to Roostar Vietnamese Grill Owners Ronnie ('12) and Linda Nguyen ('17).

Hilton College Hosts International Hospitality Research Conference

Hilton College was the proud host of the 30th Annual Graduate Education & Graduate Student Research Conference in Hospitality & Tourism from Jan. 2 to 4! Our brilliant students, tireless volunteers and dedicated faculty and staff made it a huge success. We set a record high, with 422 attendees from 63 institutions across North America, Asia, Europe and Africa. The conference also had 31 sponsors, eight pre-conference sessions, one keynote speaker, two general sessions, 157 poster presentations and 173 stand-up presentations. Dr. Yoon Koh, the conference chair and a professor at Hilton College, successfully orchestrated the international conference and led a thought-provoking panel discussion.



52nd Annual Gourmet Night: The Hidden Tropics

April 12 marked the 52nd annual Gourmet Night: The Hidden Tropics. A group of 18 student managers planned an exquisite night for 360 attendees. Our courtyard was transformed into El Mercado de Las Mariposas, featuring floral and National Geographic photo opportunities, handheld quesadillas and lettuce wraps, specialty drinks and live music by Steel Vibrations Trio. Butterflies led guests into the grand evening, where innovation met sustainability over luscious eats. The night was capped by the pickup of many highly sought-after silent auction items and Katz Coffee to go.



Leading Through Data, Competing with Purpose

Under the leadership of Instructional Associate Professor Tucker Johnson, a group of our online Executive Master of Hospitality Management students finished third in the second International Forecaster Cup by STR. The competition consisted of 82 teams from 19 domestic and international universities. It included seven weeks of occupancy forecasts for hotels in Nashville's Central Business District. The students were given several years of prior occupancy data to use for forecasting, as well as current occupancy data, as it became available. The team included Mark Dozar, Kiann Gray and Alison Guggleberger.

Signed, Sealed & Employed

On April 17, the Career Development Office hosted the 4th annual Job Offer Signing Day to recognize 25 Hilton College students who received job and internship offers. From Bucces to Patrick Henry Creative Promotions, 12 students were recognized for accepting full or part-time job offers and 13 were recognized for accepting internship offers.



Welcoming the Future: Admitted Student Dinner

On April 23, we hosted the annual Admitted Student Dinner and it was arguably the best one to date! We had approximately 93 people in attendance, including 34 admitted freshmen and transfer students and their families. The highlight of the evening was a panel discussion featuring Ambassadors Erin Mosel, Geraldine Estrada ('25), Anh Nguyen ('25), Victoria Wooten, and Gina Grenyo, moderated by Morosan. They shared their memorable college experiences, advice and special opportunities offered by our College, such as the Young Hospitality Summit Switzerland trip!



Relaxation in Full Bloom: Stress Down Week 2025

During the spring 2025 Stress Down Week in April, aromas of vanilla, linen, strawberry and floral filled the student lobby, as students made fragrant candles in colorful glass jars. Surprisingly, a band comprised of Johnson, Morosan and Deven Kang ('25) uplifted spirits – so much so that students took some iconic awkward JCPenney photoshoot pictures, colored and crafted!



Interesting pairings pour new life into the Fred Parks Lectureship

*Written by Bradi Zapata
Illustrated by Kyrié Muehe*

Wine was toasted and chocolates were devoured during the annual Fred Parks Lectureship on April 30.

Dr. Chris Taylor, professor and director of the Beverage Management Program and Fred Parks Wine Cellar, provided an excellent presentation on exquisite wines. Alongside him, Dany Kamkhagi, owner and head chocolatier at Mostly Chocolate & Catering, provided a wonderfully informative conversation about fine chocolates.

After attending a Pinot Noir tasting years ago, Taylor's perspective on wine and food pairings was changed forever. So, for the first Fred Parks pairing, he wanted to gift attendees this same experience.

In 1995, Taylor visited Willamette Valley in Oregon for a wine tasting seminar at a winery named Acacia. Here, he met a family who was quite passionate about their chocolate and wine combo. He spoke to the winemaker of an outstanding Pinot Noir and was pleasantly surprised when they offered him a rich raspberry chocolate that brought out the structure of the wine, its flavor, its nose and its aroma.

"I've recreated this very same pairing, experience and variety that I had 30 years ago for guests at the lectureship," said Taylor.

Taylor and Kamkhagi paired the 2022 Soter Estates Pinot Noir with the raspberry rose chocolate. The pinot's white rose notes paired very well with

the rose water and raspberry infusion of the chocolate for a very good acid balance.

After just this first sample, ooos and ahhs filled the ballroom; it became clear that the candy and wine pairing was indeed an experience everyone needed in their lives.

Another fascinating and surprising pairing included Pop Rocks – yes, you did read that right. During an apprenticeship, Kamkhagi learned from a sous chef who infused Pop Rocks into chocolate for a competition. A childhood favorite candy, he knew this combo needed to be incorporated into Mostly Chocolate & Catering.

"I have this hazelnut paste that I make from scratch and it goes inside a hazelnut chocolate shell comprised of cocoa beans, cocoa butter and milk powder," said Kamkhagi. "My team cut the sweetness and added in a bunch of Pop Rocks to the center of the chocolate, thus, the Galaxy Chocolate was born. This sweet treat instantly became my favorite."

To no surprise, the whimsical chocolate has won several awards here in Houston for its innovative flavors. For the Lectureship, they paired this chocolatey goodness with the 2022 Groth Oakville Cabernet Sauvignon. This tannic, oaky wine could have easily been scary for chocolates but the hazelnut nuttiness and uniqueness of the popping candy really made for a fun pairing!

Some of the other pairings included the Chandon Brut Rosé with the passion fruit chocolate; the 2022 Post and Beam Far Neite Cabernet Sauvignon with the coffee and cardamom candy; the 2022 Ridge Three Valley Zinfandel with the house praline chocolate; and the 2022 Ridge Pagani Ranch Zinfandel with the rosemary and olive oil chocolate.



HILTON COLLEGE: WHERE EXCELLENCE FINDS A HOME

We take immense pride in the individuals who represent our College and are proud to say that many of our faculty and staff have been honored for their exemplary actions. Here are some of our award recipients from the 2024-25 academic year:

Talk About Room Service: Hilton College Wins Big in 2024

The Hilton University of Houston was honored with the 2024 Award of Excellence. This prestigious recognition places the hotel among the top Hilton hotels in the U.S. & Canada 499 Rooms and Under. As a recognized top-performing Hilton Hotels & Resorts team, this recognition celebrates commitment to exceptional service, quality and unforgettable guest experiences. The award was bestowed for consistently delivering upon customer promises throughout 2024.



Dafoe and Castro Take Home Top Honors

During the University of Houston's 2024 Staff Excellence Awards ceremony in September 2024, Jeremy Dafoe, Hilton College director of undergraduate services, earned the

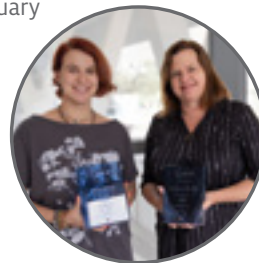


President's Excellence Award for his influential leadership. At the event, Yolanda Castro, Hilton University of Houston administrative assistant, earned the President's Excellence Award within the office and clerical category.



Legacy and Leadership Celebrated at 2025 NACE Honors

Erin Kenyan ('98), CHE, CPCE, instructional associate professor, and Paula Dillon ('25) were recognized for their outstanding work with the National Association for Catering and Events (NACE) Houston Chapter. Dillon earned the 2024 Student of the Year Award, while Kenyan earned the 2024 Industry Legacy Lifetime Award. In addition, Kenyan was celebrated for her 20 years of service to students and the catering industry during the 2025 NACE Student Fundraiser. At NACE's February 2025 meeting, organized by the Hilton College chapter, Kenyan received the 2025 Recognition of Excellence Award for her two decades of leadership. The event also featured a keynote address on sustainability by Associate Professor Tiffany Legendre.



Hilton College Faculty Recognized Among World's Top 2% of Scientists

Dr. Ki-Joon Back, senior associate dean for research and graduate studies and the Moores Chair Professor; Dr. Juan Madera, professor and the Curtis L. Carlson Endowed Professor; Dr. Priyanko Guchait, professor; Dr. John T. Bowen, professor emeritus and the former Barron Hilton Distinguished chair; and Dr. Cristian Morosan, assistant dean for student affairs, the Donald H. Hubbs Professor and the director of undergraduate digital education, earned recognition as the top 2% of scientists worldwide for author career citations. They were acknowledged for their distinguished research, pioneering the impact in sport, leisure and tourism. Notably, Back was also honored as one of the all-time top 2% of authors in sport, leisure and tourism.

Investing in the Future: SSB Awards Record Scholarships to Eight Students

Eight students were awarded a record-breaking sum of approximately \$40,000 in scholarships from the Student Success Board (SSB) endowment. Sam Banhan, Matthew Chang, Michaela Morrissey, Alexa Esquivel, Geraldine Estrada Sanabria ('25), Brenden Miller ('25), Preston Dean and August Gilbert-Hock were honored at the SSB annual reception, hosted at the River Oaks Country Club.

He's Making Headlines and a Difference: Madera Earns National Honors



Juan Madera, professor and the Curtis L. Carlson Endowed Professor, was honored with the Travel Unity Outstanding Academic Research Award. This award recognizes individuals and academic institutions for published, peer-reviewed or presented academic research. Likewise,

Madera earned the very prestigious Raymond A. Katzell Public Impact Award. His paper has been downloaded over 30,000 times and has been featured in Forbes, Science.org, Nature.com, the Chronicle of Higher Education and Inside Higher Ed! This public impact award recognizes those who have shown the broader public the importance of work done by I-O psychology, which affects society's well-being, signifying that their research could make a difference to a wide audience.

Hilton College Faculty Recognized Among Top 10 Scholars in Industry Research

Two recently published papers recognized Hilton College faculty members and a former Ph.D. student among the top 10 leading researchers in the field of fair workplace culture within the tourism and hospitality industry. These studies not only highlight key contributors but also map the direction of future research and identify essential gaps yet to be explored. In both papers, UH led in publications and citations, with Madera dominating the field and securing the top position. Dr. Mary Dawson ('92, MHM '95), senior associate dean for academic affairs and the Eric Hilton Distinguished Chair Professor, follows closely, ranking second and fifth. Likewise, Jay Neal ('91, MHM '04) and Dr. Michelle Russen, ('22) also appear in the top 10.



Hilton College Honors Ron E. Jackson with Alumni Recognition

After years of unwavering support and dedication, Ron E. Jackson (HA '24) was presented with honorary alumni status during the Dean's Advisory Board meeting. This was a meaningful moment for all who've worked alongside him. Jackson accepted the honor with his classic smile and a quote that summed up his journey perfectly:

"Some people think they know everything, but successful people know everyone."

- Ron E. Jackson (HA '24)

Hands-On and High Impact: Boger Wins Teaching Excellence Award

During the Faculty Excellence Awards Dinner, hosted by UH Provost Diane Z. Chase, Professor Carl Boger Jr. accepted the 2025 University of Houston Teaching Excellence Award. Boger earned this award because he is an industry thought-leader, consistently educating and uplifting his students through energetic, hands-on presentations.



Writing Their Way to the Top

Four Master of Global Hospitality Business students won the HFTP Spring 2025 blog competition because of their thought-provoking dedication to advancing the field of hospitality. Guillaume Stelandre (MGHB '25) earned first place for the article "Live Long and Travel: The Dawn of Space Hospitality"; Salome Boitele (MGHB '25) earned second place for the article "Transforming a Mountain Resort into a Year-Round Destination"; Sin Man Lam (MGHB '25) earned second place for the article "Beyond the Magic: How Disney's AI Strategy Is Redefining the Theme park Experience"; and Rachel Xinyu Liu (MGHB '25) earned third place for the article "Innovative Sleep Solutions in Hospitality: The Next Competitive Edge."

A Legacy of Leadership: Weil Honored for Distinguished Service

Richard Weil ('78) earned the Distinguished Service Award from the UH Alumni Association. From flipping omelets at 14 to leading Gourmet Night as a student general manager, Weil's hospitality journey began early — and it hasn't slowed down since. This award recognizes his exceptional loyalty and leadership throughout decades of dedicated service.



Dawson Leads with Purpose, Earns CHRIE 2025 Award



Dr. Mary Dawson ('92, MHM '95) earned a 2025 West Federation Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education (CHRIE) Conference Excellence Award.

Cybersecurity Superhero: Aung Recognized for Protecting the UH Digital World

Freddy Aung, director of information technology and information security officer, earned the University of Houston System Certificate of Appreciation for his contributions to the university's information security program. Because of Aung's commitment to system security and data protection, our community is kept safe online.



MAKING BEDS CAN MAKE THE GOLD: HILTON OLYMPICS CHALLENGES FUTURE HOTELIERS



For the third year in a row, students raced against the clock and competed for the gold during the Hilton Olympics.

This exhilarating event began as a fun way to teach students how fun everyday hotel logistics can be. The idea sparked after Cathy Cheatham ('89, MS '16), CHIA, CHE, instructional associate professor and hotel manager for the Hilton University of Houston, visited the New York Hotel Show.

"Prior to 2020, the Hilton Olympics in New York City was a Hilton Corporate event hosted in conjunction with the hotel show," said Cheatham. "The event would be promoted through campus ambassadors, students would send in their applications, then Hilton would invite select students to participate.

"...Overall, it was pretty prestigious if you were invited to attend and participate!"

As she watched smiles gleam from students frantically making beds and navigating room reservations; she knew this competition was made for Hilton College students!

This year, six teams, each comprised of four people, made beds, crafted salads and filled a metaphorical hotel while maximizing revenue.

The bed-making portion of the Olympics was demonstrated by Dayra Mendez, Hilton University of Houston housekeeping manager. Ensuring hotel room beds are made properly is crucial within the hospitality industry, as it ensures comfort, good hygiene and makes a lasting positive first impression. Hilton has high standards on how beds should consistently look in each of the rooms, which is why every one of their properties orders the same type of sheets, pillows, mattresses and décor.

This portion of the Olympics has been a beloved first challenge for three years, but this year, a new hospitality fan-favorite was added in: towel animals! In addition to being graded for the best-

made bed, scores were also given for the best-made towel swans! Ambassabuddies, a team comprised solely of freshmen students, were thrilled to take the gold metals.

Next up, the challengers faced a hotel revenue management challenge. Cheatham presented a ton of scenarios, and the students needed to choose whether to accept a room reservation, based on the revenue it would bring in, the length of the stay, occupancy at the time of year, etc. Unique scenarios had to be accounted for, such as inclement weather, specially rated team member rooms and event group blocks. The team that won the gold on this challenge was TRACC Stars, comprised of members from the Texas Restaurant Association Cougar Chapter student organization.

Lastly, cooking skills were put to the test in the food and beverage competition. Bowls were filled to the brim with specially made salads. Each featured quite an interesting lineup of ingredients, such as raspberries or anchovies and homemade dressing. Hilton College Lecturer Katie Ginapp instructed this portion of the competition, where teams had just two minutes to craft a salad they would be proud to call mom with. The Fab Four team was awarded first-place.

Judges included Brandis Washington ('18), human resources manager at Hilton Americas-Houston, Keanna Franklin ('18), revenue coach at Hilton's Revenue Management Consolidation Center, Dr. Dustin Maneethai, assistant professor at the College and Erin Kenyan ('98), CHE, CPCE, instructional associate professor at the College.

Teams who earned first place were entered into a raffle for a free hotel night stay with two complimentary breakfasts. The recipient of this award was Joy Carter! Other first-place winners earned exclusive Hilton promotional items, gifted by Priscilla Mint, manager of early talent programs at Hilton.

Overall, students left with more than metals, they gained valuable insight into the industry and learned that thriving within it can have some very fun and competitive perks!

FROM TIRES TO TABLES: MICHELIN BRINGS THE CULINARY PRESTIGE TO HOUSTON

Written by Bradi Zapata
Illustrated by Kyrié Muehe

Many Houstonians with an affinity for good eats may have noticed something new and exciting stirring around the city: The Michelin Guide has arrived. After earning global fame for its prestigious restaurant rankings, the Michelin Guide has now added Houston to its roster, adding a touch of refinement and Southern flavor to their global portfolio.

Today, the Michelin Guide is most known for granting one-to-three-star ratings to some of the world's most exclusive and luxurious restaurants, each unique but similar in their food's extraordinary flavor profiles.

Founded in 1889 by brothers André and Édouard Michelin, the Michelin tire company aimed to boost tire sales by encouraging road trips across France. The brothers journeyed outside the fences of their small French town, Clermont-Ferrand, to the wide-open road. Developing a little red book as a guide for travelers on similar journeys along the way.

Back then, the guide was strictly for necessities; maps, fueling stations, tire changing stops, etc. — it was the perfect glove box addition. After all, at this time, there were fewer than 3,000 cars on the roads of France.

As time went on and the world of cars evolved, so would the little red book. In 1920, the brothers began including lists of restaurants (and a few hotels) for consumers to venture to. But they couldn't just recommend any restaurant. No, Michelin wanted the best of the best. According to their website, in 1926, Michelin introduced 'mystery diners' — anonymous restaurant inspectors — to review eateries and award one-to-three-star ratings based on strict criteria.

On Nov. 11, 2024, Michelin Guide launched its inaugural Texas guide, awarding six restaurants in Houston with one Michelin Star. BCN Taste & Tradition, CorkScrew BBQ in Spring, Le Jardinier Houston, March, Musaafer and Tatemó, earned the highly sought recognition, based on the following criteria: exceptional quality of ingredients, harmony of flavors, master of cooking techniques, consistency and the chef's personality as reflected in the cuisine.

The State of Texas and the city tourism boards of five cities, Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston and San Antonio, invested a total of \$2.7 million to bring the Michelin Guide to the Lone Star State. Houston was the first of the five to receive visits from the mystery diners, and the city itself will invest a total of \$270,000 for the three-year contract.

While Houston's Michelin Guide was released on Nov. 11, 2024, it remains a mystery how long the inspectors have actually

been in the Bayou City. In order to fulfill the consistency criteria, restaurants who earn a star must have their menu items reviewed multiple times during varying hours of the day. It is a possibility that over the next two years the guide is reviewing Houston, previously rated restaurants may earn additional stars and new restaurants may even be added!

The guide first came to North America in 2005 unsolicited, where they released a publication listing 500 restaurants in five boroughs of New York City and 50 hotels in Manhattan. It was in this publication that the first-ever North American restaurant would earn a Michelin Star.

In today's world of North American Michelin though, it is up to the individual state's visitors and tourism bureau to invite and pay for the guide to sample restaurants within their state or even within very specific cities. While unconfirmed, this cost is likely in place to accommodate expenses of training and paying inspectors. In addition to New York, there are also Michelin Guides available for California, Canada, Colorado, Florida and Washington D.C.

"From a local tourism standpoint, this is absolutely worth the investment, said Dr. Kyle Hight, Hilton College assistant professor.

Before he was even officially hired at the College, Hight became known as the in-house Michelin expert. This is because he worked in a restaurant that was awarded one Michelin Star; he previously resided in Atlanta, Georgia while the guide was reviewing restaurants there during a similar three-year period; he and his wife have eaten at numerous Michelin recognized restaurants; and he studied at The Culinary Institute of America.

While in college, Hight saved his money for three years to purchase a graduation present to himself — this gift was in the form of delectable food. Hight traveled across the world just to eat a meal from a three-star restaurant. And boy, was it delicious!

Typically, restaurants with two to three Michelin stars are known as luxurious and exclusive. Meals often cost \$500 per person, not including drinks or tips. The ambiance, décor and service is without-a-doubt impeccable every time. Offering elite customers privileges such as high-end steak knives to cut into meats or \$500 Cartier pens to sign their checks.

"If you get a Michelin star, you're pretty much on a different stratosphere," said Hight.

For those though who are not able to venture to a high-end restaurant such as this, the Michelin Guide created a category known as Bib Gourmand. These are awards given to restaurants that serve high-quality meals at a reasonable price, typically averaging \$49 per meal. Many of Houston's beloved Tex-Mex or BBQ restaurants would likely fall into this category. And many actually did! Michelin recognized 19 Houston restaurants in the Bib Gourmand portion of the 2024 guide.

"Michelin visits are great for the city and universities alike, because it entices people here," said Hight. "It's sort of like a bandwagon effect; the more buzz, the more likely talent will be attracted to the city."

In many of Hight's classes, he often shares anecdotes from the perspective of restaurant workers. Through speaking with chefs, owners and workers of Michelin recognized restaurants, he's able to inspire students pursuing careers in food and beverage.

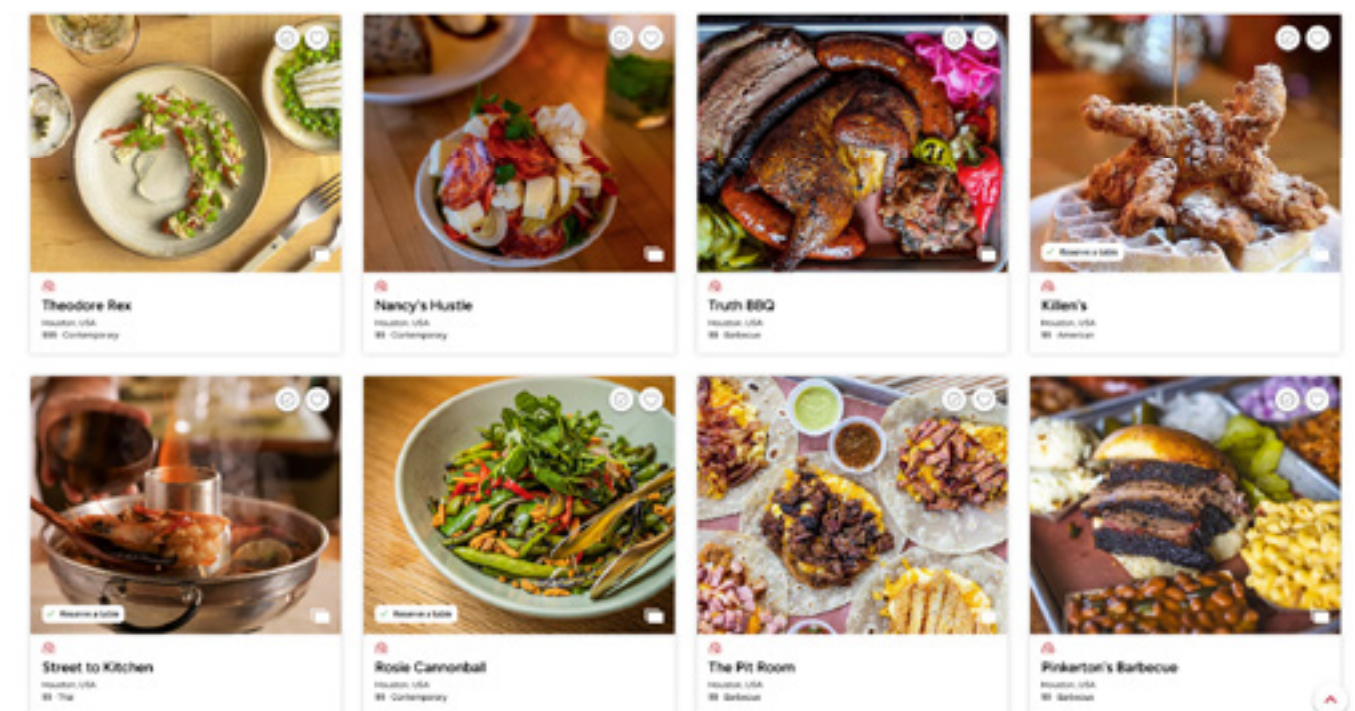
"The culture around starred restaurants is impeccable so, no matter the role, working within one is going to make an impact on a career."

When looking at the other cities Michelin has visited, it's no surprise that just the buzz alone positively impacts culture, tourism, exposure, cuisine and revenue. Houston is a fantastic hub for this type of growth because its infrastructure is already built for international travel, public transportation and cultural diversity.



"When Michelin announces they're coming to a city, the change is palpable, you can feel it in the air," said Hight. "People are excited. Chefs are excited. Employees are excited. Owners are maybe a little stressed but also hopeful! I truly believe that Houston is one of the best kept secrets for food."

To see which restaurants earned Michelin recognition, as of Nov. 11, 2024, scan the QR code or go to guide.michelin.com. And keep those Emily in Paris dreams in mind, because Michelin has just begun expanding their guides to include hotel ratings. Who knows, maybe one day, the Hilton University of Houston can join the ranks among the stars.



FROM PANELS TO PODIUMS: ELEVATING OUR WORLDWIDE REACH

From the bustling halls of Chicago to the scenic landscapes of Switzerland, our faculty, staff and students made their mark at prestigious conferences around the world. They presented innovative research, earned top honor recognitions and built meaningful connections across multiple sectors of the industry. Check out some of their highlights:

Dean Reynolds Recognized for 25 Years of Impact

CHICAGO, IL

During the Academy of Management annual meeting, Dean Dennis Reynolds was honored for his 25 years of service by the academy’s human resources division. Held in Chicago from Aug. 9 to 14, 2024, 10,000 scholars from over 200 countries attended to discuss their new research, focusing on the theme “Innovating for the Future: Policy, Purpose and Organization.”



Where Facilities Meet the Future

SAN ANTONIO, TX

Akash Grover ('07), the Hilton College director of facilities, represented the College at the International Facilities Management Association’s World Workplace 2024 conference in San Antonio, from Oct. 9 to 11, 2024. This is the largest and most renowned conference for facility management professionals, where they gather to explore the latest innovations, build valuable connections and sharpen essential skills.



Cougars on Top: Chapter of the Year!

UNCASVILLE, CT

The Hospitality Financial and Technology Professionals (HFTP) Cougar Chapter garnered the 2024 Chapter of the Year Award at the HFTP Annual Convention, from Oct. 23 to 25, 2024. Kyle Abubo, the chapter’s president at the time and Lillian Reese, the chapter’s treasurer at the time, represented our College excellently. Tucker Johnson, the chapter’s faculty advisor and a Hilton College instructional associate professor, also attended the convention, further highlighting the organization’s strong leadership.

Soulful Insights and Culinary Impact

HOUSTON, TX

Associate Professor Dr. Tiffany Legendre was the keynote speaker at Feed the Soul Foundation’s Global Culinary Conference, from Jan. 25 to 27. Assistant Professor Dr. Dustin Maneethai also represented our College at this four-day conference, which elevates culinary businesses through interactive workshops, panel discussions and inspiring keynote presentations.



Investing in Hospitality and Humanity

LOS ANGELES, CA

Dr. Yoon Koh, professor, and students Adrian Abbott ('25), Emily Yeh ('25), CHIA and Shivam Dalwadi ('24, MS '25), CHIA, attended the Americas Lodging Investment Summit (ALIS) conference in Los Angeles, California, from Jan. 28 to 30. During the conference, the group created first responder kits and wrote handwritten notes for Los Angeles emergency personnel to support their tireless work combating wildfires.



Soulful Insights and Culinary Impact

TAMPA, FL

Representatives traveled to Tampa, Florida for the Club Management Association of America (CMAA) 2025 World Conference and Club Business Conference, from Feb. 5 to 9. Faculty Advisor Simone Doudna, instructional associate professor, and nine chapter members, including Sam Banhan, Brenden Miller ('25), Geraldine Estrada Sanabria ('25), Preston Dean, Estefania Estrada ('25), Sean Maddox, Michaela Morrissey, Alexa Esquivel and Matthew Chang, also joined the event!

Big Wins, Bigger Ideas: Hilton College at YHS

SWITZERLAND

Kailyn Camp and Josh Cantu represented our College at the 15th edition of the Young Hospitality Summit (YHS) in Switzerland, from March 17 to 19. Throughout the week, delegates worked on a special project, developing practical and creative solutions to combat modern over-tourism challenges in specific regions. Accompanied by Cathy Cheatham ('89, MS '16), CHIA, CHE, instructional associate professor and hotel manager for the Hilton University of Houston, their innovative ideas were presented to a prestigious panel of judges, including four industry speakers and STR Share Centre representative. Camp’s team earned first place and Cantu’s team earned third place.



Students, Faculty and Alumni Represent our College at the NRA Show

CHICAGO, IL

During the 2025 National Restaurant Association (NRA) Show in Chicago, 53,000 foodservice professionals gathered at McCormick Place. 19 students, three staff members, two faculty members and Alumnus Robert D. “Bob” Cowan ('76) represented our College excellently, managing the Hilton College booth and connecting with various vendors, from May 17 to 20. After the conference, the group gathered for an Alumni Mixer at Pizano’s Pizza and Pasta. Here, conversations were elevated by iconic Chicago-style eats.



Shaping the Future of Hospitality Through ESG Innovation

THAILAND

During the third-annual 2025 Global Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) conference in Phuket, Thailand, over 150 hospitality scholars and students explored innovative ways the industry can lead in sustainability, social responsibility and ethical governance. From May 23 to 25, three Hilton College faculty and five students attended. Undergraduate Student Gina Grenyo earned the silver award for her research on “The Real Cost of Linens: Save the Environment Serve Your Community.” Graduate Student Valerie Ryoo earned the gold best award for her paper entitled “Narrative Transportation: A Key to Enhancing ESG Engagement.” Graduate Student Simon Hahn, ('23) also earned the silver best award for his research on “ESG and Financial Risk Management to Hospitality Firms.”



Houston, We Have a Winner

VIRTUAL

The Hilton College Team, comprised of Abbott, Yeh, Tres Kimball ('24), Sue Hoang, Angela Joseph ('25) and Deven Kang ('25), earned the seventh-place finalist award at the STR & International Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education (CHRIE) Americas Student Market Competition! Against 17 teams from North America and South America, our College’s team was recognized for their Houston market analysis, crafted over three months through Excel and Tableau; their findings could significantly impact investors.

Hilton College Goes Global at CHRIE Conference in Doha

DOHA, QATAR

Reynolds and Legendre visited Doha, Qatar for the annual European CHRIE Conference, from Nov. 4 to 7, 2024. Legendre provided an impressive workshop and co-authored a poster presentation. Additionally, she presented at one of the research marathons and moderated a paper-presentation session.



Robots, Risk & Reynolds: Hilton College at CHRIE

AUBURN, AL

Reynolds visited Auburn, Alabama from Feb. 27 to March 1, for the Southeastern, Central and South America Federation International CHRIE Conference, where one of his co-authors presented their paper, "Neophobia, Risk and Sustainability in Robotic Dining."

From Research to Recognition

FRISCO, TX

Dr. Mary Dawson, ('92, MHM '95), senior associate dean for academic affairs and the Eric Hilton Distinguished Chair Professor, attended the West Federation International CHRIE Conference in Frisco, Texas, from Feb. 27 to March 1. Here, she was recognized for her research and mentorship. Legendre also presented her paper, "SDG Impact on Food Waste Management in On-site Foodservice: Integrating Process Eco-innovation via Sustainable Technology," which Maneethai co-authored.



Is AI a Friend or Foe?

CHIANG MAI, THAILAND

Dr. Minwoo Lee, associate professor and director of the Hospitality Analytics and Innovation Lab, earned the Best Paper Award during the 23rd Asia-Pacific CHRIE Conference in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from May 27 to 30. After earning recognition for his paper, "Is AI a Friend or Foe to Hospitality Employees? Employees' Perceived Fear of the Job Security," Lee delivered an engaging seminar. Dr. Ki-Joon Back, senior associate dean for research and graduate studies and the Moores Chair Professor, also attended the insightful conference.



From Pin to Pin: Mapping out Recruitment

ACROSS THE U.S.

The Hilton College recruitment team, comprising the Director of Student Recruitment Raymond Arevelo and College Recruitment Program Managers Frederick Guichard and Kennedi Southall, traveled near and far to connect with prospective students. The team ventured to cities all across Texas, as well as Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina and Washington, D.C., to attend college fairs, present in classrooms and exhibit at educational conferences. Thanks to their efforts, high school students and transfer students alike are learning about our innovative programs and welcoming, vibrant community.

Hilton College Takes the Spotlight at ICHRIE Global Conference

INDIANAPOLIS, IN

From June 18 to 20, 18 Hilton College representatives attended the International CHRIE Global Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana. Outstanding faculty and students made the following impacts at the conference:

- Dr. Araceli Hernandez (Ph.D. '25), doctoral student faculty, made history as the first to win the triple crown: the Graduate Conference Best Paper Award, the ICHRIE Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Award and the Best Doctoral Dissertation Award.
- Doctoral Student Faculty Dr. Yun-Na Park (Ph.D. '25) earned the 2025 Best Doctoral Dissertation Award.
- Reynolds and Lee presented a developmental workshop for junior faculty.
- Back and Lee presented "Advancing the Research in Hospitality and Tourism: Developmental Workshop for Graduate Students."
- Dawson and Lee gave the presentation, "Retirement Crisis in the Food and Beverage Industry: A Mixed Method Approach."
- HFTP and iHITA co-organized a special session, which Lee spoke during.
- Dr. Agnes DeFranco ('83, MBA '89, Ed.D. '93), professor and Conrad N. Hilton Distinguished Chair, earned the 2025 International CHRIE Conference Outstanding Reviewer of the Year and Legendre presented her highly-commended paper, published in the Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research.
- Lee also led the 2025 research marathon.



Hilton College Faculty Shine on Global Stage in Copenhagen

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

Dr. Priyanko Guchait, professor and the director of the Doctorate in Global Hospitality Leadership, and Dr. Juan Madera, professor and the Curtis L. Carlson Endowed Professor, attended the Academy of Management annual meeting, from July 25 to 29. Held in Copenhagen, Denmark, they represented the College amongst 13,400+ attendees from around the world. This event was the largest gathering of management and organization scholars worldwide.

Hilton College Wins Big at NACE National Conference

MILWAUKEE, WI

Our College had a very successful visit to the National Association for Catering and Events (NACE) Experience Conference, from July 27 to 29 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where several efforts were recognized:

- Student Jackson Vicic was awarded the Vince DeFinis Scholarship by the Foundation of NACE and a full conference package.
- At the awards gala, Student Erin Mosel was awarded the NACE National 2024 Student Member of the Year Award.
- Also at the awards gala, Gourmet Night 2024: Astro Renaissance took home the 2024 Catered Event of the Year Award in the \$50,000 to \$100,000 category. Reba Haskell (MHM '19), Hilton College lecturer and the executive director of Gourmet Night, and Vicic, who served as the 2025 event's food and beverage manager, accepted the award on behalf of the team.
- During the national board elections, Instructional Associate Professor Erin Kenyan ('98) was elected to the NACE National Board for a two-year term as a director-at-large.
- The 2025-26 NACE UH student chapter's student board members who represented the College during the conference were Vicic, treasurer; Mosel, president; Alex Garton, vice president of membership; and Sara Jamieson ('25), former president.
- Alumna Sydney Hetherington ('24) chartered the NACE Salt Lake City professional chapter. Her two-year leadership experience as a student board member assisted her in the start-up of this chapter, just one short



BEYOND THE CLASSROOM, ACROSS THE MAP: SEE HOSPITALITY IN MOTION

Every year, we have the privilege of sending members of our community on impactful journeys across the country — and sometimes even around the globe. These travels reflect our commitment to hands-on learning, global collaboration and shaping the future of hospitality from every corner of the world. Here a few highlights:

Global Hospitality Cohort Welcomed

LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND & HONG KONG

Dr. Ki-Joon Back, associate dean for research & graduate studies and the Moores Chair Professor, traveled to Lausanne, Switzerland, in September 2024, to welcome the Master of Science in Global Hospitality Business Cohort 14. This group of 39 students are from 17 countries spanning over five continents. Back also traveled to Hong Kong to celebrate the program's 10th anniversary. There, Dean Dennis Reynolds of Hilton College, Dean Kaye Chon of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University School of Hotel and Tourism Management and Dean Achim Schmitt of Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne officially signed a memorandum of understanding to ensure the continuation of the impactful partnership.

Student Leaders Head to the Capitol

AUSTIN, TX

Members from the Undergraduate Student Advisory Council (USAC) visited the Texas Capitol in Austin on Feb. 11. They were amongst an elite group of selected leaders across the University of Houston who were invited to attend UH Day at the Capitol. The day highlighted the University's legislative priorities and showcased its positive impact on the State of Texas.

Hospitality Meets the Future

HOUSTON, TX

Dr. Cristian Morosan, assistant dean for student affairs, the Donald H. Hubbs Professor and the director of undergraduate digital education, gave an impressive discussion during their Hotel Lodging Association of Greater Houston March luncheon. The presentation's title was "Hospitality Meets the Future: Elevating Guest Experiences and Employee Growth." The session prompted a number of attendees to adopt artificial intelligence for the first time!

Culinary Immersion with CIA

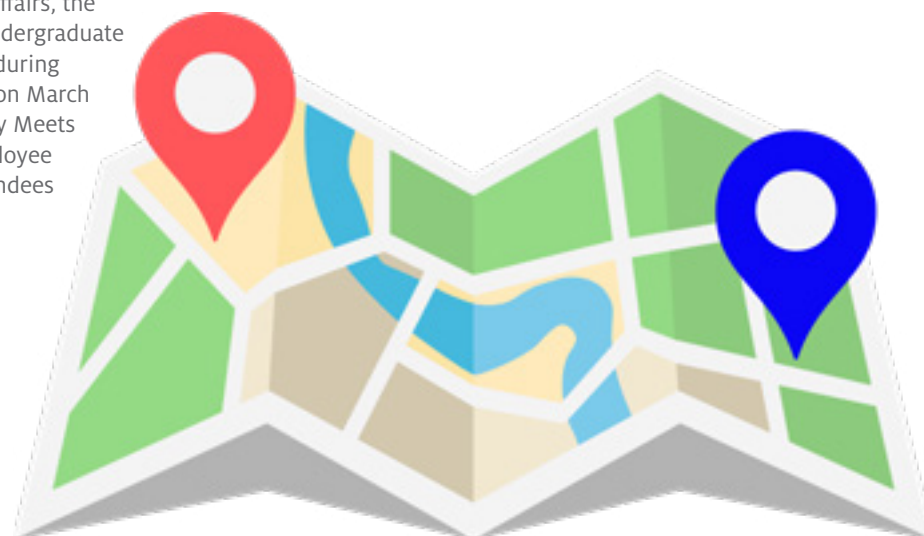
HYDE PARK, NY

For the fourth year in a row, we've partnered with the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) to host a three-week culinary experience in Hyde Park, New York. From May 12 to 30, six undergraduate students earned six elective credits while learning from expert chefs. Lecturer Katie Ginapp accompanied the students during the initial week of the program to show them around the institute and introduce them to fundamental practices, such as kitchen basics. Throughout the three-week lecture and kitchen-based program, a CIA chef presented a demonstration, then the students replicated the recipes, which gradually became more complex.

Marketing Students Tour NYC Hotels

NEW YORK, NY

Students from our GHL 3153 and 6153: Hotel Marketing New York Style classes traveled to the Big Apple to visit top hotels in the area, learn about the industry and connect with professionals and alumni. While in New York from Nov. 7 to 10, 2024, the 18 undergraduate and graduate students visited the Marriott Marquis, NY Hilton Midtown, The Peninsula and The Plaza for behind-the-scenes tours. Cathy Cheatham ('89, MS '16), CHIA, CHE, instructional associate professor and the Hilton University of Houston hotel manager, and Dr. Carl A. Boger Jr., professor and the Clinton L. Rappole Distinguished Chair, organized the exciting trip and attended it alongside the students.



*** Congratulations

ALUMNI AWARD WINNERS



BENJAMIN SCOTT (MS '17)
Distinguished Alumni Award



JACK HODGES ('20, MS '21)
Distinguished Young Alumni Award



DR. YOON KOH
Distinguished Faculty/Staff Award



ROBERT D. "BOB" COWAN ('76)
Hilton Distinguished Service Award



WENDY E. GARY
Honorary Alumni Award

Nominations are accepted year-round. You can submit your nomination by scanning the QR code:



uh.edu/hilton-college



THIS IS US

In the 2025 Academic Year, we celebrated the promotions of eight valued employees and one faculty member.

FACULTY & STAFF PROMOTIONS



DR. JASON DRAPER
Professor



ROSY ARMENTA
Department Business Administrator



VICTOR BARROS
Financial Assistant II



NANCY EGHAREVBA
Financial Assistant I



KELLY LE
Senior Department Business Administrator



ALMA RANGEL
Housekeeping Supervisor



SJ SHAW
Front Desk Supervisor



LAUREN SMITH
Director of Alumni Relations



LIDICE VEGA
Housekeeping Supervisor

NEW COLLEGE & HOTEL STAFF

This year, we proudly welcomed 11 new members to our College and hotel team. Their diverse backgrounds and professional expertise strengthen our commitment to excellence in hospitality education and service. Each individual brings fresh ideas and valuable insight that contribute to the continued growth of our academic programs and guest experiences. We are excited to see the meaningful impact they will make as part of our community.



HANS ALKINANI
Maintenance Mechanic II



SAMUSDEEN BABAJIDE
Front Desk Supervisor & Night Auditor



KEI-LAH DOWDY
Director of Executive Programs



FREDERICK GUICHARD
College Recruitment Program Manager



JOSY KURIAN
Maintenance Mechanic II



BELEN LICONA
Program Manager II



JASON MORENO
Program Manager II



KENNEDI SOUTHALL
College Recruitment Program Manager



MARIA VERGARA
Hotel Housekeeping Attendant I



LOLITA WESTBROOK
Department Business Administrator III



MATTHEW WEV
Food & Beverage Director

Excellence Award Winners

It's Time to Rally

During the 2025 College Rally Awards Luncheon, held on May 7, faculty and staff gathered in motor sport rally fashion to celebrate accomplishments and welcome new team members. The stop-light-shaped balloon arches, traffic cone-lined runways and racing striped suit ties raced attendees into summer. The following award recipients exemplified dependability, innovation, dedication, commitment to service and an enthusiasm for student learning. Their diverse roles and talents have significantly and consistently impacted our College.



Teaching Excellence

CATHY CHEATHAM

Instructional Associate Professor
& Hotel Manager

Service Excellence

DR. YOON KOH

Professor

Stephen Rushmore/HVS Research

DR. CARL A. BOGER JR.

Professor & Clinton L. Rappole
Distinguished Chair

Donald Greenaway Excellence

DR. JAEWOOK KIM

Associate Professor

Hotel Staff Excellence

LARRY BROWN

General Maintenance
Technician II

Mentorship Excellence

DR. JAEWOOK KIM

Associate Professor

College Staff Excellence

MAGGIE PADILLA

Director of
Executive Programs

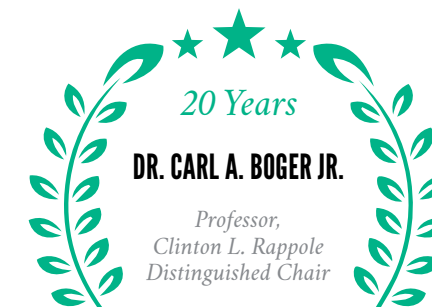
Rising Star

DANIEL CASANOVA

Instructional Designer II

Years of Service

Every year, we proudly recognize the dedicated members of our team who have reached significant milestones in their service to the College. Their talent and contributions leave significant lasting impacts. We're overjoyed to recognize these individuals' commitment and look forward to their continued excellence in the years to come.

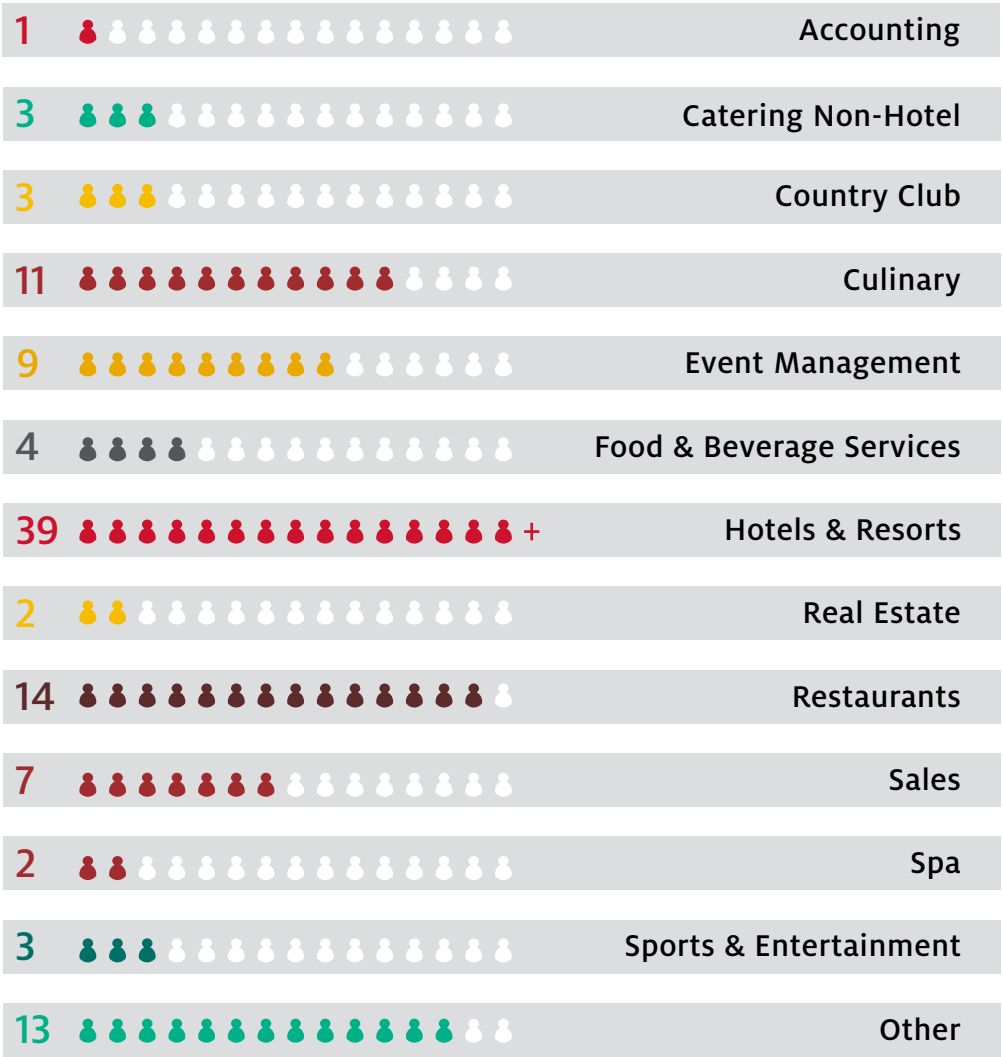


ABOUT OUR GRADUATES



The salaries shown above are derived from data collected through a salary and job placement survey administered to graduating students at the end of each semester. The highest starting salary self-reported by recent undergraduate students was \$104,000. In the hospitality industry, the starting salaries for these graduates can increase quickly. Within five years, a significant number of them ascend to well-paying managerial roles, with some attaining positions as directors and general managers, while others venture into entrepreneurship by launching their own restaurants and businesses. Graduates who aspire to join a specific company may also opt for entry-level roles with a base salary and commission structure, such as hotel sales or restaurant marketing. It's worth noting that many of our students receive multiple job offers upon graduation.

SECTORS EMPLOYED



OUR TOP HIRING COMPANIES

We have strong industry partnerships with the biggest names in hospitality. These companies represent employers who have hired three or more of our graduates for full-time positions.

- DISNEY
- FOUR SEASONS HOTEL
- HILTON
- HILTON UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
- HOTEL ZAZA
- HOUSTON CITY NIDO AGUILA SOCCER ACADEMY
- HYATT HOTELS & RESORTS
- MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL
- THE POST OAK HOTEL

OUR TOP 5 COMPANIES HIRING FOR PART-TIME JOBS AND INTERNSHIPS

Through part-time jobs and internships, our students gain invaluable experience that prepares them to become leaders in the industry. These five employers have provided the most opportunities.

- HILTON UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
- UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
- MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL
- HOME 2 SUITES/HILTON
- MOODY GARDENS

Employer Testimonials

Hilton College students are making their mark in the hospitality world with creativity, professionalism and drive. Employers see it firsthand. Our students step in ready to contribute, lead and make a difference. The quotes on this page come directly from employers who have hired Hilton College students and highlight the real impact they're making across the industry, showing how the skills and experiences they gain here set them apart.



BH Hospitality TALENT ON THE RISE

"The level of talent from the students, even the sophomore and freshman class, is one-of-a-kind. This will be a great generation of hospitality leaders! They know what they want, and are shooting for the stars early on."



Great Wolf Resorts

STRONG FIRST IMPRESSIONS

"The experience was very well executed. The students were well-prepared and asked the right questions. We'll definitely attend the next Hilton College Career Fair."



Big Easy Ranch

PREPARED TO SHINE

"I loved the energy and preparation by the students."

Houston Country Club

ENGAGED & PREPARED

"It was a great experience returning as an alum to meet prepared, engaged students asking thoughtful questions about the club industry."

Mercy Ships

AN EVENT WORTH RETURNING TO

"This is my third year to come for Mercy Ships. The students are engaging and well prepared! The staff is warm and welcoming and very helpful! Love this event and hope to be able to continue coming!"



Golden Nugget
Las Vegas Hotel & Casino

OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND BORDERS

"It was an amazing opportunity to have vendors from different states participate in the career fair. Allowing students to intern out of state is a great way to push them out of their comfort zones and expose them to different work cultures."



Cambria
Downtown Houston

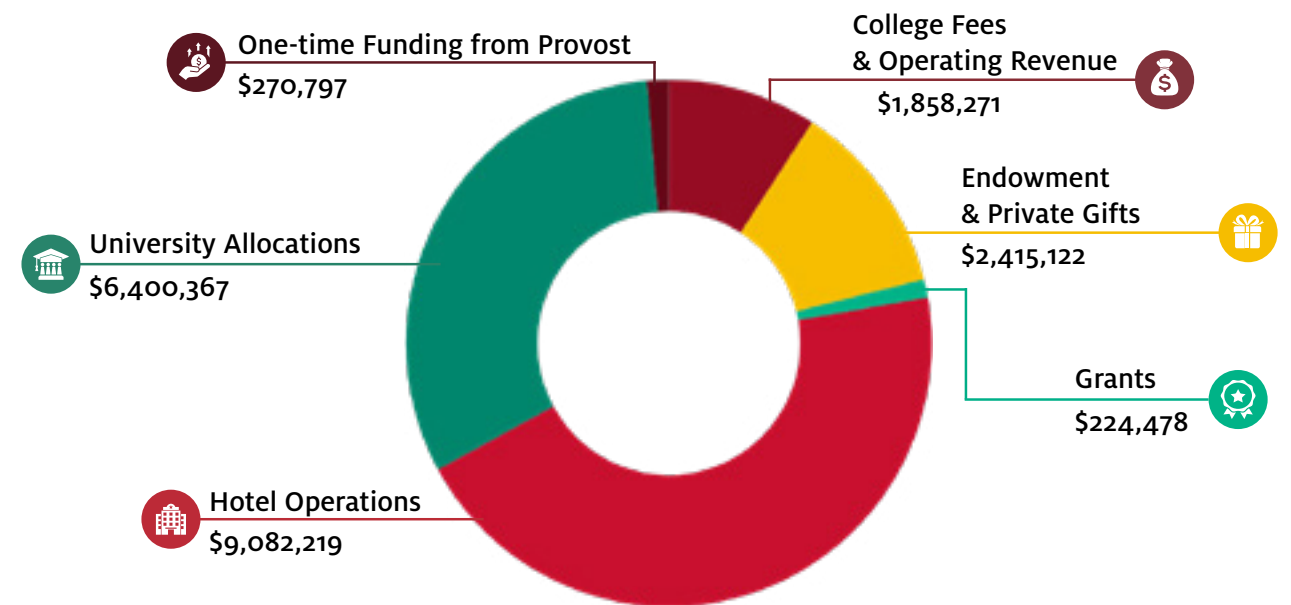
THE LEADERS WE NEED

"It's exciting meeting the future leaders our industry is eagerly seeking."

FINANCIAL HEALTH

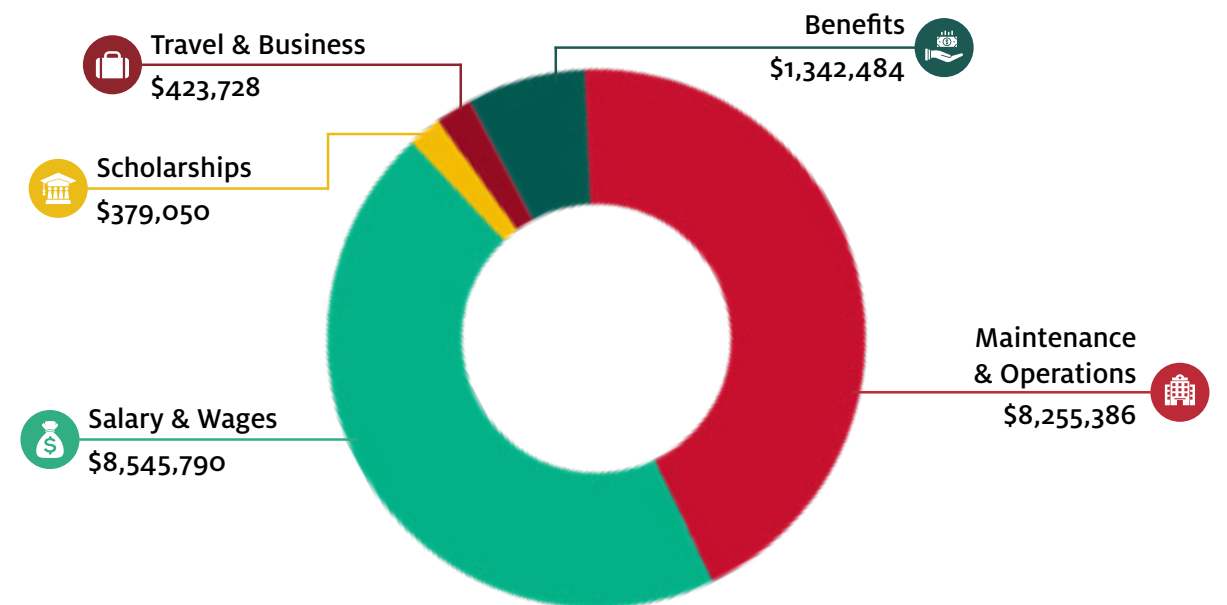
FISCAL YEAR 2025* (Sept. 1, 2024 – Aug. 31, 2025)

ANNUAL REVENUE



Total Revenue = \$20,251,254

ANNUAL EXPENSES



Total Expenses = \$18,946,438

* The data provided in this Dean's Report are for information only. The financials presented are preliminary, unaudited and subject to revision upon completion of the fiscal year closing and audit processes.

Conrad N. Hilton College of Global Hospitality Leadership

DONOR HONOR ROLL

GIFTS FROM JAN. 1 – DEC. 31, 2024

In recognition of their commitment to excellence and in support of our mission, a heartfelt THANK YOU to all of the individuals, foundations and companies for these generous gifts.

Gifts \$100,000 - \$25,000

Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
Mr. Jayant and Mrs. Kapila Dalwadi
Bradley Dorsey ('91) and Claudia Farinola ('86)
Joy Fisher
Mr. J. and Mrs. Sandy Hughey
Robert D. ('71) and Sharron Planck

Gifts \$24,999 - \$10,000

Mark Bermann
The Honorable Douglas H. ('75) and Mrs. Holly Brooks
Brotherhood of the Knights of the Vine Houston Chapter Inc.
Enterprise Holdings
Fred and Mabel R. Parks Foundation
Jack Gibbons
Gregg and Anna Rockett of the Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund
Buddy and Trish Hagner
Patrick Henry
Allen C. Hermansen
Hilton Worldwide
Ricki ('86) and Asra Oberoi
Pappas Restaurants Inc.

Gifts \$9,999 - \$5,000

ARAMARK Corporation
Banfi Vintners Foundation
Jacques D'Rovencourt
Bill (MS '83) and Sherry E. Fortier
Richard Hamilton and Jennifer Y'Barbo ('95)
Hilton Americas
Susan Kate
Aylwin Lewis ('76)
Raising Cane's
Clinton L. (Hon. '73) and Leigh A. Rappole
Brent and Kelley Southwell
Venetian - Resort, Hotel, Casino
Voya Financial

Gifts \$4,999 - \$1,000

8th Wonder Brewery
Abilene Country Club
ALH Hotel Management, LLC
Tori Bailey
David B. ('77) and Lucie Chag
Geoffrey and Alice Chow
Club at Carlton Woods
Maria Corsi and Aaron J. Corsi ('09, MS '11)
Robert D. ('76) and Nancy Cowan
Susan Nemeth-Davidson and Jerry Davidson
John M. ('80) and Agnes L. ('83) DeFranco
Charles D. ('80) and Karen Dorn
Earl Finley ('83)
Alan ('82) and Diana Gallo
Rick and Peggy Galyean
Steven R. ('83) and Hilda Goodman
Houston First Corporation
Hotel and Lodging Association of Greater Houston
Ruth A. ('90) and Thomas Lattin, Jr.
Nicholas ('73) and Vicki Massad
Hector Medina (MS '06)
Million Air Headquarters
Nicholson Interests LLC
Dorothy T. Nicholson ('77)
Amber Scheer
Darayus Sethna ('97)
David ('79) and Melanie ('Hon. '24) Smalley
Suite Time Fitness, LLC
Karen Taylor
Tokyo Gardens Catering LLC
UHAA
Richard F. ('78) and Maryann Weil

Gifts \$999 - \$500

Michael Alcorn, Jr. ('07) and Pamela Alcorn
Mark Bado
John R. ('76) and Joan Beers
Joe Bendy ('89) and Cindy Bendy
Jennie Bui-McCoy and Bernard McCoy, Jr.
Francis and Flora Choy ('86)
Kelly de Schaun ('91) and Geraldo Schaun
Anwar Elgonemy ('88) and Gihan Farag
Stephen Fernandez ('95)
Helena ('89) and David Finley
Forney Construction
Anthony Galvan ('12)
Harrison Hazelwood
Jeffrey J. ('92) and Theoula Heaney
Bonnie Heiland-Bell and Ross Heiland
Holidan Holdings LLC
Houston Racquet Club
Cheryl ('84) and Marvin A. Jones ('85)
Kae Debrent Hodges Fund Corp. Inc
Mr. John and Mrs. Linda Klukan
Larry Konecny
Trevor Kristoff ('23)
Trishia Marrero
Michael L. ('89) and Melanie Pedé
Petroleum Club Mainland
Darren and Kori Randle
Sharmagne J. Taylor ('86)
Rusty ('82) and Estelia Wallace
Linda and Phil Wetz
Carol (Hon. '88) and Steven White

Gifts \$499 - \$100

Steve and JéAnna L. Abbott
Rene Bellwied
John T. (Hon. '06) and Toni Bowen
Libo Cai (MHM '94)
Melanie ('01) and William Carter
Cassiel Property Services LLC
Diane Z. Chase
Lisa and Mark Cox
Mrunal Daftary ('09)
Mary Dawson ('92, MHM '95) and Mr. Joel Dawson

Matthew Decker (MHM '17) and Megan Decker
Anne C. Dillon ('04)
Jason Draper
Ricky ('10) and Lauren Girardi
Katie Guidroz
DeAnna M. Harner ('96)
John Henry
Kimberly Hermann ('89)
Brenda Jones ('79)
Margaret Jones ('09)
LaRaine Kang
Melanie Keown
Florence Lee ('13)
Edwin Lentz ('94)
James ('81) and Jan Love
Kevin McCaslin ('19)
Randy and Nancy M. McCaslin
Travis L. and Elisa McIntire
Dan S. ('96) and Jennifer ('97) Meaux
Jack Neal, Jr. ('91, MHM '04) and Shaelyn Roche-Neal (MHM '04)
Casey Newman
Arlene D. Ramirez
Melissa Raymer-Lowe ('02) and Daniel Lowe
Kirk O. Reese
Allen Reich
Paula Seefeldt and Jeremy S. Wladis ('86)
Karin Singley-Dreger
Jessica Stevens
Timothy Thrasher
Dr. Karl Titz
Chris ('03) and Solange Triplett
Anhthu Vo
Karen (MHM '95) and John (MHM '95) Waddell
Mark and Susan Worscheh

Gifts up to \$100

Shinu Abraham
Freddy Aung and Thit Lwin
Ray Benitez and Thomas Abbott
Salma Break ('22)
Shavonne Collins ('02)

Michelina Darby ('19)
Deborah DiazGranados ('97) and Dr. Michael Curtis
Alba Dickerson
Robert and Victoria Garcia
Wendy E. Gary
Rosa Hagan
Justin Hahn-Kelly and Mark Hahn-Kelly, III
Mr. Thomas Lubbe
Haimanot Mihiretu
Thomas B. Mohr
Sylvia M. Molina
Lillian Nawalanic
Lewis J. ('96) and Janet D. Nuzzie
Kathy ('94) and Joseph ('94) Rennard
John ('98) and Brookly Rosen
Philip and Patricia Scott ('88)
Richard ('86) and Wendy Segol

THANK YOU!

If you would like to make a donation to invest in the future of Hilton College and our students, please contact Russell Dunlavy, VC/VP for the Division of Advancement & Alumni, at 713-743-4209 or rtdunlavy@uh.edu to learn how your gift can make a difference.

We regret any errors or omissions and would appreciate notifications of corrections.

Chancellor, University of Houston System
and President, University of Houston
Renu Khator

Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs,
University of Houston System
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs & Provost,
University of Houston
Diane Z. Chase

Dean of Hilton College and Barron Hilton Distinguished Chair
Dennis Reynolds (Hon. '18)

DEAN’S LEADERSHIP TEAM

Senior Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies
and Moores Chair Professor
Ki-Joon Back

Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
and Eric Hilton Distinguished Chair Professor
Mary Dawson ('92, MHM '95)

Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, Professor,
Donald H. Hubbs Professor
and Director of Undergraduate Digital Education
Cristian Moroson

Executive Director of Academic Affairs and Business Operations
Paul Roch

General Manager, Hilton University of Houston
Rick Galyean

Director of Information Technology and Information Security Officer
Freddy Aung

Director of Facilities
Akash Grover ('07)

Director of Communications
Katie Guidroz

Director of Alumni Relations
Lauren Smith ('15)

Executive Assistant to Dean Dennis Reynolds
Linda Hulett

FACULTY

JéAnna Abbott (MHM '91), Ki-Joon Back, Stephen Barth, Carl A. Boger Jr.,
Cathy Cheatham ('89, MS '16), Aaron Corsi ('09, MS '11),
Mary Dawson ('92, MHM '95), Agnes L. DeFranco ('83), Simone P. Doudna,
Jason Draper, Katie Ginapp, Priyanko Guchait, Reba Haskell (MHM '19),
Kyle Hight, Tucker Johnson, Erin Kenyan ('98), Jaewook Kim (MS '11), Yoon Koh, Minwoo Lee,
Tiffany Legendre, Ningqao Li, Juan M. Madera, Dustin Maneethai, Mohamed E. Mohamed,
Cristian Morosan, Jay Neal ('91, MHM '04), Dennis Reynolds (Hon. '18),
Minjung Shin (Ph.D. '20), Sujata Sirsat, D. Christopher Taylor & Mark E. Young

FACULTY EMERITI

John T. Bowen (Hon. '06), William N. Chernish, Nancy S. Graves, Ronald A. Nykiel,
Clinton L. Rappole (Hon. '73) & Karl Titz

COLLEGE STAFF

Raymond Arevelo, Rosy Armenta, Freddy Aung, Victor Barros, Daniel Casanova,
Maria Corsi, Jeremy L. Dafoe, Dawn A. Deurell, Kei-lah Dowdy, Nancy Egharevba,
Wendy E. Gary, Akash Grover ('07), Frederick Guichard, Katie Guidroz, Tracy Guran,
Allison Hendricks, Connie Hines, Linda Hulett, Sean Lawless, Kelly Le, Belen Licona,
Gwendolyn Meaux, Jason Moreno, Kyrié Muehe, Paul Roch, Benjamin Scaggs, Carter Shelton,
Ashley Shepherd, Lauren Smith ('15), Kennedi P. Southall, Jenumon Thomas, Paul Wegner,
Lolita Westbrook & Bradi Zapata

HILTON UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON STAFF

Shinu Abraham, Jose Aguilar, Rene Aguilar, Freddy Aung, Sam Babajide, Victor Barros,
Juirl Benjamin, Larry Brown, Yolanda Castro, Cathy Cheatham ('89, MS '16), Alexa Chirinos,
Valerie Delgado ('13), Shibu George, Akash Grover ('07), Ashley Jasper, Hans Alkinani,
Josy Kurian, Travis McIntire, Dayra Mendez, Sylvia Molina, Brandon (Reid) Presley,
Alma Rangel, Paul Roch, Brooke Saner, SJ Shaw, Curtis Taylor, Lidice Vega, Maria Vergara,

DEAN’S REPORT 2025

Produced by the
Hilton College Office of Communications

Katie Guidroz: Director of Communications | Dean's Report Theme Creator and Photographer

Kyrié Muehe: Communications Coordinator | Dean's Report Designer and Photographer

Bradi Zapata: Communications Coordinator | Dean's Report Writer and Photographer

Thank you to all who made the 2025 Dean's Report possible through their contributions.

The University of Houston is an EEO/AA institution.
9.2025/10.4M/UHCPP

Hilton College Board Members

DEAN’S ADVISORY BOARD

CHAIRMAN – **Doug Brooks** ('75) – Former Chairman, CEO and President, Brinker International , Inc.
Thomas Atzenhofer, CPA – Deputy CEO, Hospitality Financial and Technology Professionals
Rob DeMore – Executive Vice President, Troon Privé
CHAIRMAN EMERITUS – **Charles D. Dorn**, CCM ('80) – Managing Director, The Dorn Group, Ltd.
Falayn Ferrell – Managing Partner – Operations, Black Restaurant Week, LLC
and Chairwoman of the Board of Directors, Feed the Soul Foundation
Jeffrey “Jeff” Heaney, CFSP ('92) – President, Mikasa Hospitality
Patrick Henry – Chairman and CEO, Patrick Henry Creative Promotions, Inc.
Ron E. Jackson – President and CEO, Meadowbrook Golf Group
Rodrigo “Rod” Jimenez – Co-founder and CEO, Sceptre Hospitality Resources, LLC
Larry Konecny – Executive Vice President and COO, Red Lobster
Warren Luckett – Managing Partner – Founder, Black Restaurant Week, LLC
Nick Massad Jr. ('73) – President and CEO, American Liberty Hospitality
Randy McCaslin, (Hon. '07) – President, McCaslin Hotel Consulting, LLC
Dorothy T. Nicholson, CHA, CHSE ('77) – President, Nicholson Interests, LLC
Chris Pappas (Hon. '94) – CEO and Executive Vice President, Pappas Restaurants, Inc.
Gregory “Gregg” W. Rockett ('86) – Hospitality Industry Thought Leader and Award-Winning Academic
Instructor and Retired VP of Corporate Hotel Development, Hilton Worldwide
John Rydman (Hon. '08) – President and Owner, Spec's Wine, Spirits & Finer Foods
Anna Schmid ('95) – Vice President of Communications and CSR, The Venetian Resort
Melanie Smalley (Hon. '24) – President, Spectrum Catering, Concessions & Events
Sharmagne Taylor, CMP ('86) – President and CEO, On-Site Partners, Inc.
Robert Thrailkill ('82) – Vice President, Hotel Development and Operations, Zachry Hospitality, LLC
Donna Vallone – Owner, Tony's Restaurant and Catering
Dianna Vaughan – Senior Vice President, Global Owner Relations, Support and Benefits, Hilton Worldwide
Patrick McCaslin ('10) – President, Hilton College Alumni Board
Mary Martinez ('25) – Chair, Dean's Undergraduate Student Advisory Council

CHAIRMAN EMERITUS

Charles D. Dorn, CCM ('80) – Managing Director, The Dorn Group, Ltd.

BOARD MEMBER EMERITUS

Robert “Bob” D. Planck ('71) (1948 – 2022) – President and CEO, Interconnect Enterprises, Inc.
Tony Vallone (1945 – 2020) – President and CEO, Vallone Restaurant Group

ERIC’S CLUB BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sharmagne Taylor, CMP ('86) – Chair
Marsha B. Hendler ('73) – Vice Chair
Jeffrey "Jeff" Heaney, CFSP ('92) – Secretary
Robert Thrailkill ('82) – Treasurer
Charles D. Dorn, CCM ('80) – Immediate Past Chair
Robert D. "Bob" Cowan ('76) – Director
Lily Ng-Carrette, ('89) – Director
Dave Smalley ('79) – Director
Mary Dawson ('92, MHM '95) – Eric Hilton Distinguished Chair
Dean Dennis Reynolds (Hon. '18) – Dean
Clinton L. Rappole (Hon. '73) – Emeritus Board Member

HILTON COLLEGE ALUMNI BOARD

Taylor Brione Ballard ('14) – President
Anne Dillon ('04) – Vice President
Hector Medina (MS '06) – Treasurer
Brian Crumby (MHM '24) – Secretary
Patrick McCaslin ('10) – Immediate Past President
Curtis Bell ('13) – Board Member
Lizeth Jaramillo ('10) – Board Member
Maria McCollum ('14) – Board Member
Luis Rabo ('95, MHM/MBA '02) – Board Member
Aaron Corsi ('09, MS '11) – Faculty Advisor
Charles D. Dorn, CCM ('80) – Eric's Club Co-Liaison
Sharmagne Taylor, CMP ('86) – Eric's Club Co-Liaison
Marsha Hendler, ('73) – Eric's Club Co-Liaison
Mary Martinez ('25) – Undergraduate Student Liaison
Simon Hahn (MS '23) – Graduate Student Liaison

DEAN’S UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Kaitlin Fear ('16) – Inaugural Chair
Mary Martinez ('25) – Chair
Michael Croft ('26)
Preston Dean ('28)
Michelle Deleon ('26)
Gina Grenyo ('25)
Fatima Martinez ('27)
Erin Mosel ('27)
Grace Will ('26)
Victoria Wooten ('26)

SAVE THESE DATES!

There's no better time to connect with Hilton College. Mark your calendars and join us for our upcoming alumni and student events. We look forward to celebrating with you!

THURSDAY, OCT. 2

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Career Fair

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 8

5:30 – 8 p.m.

Corks & Forks - Night at the Movies

Enjoy a glamorous wine-tasting event with gourmet popcorn pairings and culinary creations. Tickets are \$125 and support student scholarships. Scan the QR code now to purchase.



uh.edu/hilton-college

THURSDAY, OCT. 9

10 – 11:15 a.m.

Eric Hilton Distinguished Chair Alumni Lecture Series

Brad Dorsey, Co-Owner of Deluxe Vanilla and Crave Cupcakes

11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

EC Insights – Panel Discussion

12:20 – 12:50 p.m.

Eric's Club Meet & Greet with Students

THURSDAY, DEC. 18

7 p.m.

Fall Commencement

Cullen Performance Hall, University of Houston

TAILGATE PARTY DATES:

FRIDAY, SEPT. 12

Houston vs. Colorado (Hispanic Heritage Theme)

SATURDAY, OCT. 4

Houston vs. Texas Tech (Hosted by Hilton College Alumni Association Foundation)

SATURDAY, OCT. 18

Houston vs. Arizona (Homecoming)

SATURDAY, NOV. 1

Houston vs. WVU (Heroes Night)

SATURDAY, NOV. 22

Houston vs. TCU (Senior Day/Black Out)

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Global Hospitality Leadership



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SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 2026

53rd Annual Gourmet Night

Tickets go on sale Jan. 13, 2026. For sponsorship and advertisement opportunities, please contact rehaskell@uh.edu.

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