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PRESS RELEASE

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CSUSB Palm Desert Campus hospitality management students return inspired from transformative journey to Italy

PALM DESERT, Calif. – Hospitality management and business students, from both the CSUSB Palm Desert and San Bernardino campuses, recently returned from a short-term study abroad trip to Italy.

The transformative journey, which took place from March 31 to April 7, was designed to provide students with firsthand exposure to the vibrant hospitality industry and rich cultural heritage of Italy.

Led by hospitality management program director Joseph Tormey and faculty member Michelle Russen, students discovered the vast appeal of Italy, which is ranked among the top tourist destinations in the world.

Students had opportunities to interact with business owners and operators in the manufacturing and services sectors of wine, food products, retail, hospitality and tourism.

Visiting the cities of Reggio Emilia, Modena, Bologna and Florence, the group participated in a variety of activities, including guided tours of historical centers, as well as food production and cultural stops, including the home of Luciano Pavarotti, which is now a museum.

The itinerary integrated academic coursework with a focus on Italian gastronomy, tourism and transportation systems, restaurants, destination marketing, art, history and hands-on activities.

The group visited the University of Bologna, which was founded in 1088 and is the oldest university in Europe, and enjoyed a morning tour of a food market in Florence followed by the preparation of a three-course meal with a chef instructor from Florence University of the Arts, an affiliated partner school of CSUSB.

Many of the student travelers had a lot to say about their experience.

“Studying abroad in Italy proved to be an enriching experience as I discovered their serious dedication to food preparation. Their emphasis on using simple, locally sourced ingredients resulted in incredibly healthy meals, a stark contrast to the culinary norms in America,” said Sandy Santiago.

“I found the owner of Hotel Posta to be an inspiring leader and hearing Umberto’s story and background was highly motivating. He demonstrated resilience and a strong entrepreneurial spirit, which left a lasting impression on me,” said Diego Rendon.

“One thing that really stood out to me was how much everyone walks. The transportation in Italy amazes me. If they are not walking, they are riding bikes, electric scooters or taking the train. The hospitality we received was elite, and it really goes to show how much passion and thought they put into their work. The owners at each and every establishment were present and actively participating. In Modena, I enjoyed hearing Luciano Pavarotti perform (from the museum recordings). Both Pavarotti and the hotel owner’s properties were absolutely breathtaking and one of the many highlights of my trip,” said Hayley Ugarte.

The success of the Italy trip underscores CSUSB’s ongoing commitment to providing students with transformative learning experiences that extend beyond the classroom. Through initiatives like these, the university continues to empower students to become global citizens and leaders in their chosen fields.

For more information about the hospitality management program, visit the [CSUSB Hospitality Management](#) webpage.

About PDC: The CSUSB Palm Desert Campus offers bachelor’s and master’s degrees, teaching credentials and certificates, and plays a vital role in educating and training the region’s growing population.

For more information about the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus, contact Mike Singer in the Office of Strategic Communication at msinger@csusb.edu or (760) 341-2883, ext. 78107, or visit the PDC website at www.csusb.edu/pdc.