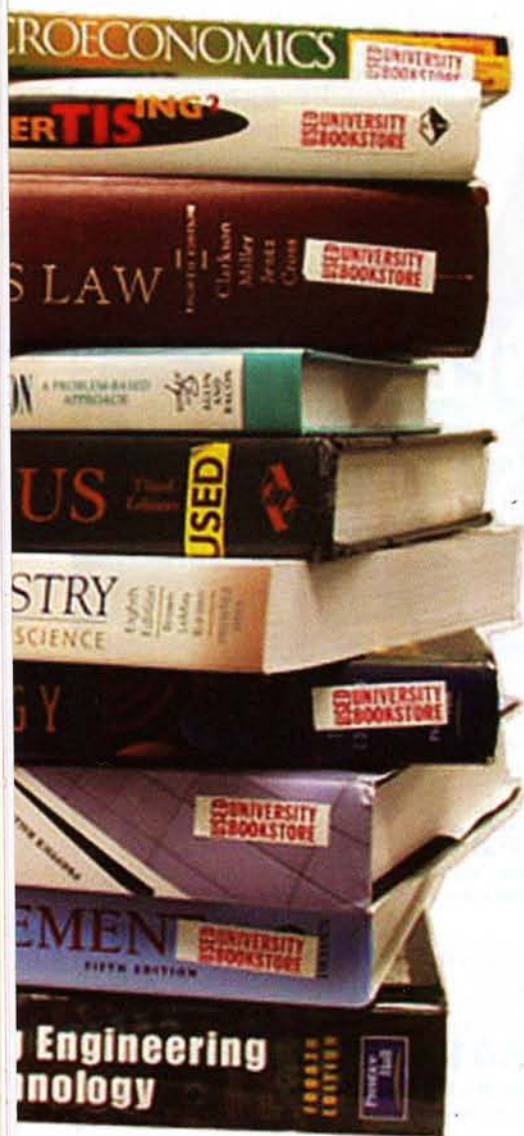


Education Matters

Funding for continuing education is well spent on establishments of higher learning

by Sharon Denning



If the cost of furthering your career through education seems out of reach, you may be surprised to learn there are a number of ways in which you can acquire and utilize grant money, student loans and reimbursement programs to help defray the cost of tuition fees.

This is true especially in Las Vegas, where as a gaming/hospitality worker, you may find yourself accumulating the college credits required to climb the corporate ladder, with your employer more than willing to pick up the tab (see “Earning and Learning” on page 20).

Corporate giants in the hotel industry have acquired a group consciousness, utilizing the tuition reimbursement program as a strategic tool for recruiting and preserving talented employees. The terms of each tuition reimbursement program will vary greatly from corporation to corporation. This program is an arrangement between the employer and employee specifically outlining how much, and for what purposes, the employer is willing to pay for continuing education.

Do not ignore this perk. It is costly to the hotel and depending on the property, mostly free to you. It does not come however, without doing your part. Payment is most often based on performance. Higher grades may equal larger financial rewards. Check with training and development departments at the hotel in which you are currently employed, or considering employment in the future.

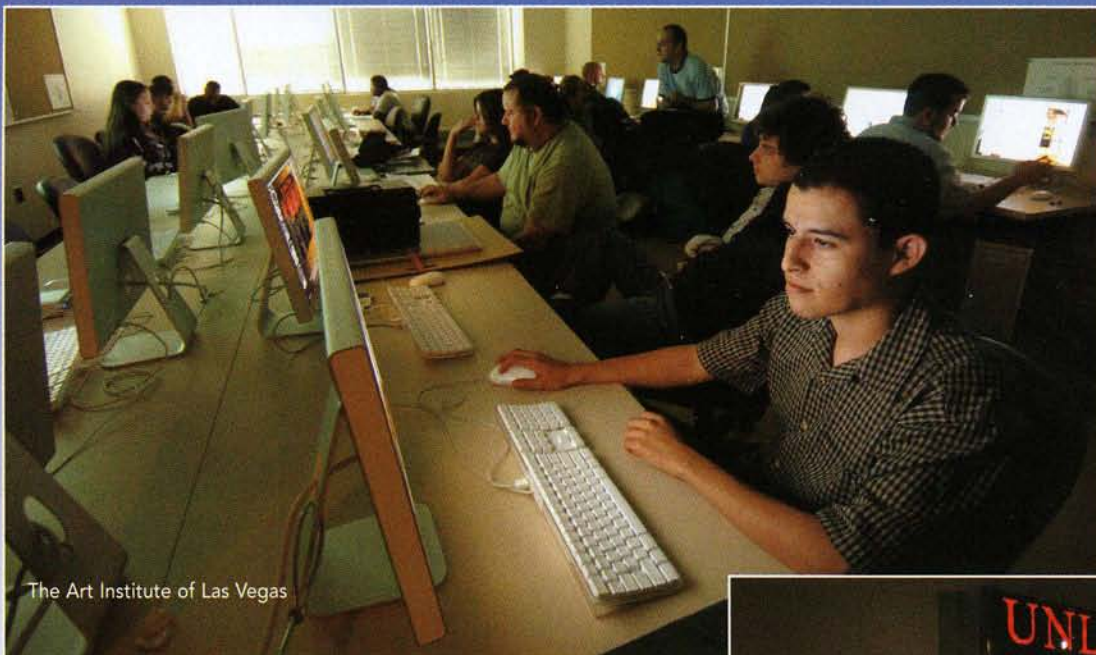
Footing the Bill

Another avenue for continuing education that does not involve crunching your finances is the federal Pell Grant. Students

with family incomes up to \$50,000 may be eligible for this program. Funded by the United States Department of Education, this is free, (yes, let’s say it again), absolutely free money. You are not required to repay this award. There is no charge to apply for a Pell Grant, (FAFSA application) and eligibility is based on the family’s financial situation, family size and whether the student is attending school full- or part-time. The maximum amount for July 1, 2007, to June 30, 2008, is \$4,310. The limit is likely to change each “award year” based on government funding. The Pell Grant may be used at any accredited school you choose to attend. College financial aid administrators can provide an application and tell you whether the institution and its programs are eligible for the federal Pell Grant Program, or you can call the Federal Student Aid Information Center, toll-free at 800-433-3243.

This brings us to actual student loans, a form of financial aid that must be repaid, with interest. Don’t confuse educational borrowing, which includes an actual promissory note outlining the terms of repayment, with grants and scholarships. The array of student loans offers a vast spectrum of choice. For the casino/hospitality employee trying to acquire the skills or certificates that will help you get ahead, the “continuing education” loan programs are designed especially for you. The Education Resource Institute is the most experienced and largest guarantor of private student loans in the nation.

Continuing education loans through TERI has an annual limit up to \$15,000, aggregates maximumly of \$30,000, and a loan minimum of \$1,000. You may take up to 20 years to repay with a monthly



The Art Institute of Las Vegas

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payment as low as \$25. Banks participating in the TERI program can be found online at www.teri.org.

The University of Nevada-Las Vegas offers more than \$70 million each year to students who apply for scholarships, grants, student loans, part-time work or veteran's benefits. These funds come from federal, state and private sources. Financial assistance can be used to help cover the costs of registration, books, fees, tuition and study abroad. To register online go to <http://financialaid.unlv.edu>, or you may call the Financial Aid Office to schedule an appointment at 702-895-4324.

The College of Southern Nevada offers scholarships and aid opportunities for families of all income levels. Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid is the first step in the application process to determine your eligibility. The FAFSA becomes available on January 1 of each year and should be completed at least six months prior to the start of the semester to allow for verification and processing of your financial aid file. Contact the Student Financial Services Office at CSN by calling 702-651-4047 or log onto their website at www.csn.edu.

So now that we have finances in order, what's next? For those of you in the Valley who have chosen the gaming/hospitality industry as a career, you are certainly in the right place. Whether your opting to continue your education or start from the beginning, your choices of education venues here in Las Vegas are stellar.

School Ties

The Culinary Institute of Las Vegas, a division of the Art Institute of Las Vegas, consists of approximately 45,000 square feet of

classroom, computer lab, library, professional skill's kitchens and a dining lab. Opus Too, an upscale dining experience, is managed and operated by the students, allowing them to apply the culinary artistry they have gathered over the course of their studies in a live restaurant environment. AILV is licensed by the Nevada Commission on Post Secondary Education, and accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology. Financial aid through scholarships, grants and student loans is available making this a top choice for those wishing to make the art of food your career of choice. Located at 2350 Corporate Circle in Henderson, you may call 800-833-2678 or log onto www.artinstutes.edu/lasvegas/culinary/.

With Las Vegas now a culinary leader in the world, a career in the culinary arts is a safe bet to ensure long-term employability. The Culinary Institute offers a number of programs, including diplomas in cooking, baking and pastry; associate degrees in baking and pastry, and culinary arts; and a bachelor's of science in culinary management.

The International School of Hospitality is uniquely structured offering seldom-found courses in the hospitality industry. Designed with classroom and online programs, TISOH operates in conjunction with the Hospitality Outreach Services Division of UNLV's William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration. All students who successfully complete their desired course will receive



UNLV's gaming lab

TISOH/UNLV certification. Timothy Lam, school director says, "We believe that adult education must be practical and include networking opportunities designed to provide, not just a foundation of knowledge, but also the confidence to enter and succeed in a chosen field." You can reach Lam at 702-505-4878, or visit the the school online at www.tisoh.com.

Classroom instruction covers the following subjects:

- Conference Management and Event Planning, a 12-week course with fall classed starting September 8, 2007; classes are held Mondays and Wednesdays from 6 p.m.-9 p.m.
- Nightlife Operations, a 14-week



The Culinary Institute of Las Vegas

The Crescent School of Gaming and Bartending is far from being a newcomer to educating students in the hospitality field. Established in 1983 in New Orleans, this school has expanded to

Accredited by the U.S. Department of Education, and the Council for Continuing Education and Training, the Crescent School works with students who are eligible for financial assistance through all available resources. Lifetime membership provides the convenience of returning to brush up on skills and participate in the placement program for all graduates. Log onto www.crescentschools.com or call 702-458-9910.

A new class begins every Monday, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., or evenings from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Become an expert at the game of craps, or learn the art of mixing international cocktails by checking into these classes:

- Two-Game Dealing Course, 336 hours (358 hours with Craps)
- Comprehensive Dealing Course, 750 hours
- Bartending Program, 45 hours
- Beverage Management, 12 weeks

For those of you looking to pursue education on campus of UNLV, www.unlv.edu, or the College of Southern Nevada, www.csn.edu, it is not too early to start thinking about the fall 2008 semester. Fall schedules and registration dates will be available in April. According to Dave Morgan, director of marketing for CSN, last minute scholars still have until September 7 to register, (with dean's approval) for the fall 2007 semester. UNLV fall registration closed on August 31, but if you're looking to plan ahead, most of the courses offered in 2007 will be on the class schedule for fall of 2008. Don't rule out summer sessions for both of these colleges.

At UNLV and CSN, the variety of courses you will find to further your education in the hospitality industry is beyond outstanding. From Electronic Engineering Technology emphasizing slot repair to proficiency in dealing and supervising table games, CSN is a worthy recipient of your education funds. Study UNLV's prestigious International Gaming Institute, and look for internships abroad with the 2006 opening of its new campus in Singapore.

Whatever options you may choose to further your career through education, it's just a good solid plan for your occupational future to do so. Benjamin Franklin is quoted as saying, "An investment in knowledge always gives a good return." Such a wise man, this Mr. Franklin. Wouldn't you agree?

Sharon Denning is a former employee of the MGM Grand Hotel where she worked in the table game's department for more than 12 years. She is now a freelance journalist residing in the Mountain Community of Shingletown, in Northern California.

course starting September 11; classes are held Tuesdays from 6 p.m.-9 p.m.

- Hospitality Leadership and Supervision, a 10-week course, begins September 13, with classes held Thursdays from 6 p.m.-9 p.m.

- Wedding Coordination and Design, a 10-week course, starting September 10, with classes on Mondays and Wednesdays from 6 p.m.-9 p.m.

- The Art of Concierge, a 10-week course, begins September 11. Classes are held Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6 p.m.-8 p.m.



four different locations nationwide, including Las Vegas, which opened in 1993.

According to owner Ricky Richard, "We are the only accredited school in the country offering courses in bartending and gaming."

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