

**Florida Atlantic University  
Hospitality and Tourism Management Program  
Academic Program Review  
April 7-9, 2021**

**Review Team:**

**Dr. Debby Cannon (Georgia State University)  
Dr. Srikanth Beldona (University of Delaware)  
Dr. Jesse Saginor (Florida Atlantic University)**

**Committee Process:**

This report provides the findings of the review team, Dr. Debby Cannon, Dr. Srikanth Beldona, and Dr. Jesse Saginor, on the academic program review of FAU's Hospitality and Tourism Management Program. The findings are based on a review of the Program's self-study document, web materials, and meetings with relevant stakeholders virtually via Zoom over April 7-9, 2021. The virtual interviews included meetings with students, faculty, administration, alumni, and industry executives. Beyond the undergraduate students we met with during the virtual site visit, we met separately with non-tenure track and adjunct faculty, assistant professors, and the sole associate professor. In addition to these group meetings, the review team met with the following individuals separately during the site visit:

In the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program:

Dr. Peter Ricci, Program Director

In the College of Business:

Dr. Daniel Gropper, Dean

Dr. Paul Hart, Associate Dean

Dr. Siri Terjesen, Associate Dean

Dr. Marc Rhorer, Assistant Dean

Dr. Russ Ivy, Senior Associate Provost

Dr. Ed Pratt, Dean of Undergraduate Studies

Dr. Karin Scarpinato, Senior Associate Vice President for Research

Each individual meeting lasted for 30-60 minutes and covered a wide range of topics included in this program review report.

## **Department Overview**

The department consists of three tenured/tenure-track professors, four instructors, two adjunct instructors, and the director of the program. The tenured/tenure track lines include one associate professor and two assistant professors. With respect to diversity, the faculty is particularly well represented for its small size based on several different aspects of diversity. As mentioned in the report, one area for future improvement in faculty diversity is based on gender, with the program focused on addressing this gap via adjuncts given the lack of additional faculty lines in the near future. Student enrollments since the last program review range from 88 to 110. The program offers a Bachelor of Business Administration of Hospitality and Tourism Management, an Online Bachelor of Business Administration of Hospitality and Tourism Management, and minor in Hospitality and Tourism Management. Additionally, there are six undergraduate-level certificates: two executive education certificates (Hospitality and Tourism Management; Meetings and Events Management) and four undergraduate certificates (Hospitality and Tourism Management; Club Management; Casino and Gaming Industry Management; Meetings and Events Management). At the graduate level, there is an MBA in Hospitality and Tourism Management as well as a certificate in Hospitality and Tourism Management.

## **Departmental Strengths**

### **1. Program and Departmental Leadership**

A predominant and consistent strength heard in all meetings including both internal and external stakeholders was the strong and positive leadership of Dr. Peter Ricci, Director of the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program and Clinical Associate Professor. Dr. Ricci has had a central role in establishing a program with an excellent reputation. He has played an integral part in recruiting outstanding faculty, engaging and mentoring students, developing widespread and loyal industry relationships including alumni and others and building administrative support throughout the College and University. The review committee commends Dr. Ricci for his positive and inspirational leadership that has been fundamental to the building and expanding of an exceptionally well-run program known for excellence, innovation and support of current and future industry needs.

The Hospitality and Tourism Management Program is organizationally located in the Marketing department. The support of the Chair of the Marketing Department, Dr. Cheryl Burke Jarvis, has been important to Hospitality and Tourism since her arrival to FAU approximately three years ago. A respectful and supportive partnership is evident between Drs. Burke Jarvis and Ricci which has administratively been important and has expanded to faculty collaboration in research endeavors between Marketing and Hospitality/Tourism as well as with faculty from other business disciplines. These collaborations have resulted in several scholarly works in top tier publications.

### **2. Departmental Faculty**

The Hospitality and Tourism Management Program (HTMP) has a superb group of faculty consisting of four faculty at the rank of Instructor, two Assistant Professors, one Associate Professor (with tenure) and several adjunct faculty members. The review committee met with all non-tenure track, tenure-track and tenured faculty as well as one adjunct faculty member. All faculty are commended on both their productivity and quality of work. "Student Perceptions of Teaching" show HTMP faculty out-

performing over the last eight years as compared to faculty from marketing, the overall College of Business and the entire University.

The non-tenure track faculty typically have a 4-4 teaching load. In addition to teaching, their service activities are extensive including membership in numerous hospitality professional associations. In several cases, faculty hold leadership positions in these associations as board members and committee chairs. Tenure-track faculty (two faculty) and tenured faculty (one faculty) have 2-2 teaching loads warranted on research productivity. Research areas are clearly identifiable, and the scholarly work of Hospitality and Tourism faculty is making significant contributions to discipline specializations. Service activities for all faculty are also focused on College, University governance (i.e. Faculty Senate) and academic leadership (i.e. journal editors). All faculty have a minimum of two and as many as six college or university committees on which they serve.

All faculty are teaching courses that are synchronous with their backgrounds – both academic and industry-based – and faculty continually work to stay updated with the dynamic field of hospitality and tourism through a variety of approaches: their own research, attendance at academic and industry conferences (virtual for this past year); active involvement with industry professional associations; regular interaction with industry partners of the program; as well as regularly reading industry and academic and trade publications.

According to the College, the Hospitality and Tourism Program supports requirements for AACSB accreditation and contributes to the College's success in reaccreditation. Non-tenure track faculty are active in research with one instructor being classified as scholarly academic (SA) for AACSB accreditation purposes. Two additional instructors are classified as instructional practitioners (IP) with one holding practice academic (PA) status. All other faculty (Ricci, Bilgihan, Park and Zhang) are classified as scholarly academic (SA). In the last program review (2007-2013), the program reviewers established a goal of publications in 30 peer-reviewed journals. For 2014-2020, the HTMP faculty exceeded 100 peer-review articles showing impressive and significant research productivity.

The review committee was impressed with the collegiality of the faculty and the mutual support and respect of NTT faculty for TT faculty and vice versa. All faculty are clearly passionate about their roles as educators. They communicate well and commented on the regular and effective communication from Dr. Ricci particularly over the past year of working remotely during COVID. Faculty awards include an extensive list of accolades for teaching, service and scholarly activity from the College, University and professional associations.

It should also be noted that faculty commented specifically on what attracted them to FAU. Dr. Ricci's outreach to find extraordinary talent was very evident along with their attraction to a program known for quality results with a positive and engaging work environment. At present, there is a sufficient number of faculty with no faculty lines open or requested.

### **3. Student Quality**

Industry representatives who recruit at FAU described Hospitality and Tourism Management majors as being career-minded and highly motivated even throughout the past difficult year with COVID and delivery modality largely being virtual. The industry representatives cited students' strong business backgrounds as providing a competitive advantage in the job market because of the relevancy to business

operations. They also noted that FAU students have a “hunger” to succeed and are impressive communicators. For one large luxury private club, the comment was that students “understand the Boca world” equating to the understanding of high quality standards.

Most students combine work and school and it was indicated that course scheduling allows for this combination with no hardships created with the 1000 work hour requirement for majors and 500 work hour requirement for minors. There is a variety of career options upon graduation with most graduates working in hotels but other options existing with Expedia, private clubs, senior living and retail.

There were no major bottlenecks or roadblocks to student success that were identified other than some of the degree requirements in math and other quantitative areas that will be addressed under curricular opportunities.

#### **4. Curriculum and Program Enrollment**

There are clear assessment measures in place in evaluating assurance of learning for the Hospitality and Tourism major. These are tied to specific course outcomes with one faculty member overseeing the collection and analysis of relevant data. Faculty meet for an annual retreat to comprehensively review curricular issues, the need for revisions and new courses and expanded teaching techniques.

The curricular requirements for Hospitality and Tourism Management majors include a representative selection of courses. In the BBA program, required courses in the major total 21 hours (7 courses). This small number will be addressed in the “Opportunities/Weaknesses” section.

Credit hour generation has shown growth over the last seven years due to several for-credit certificates as well as having a minor in hospitality and tourism. The number of majors in hospitality and tourism has remained relatively constant for the same time period ranging from 90 to 135. While the funding model of FAU is based primarily on credit hours, increasing the number of majors is always a priority in creating a robust pipeline for industry talent. It is expected that the development of a BS in Hospitality and Tourism will contribute to an increase in the number of majors.

The review committee was impressed with the Hospitality and Tourism program initiating an online industry-based certificate program shortly after the pandemic hit. The certificate program was extraordinarily well-received and generated significant donations even though it was offered at no charge.

#### **5. Industry Relationships/Partnerships**

One of the strongest areas of the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program is the quantity and quality of its industry partnerships. While there is no formal Advisory Board for the Hospitality and Tourism Program, industry representatives interviewed felt they had been “tapped” for such positions without the formal structure of a Board (which will be addressed in “Opportunities.”)

A creative approach developed by Dr. Ricci has expanded industry involvement and created a revenue stream. The *Employer Partner Program* involves professional videos created for participating companies that are used for recruiting FAU hospitality and tourism students resulting in “modest donations.”

## Areas of Potential

Two particular areas were noted by the review committee as having significant potential:

1. The strategic plan for FAU delineates four “pillars” which are “areas of focus” that will “guide institutional goals and strategic actions.” One of these pillars, “Healthy Aging,” has the potential to directly relate to Hospitality and Tourism Management involving the connection between “Health and Wellness” and senior living developments many of which include club facilities for residents. Increasingly, senior living establishments, particularly in the luxury segment, are incorporating business and service models of hospitality, recreation and fitness. The Health Administration program and programs at the College of Nursing and College of Medicine can be potentially explored to create synergies here that might benefit the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program.
2. It was indicated in the interview with FAU’s Executive Associate Vice President of Research that opportunities for international collaborations could involve the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program working with SBCD’s business development efforts particularly in Colombia and Chile, South America. On-site certificate programs in hospitality may be a deliverable in running business incubators to train managers for entrepreneurial hospitality and tourism start-ups.

## Weaknesses/Opportunities:

1. Throughout the review period, there were countless comments praising the work of Dr. Peter Ricci and, simultaneously, questioning how he does all he accomplishes. The review committee agrees that Dr. Ricci is over-extended. The need for a Program Coordinator is clear especially if this position could be involved in the more repetitive duties such as weekly job opening updates and routine communication to industry partners as well as to students. This would allow Dr. Ricci to be involved in the development of new, creative initiatives further defining and differentiating the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program.
2. There has been significant deliberation about adding a Bachelor of Science degree option in Hospitality and Tourism Management to the existing BBA degree. The review committee agrees that all indications support this addition. The BBA degree requires completion of Calculus as well as other quantitative courses in which students “stumble.” These difficulties have resulted in students changing their majors to the less-rigorous *Bachelor of General Studies (BGS)* often minoring in hospitality. A further complication is this detour often prolonging graduation beyond six years. The addition of a BS degree would also allow articulation agreements to be created with community and two-year colleges creating pipelines for additional hospitality majors. The BS degree would also create openings for more hospitality-specific courses with fewer required business courses. The goal would be, therefore, to expand beyond the current 21 credit hours in hospitality courses to 36 or more hours which is typical for hospitality programs not located in colleges of business.

3. While the current Hospitality and Tourism Management curriculum is strong, the addition of more structured analytical course content would be advantageous in addressing industry needs and enhancing marketability of students and graduates. Specifically, adding the Certification of Hospitality Industry Analytics (CHIA) is recommended. CHIA is administered by a major industry professional association, the American Hotel and Lodging Association, in partnership with the International Council of Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education (ICHRIE) and Smith Travel Research (STR). On the graduate level, the Certification of Advanced Hospitality and Tourism Analytics (CAHTA) is available and recommended.
4. The Hospitality and Tourism Management Program has great industry support. Based on feedback from several of the industry representatives interviewed, the establishment of an Industry Advisory Board should be considered. Getting feedback from numerous industry supporters of the program would be recommended as well as talking with other hospitality programs with successful Industry Boards to understand the intricacies of Board formation and operations.
5. It is recommended that the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program consider initiating discussion of a faculty development plan that may eventually be supportive of a structured succession plan. There is tremendous potential for expansion and growth of the program eventually requiring leadership support beyond the addition of one program coordinator position. Faculty are engaged and have the potential to eventually expand into leadership roles (such as graduate program coordinator; executive education coordinator; international program coordinator) that may be involved with growth and expansion. Faculty are eager to continue learning and gaining more information on the department, college and university. For example, faculty mentioned wanting to gain more knowledge of online teaching modalities. (The rush during the pandemic to go online, understandably, did not allow sufficient time for in-depth learning.) They also would like to better understand student demographics and recruitment strategies to better support growth potential.

A related item that was strongly voiced with the need of faculty, particularly research-active tenure-track faculty was to have Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs). This support is not currently available because there are no GRAs with the MBA program. Perhaps GRAs can be identified in other programs with cross-disciplinary interests in the research being done in hospitality and tourism management.

6. Although a university “guideline” and most likely an item out of the program’s control, there was considerable concern voiced to the review committee about the policy of canceling classes with enrollment under 22 students. The concern from faculty for the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program was, for a smaller program, this threshold may not always be met and canceling courses would result in delays in students graduating on-time.

## Answers to Questions for Review Committee:

The academic program review report listed specific questions for the program review committee that are addressed in this section. These questions are italicized below followed by the committee's response.

- 1. What are the committee's thoughts on the BBA versus the BA/BS degrees? Do you agree with our faculty members and Program Director that both options would be beneficial to possibly enhance future enrollments?***

As noted in #2 under "Weaknesses," it is recommended that an option to the BBA degree be evaluated with the BS degree having the potential to address several immediate and long-term needs of the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program.

- 2. Should we move toward an MS degree or continue with a smaller number of students enrolled in an MBA with specialization in Hospitality and Tourism Management?***

***We hear different things from different stakeholders. It appears that the typical hospitality and tourism employee may not possess prior business skills and is often frightened to enter an MBA program due to its heavy reliance upon quantitative courses. Yet, the business model of the future would indicate that an MBA could be preferable. We would appreciate your feedback on this item.***

The review committee discussed pros and cons of different graduate options. Many hospitality programs are evaluating this same topic across the nation. Establishing a graduate program can be expensive with additional faculty and facilities required. One of the key questions in this deliberation concerns industry demand for individuals with graduate hospitality degrees. In conjunction with this question is the willingness of industry to offer higher-paid salaries for individuals with graduate degrees.

A comprehensive analysis of the demand for individuals with graduate degrees in the markets served by FAU in hospitality and tourism (hotels, resorts, private clubs, cruise lines, etc.) would be recommended.

Specific questions to address may include:

- What is your competition? What other programs are offering graduate hospitality and tourism management programs? This external scan should not be solely focused on Florida but graduate programs in this discipline nationwide? What types of programs are experiencing decent enrollment and strong job placement (online, in-person, hybrid; MS, MBA and others)? What are the program lengths and the pricing structure?
- Are there corporate offices or headquarters in the area that would support a graduate program (committing to sponsoring a specified number) and what would be preferred – the MBA or MS?
- To what extent do HTMP BBA graduates continue their education, in what types of programs and where?

- What is the market for international students and does one (MBA or MS) have a greater chance of attracting international applicants?
- If students are planning to use the Master's degree as a bridge to a PhD program, which (MBA or MS) is more likely to be accepted by doctorate programs in hospitality or related fields?

**3. *What are your opinions on striving to add a track to the Executive PhD Program? Our current sentiment is that a potential pool exists among regional hospitality and tourism experts who may desire future instructor or consulting roles. This group would most likely not have the desire or time to pursue a traditional research-intensive PhD. Do you think there might be a market for this group and would you pursue it?***

Research of programs offering the executive doctorate degree and placement of their graduates is recommended. If not research-intensive, the program will most likely not be at the PhD level but may be an EDB (Executive Doctorate in Business.) If such a program is planned for the College of Business, the opportunity for a Hospitality and Tourism tract may be readily available and a logical expansion.

A common problem with a non-research based program at this level is limited career options. While perhaps appropriate for consulting and teaching in two-year community and technical schools, the EDB type of degree is typically not accepted at major universities and colleges for full-time faculty positions especially at the tenure-track level. This limitation may, therefore, restrict interest in the program and minimize enrollment.

**4. *What are the committee's thoughts and recommendations on having a specific role for Internship & Job Placement or as a Program Coordinator? Please share comparisons with other programs.***

As noted in #1 under "Weaknesses," the committee strongly recommends having a Program Coordinator. Including in the job description, roles related to "Internships and Job Placement" seems needed and logical. Using the job title, "Program Coordinator," may give more flexibility in extending the scope and depth of the position as needed.

**5. *What are our Program's two biggest strengths and two biggest weaknesses in the eyes of the committee? And, what suggestions do you have on these four items?***

The review committee felt program leadership and faculty were the two biggest strengths of the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program. Regarding suggestions, these two major strengths are reciprocal: Talented, strong faculty want great leadership and great leadership will be supported by a strong and talented team. The importance of continued open and positive communication and offering a positive, stimulating work environment is important. For program leadership, continuing to be a strong advocate for each faculty member is crucial.



The two biggest weaknesses relate to supporting the biggest strengths:

- 1) Hire a Program Coordinator to support the Director of the Program; and
- 2) Determine the Program's direction with the addition of a BS program.

With both significant moves for the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program, getting faculty input and involvement will be important (as related to the two biggest strengths.)

**6. *What are your best practices and advice for improvement when it comes to hiring diverse faculty members at your institutions? Do you have any current initiatives or training as it relates to expanding diversity, examining unconscious bias, or related?***

The Hospitality and Tourism Management Program has a significant advantage in having an impressive reputation with outstanding "ambassadors" of the program in its leadership, faculty and industry partners. Utilizing these extraordinary relationship-building skills in outreach activities to doctorate programs around the country (and internationally) would be recommended in expanding diversity among incoming faculty. Because the pipeline for PhDs is not robust and diversity is not multi-dimensional in many of the doctorate programs, recruiting of faculty may have to extend to other disciplines who have hospitality connections either through areas of research and/or industry work experience.

**7. *What are the thoughts of the committee specific to the Covid-19 pandemic? This would include not only your near- and long-term thoughts for hospitality and tourism enrollments; but, further, overall university structure, course modality distribution, and any other comments you feel are relevant.***

The hospitality and tourism industry will recover from the Covid-19 pandemic and there are clear signs, particularly with vaccine distribution, that recovery has begun. The industry has changed with a heightened focus on cleanliness and sanitation, technology and analytics. Some of these changes had already begun before the pandemic with the momentum increasing drastically over the last year. The challenge for hospitality education will be in developing future leaders who are techno-savvy, have great analytical abilities and understand health and wellness processes who are also passionate about quality service, have keen interpersonal and communication skills and can demonstrate agility in problem-solving and decision-making as never before expected in our industry.

## Recommendations

1. Recruit and hire a Program Director for the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program.
2. Propose and gain approval for the B.S. degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management. As this degree nears approval stages, develop a strong marketing program for heightened student recruitment and endorsement of the Program's existing stellar reputation.
3. Review courses, undergraduate and graduate, for the ways to expand analytical content and particularly for students to gain certification opportunities as in the Certification of Hospitality Industry Analytics (CHIA) and the Certification in Advanced Hospitality and Tourism Analytics (CAHTA). Smith Travel Research (STR) and their SHARE Center for Educators are resources.
4. Evaluate the pros and cons of establishing a Hospitality and Tourism Management Advisory Board. It is recommended to expand the inquiries to current industry supporters to get their feedback as well as explore the topic with hospitality academic programs who have such Boards that operate effectively.
5. Create strong external awareness opportunities in publicizing the many strengths of the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program. These efforts will support growth in enrollment, fundraising and have the potential for numerous other benefits. There are many positive "stories" to be told from this program – faculty accomplishments, research, alumni successes, student successes, supporting the state's biggest economic driver - and this type of external awareness is a form of individual as well as programmatic recognition that attracts positive engagement.
6. The review committee was clearly impressed with the program's leadership and faculty. Consider a plan to continue to support and engage faculty. The review committee is not assuming knowledge of what is needed by the faculty but wants to underscore the importance, as has been done to date, of strong retention measures for a very quality-driven, productive faculty (NTT and TT.)
7. Research graduate options in hospitality and tourism management in evaluating similar programs and indicators of need that could substantiate investment in program expansion.

## Summary Statement:

The review committee was extremely honored to visit with members of the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program along with representatives from the College of Business, Florida Atlantic University, students, alumni and industry partners. The support of this program was evident on all levels and the cooperation and assistance provided to the review committee made the virtual visit productive and, we hope, helpful.