

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Wyndham Summit Provides Real World Experience To UVI Hospitality Students

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ST. THOMAS -- Senior executives from Wyndham Vacation Ownership (WVO) hosted the “Unleash the Power of Your Hospitality Career” panel presentation this fall for 65 students and guests of the University of the Virgin Islands Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) program at Chase Auditorium on the St. Thomas Campus, the institution of higher learning announced this afternoon.

The panel was international, with participants originally from Brazil, Romania, Morocco, Puerto Rico, and the United States mainland. All of the speakers placed special emphasis on the need to be flexible, willing to take risks, sacrifice for career advancement, and above all to pitch in as a team member. They also discussed the

transition from being a hospitality student in a classroom, which provides a leg up on one's career, to actual on-the-job operations.

Prior to the presentation, they awarded two \$10,000 scholarships to UVI HTM students K'nai Gumbs and Esther Walters, both first-time freshmen who started in the Fall of 2016.

“Wyndham was one of our earliest partners and has continued to support us by providing both scholarships and internship opportunities for our students who need to learn real-world skills,” said Tamara Lang, director of UVI's HTM program. “Consistency is the lifeline of any academic program. We need partners like Wyndham to give our Hospitality and Tourism Management degree program the sustainability and continuity that makes it an asset to the territory and beyond.”

“A career doesn't just happen,” said Panelist Youssef Ouahi. “It comes with a price. Your degree is the platform that will sustain you as you learn on the job.”

Another panelist, Richard Wieczerszak, vice president of sales and marketing for the Caribbean, advised the students to “act as if you already have your next job.”

WVO's three St. Thomas locations were represented by their managers, Alex Tamas of Margaritaville, Jose Carvalho of Bluebeard's Beach Club, and Ivan Miralta of Elysian – all of whom took the opportunity to pass along nuggets of hard-earned wisdom.

“Every single sacrifice I've made for my career has paid off – not always right then, but in time,” said Tamas.

“How you roll up your sleeves and take care of problems is going to make or break your career,” said Ivan Miralta.

Karen Case, WVO's senior vice president for Human Resources, opened and closed the panel. “When you have an engaged workforce you'll have happy customers,” said Case. “Becoming a change agent is not a skill but an attitude and a disposition.”

WVO has provided scholarships for UVI students in the HTM program for the past four years. In addition, the three local properties provide internships for HTM students and actively recruit UVI students for staff positions at the nearby resorts.