

HTM Partnerships With High Schools: A Case Study for How Faculty Can Help Increase Enrollment

Damien L. Duchamp, Ed.D

Abstract

The role of faculty is not just to teach in their respective programs, but also to contribute to the enrollment management strategy for the institution. Specific to hospitality and tourism management (HTM) programs, this article focuses on strategies developed for colleges in urban environments to develop partnerships with local high schools. While the focus is HTM, the methods can be applied to other academic disciplines.

Keywords: hospitality, tourism, high schools, CTE, college readiness, articulation, MOU, enrollment management, admissions

Introduction

The following is intended to be a roadmap for engaging high school partners as a 2-year or 4-year hospitality and tourism (HTM) program. That being said, conceivably this could be applied to most any other academic program. The assumption made is that faculty are in a position to lead in certain areas, even if the leadership of the unit is technically responsible for doing so. While politically there are clearly barriers to faculty just going out to do some of the things that are suggested in this article, there should be room for initiative. The limitations of this article is that it is one faculty member's experience in one urban environment as part of the St. Joseph's College (SJC) faculty.

Role of Faculty

The role of a faculty member is defined not just by the institution, but also by the individual. You don't have to be the chair of the department to do good things for your institution. You don't have to have a title to lead. An adjunct lecturer could be just as capable and effective at building relationships with high schools as the dean. The perspective in this article is that a faculty member can do many things to help their program. Understandably they should make sure not to violate any policies or procedures, and to seek permission where possible. It is assumed that in most instances they will get the green light if it is seen as a step in the right direction. At times this article will speak to a regular faculty member, and at others to someone given the role of leading or building a program. It is up to the reader to distinguish between both.

First Contact

When you first arrive on campus, you will either step into existing relationships or be in a position to start brand new ones. If you are lucky you will have high school articulation agreements or MOUs (memorandum of understanding) in place, or perhaps a contractual relationship based on strategic partnerships by your institution. In order to foster interaction and create opportunities for collaboration, it is important to seek out meetings where you can meet high school teachers and administrators. There should be open meetings with the local DOE (department of education) related to CTE (career and technical education) or college readiness programs. This is where you will find a plethora of allies. There may also be dedicated commission meetings for hospitality and tourism. If within the first couple of weeks of your first semester you do not receive an invitation, you may need to invite yourself. Track down the people who work for local government in this area and get on their mailing list. Another strategy is to use your existing network of faculty and staff to identify teachers at schools. Even if they don't teach hospitality and tourism, they can put you in contact with the teachers that do. An added strategy is to reach out to guidance counselors and administrators. They may be tougher to access, but they can get you the answers you need. From an industry perspective, you may also be able to reach out to the local CVB (convention and visitors bureau) or local chamber of commerce. They could have a committee tied to education, and many have a tourism and hospitality committee.

Mutual Benefit

The goal should be to get yourself as close as possible to teachers, guidance counselors, and leadership of high schools. One of the first steps is to establish what resources you have that are of interest to the high schools. You also want to know what level of relationship you may have with certain schools based on admissions and enrollment management. Are there historic feeder schools? Are there schools that come on campus often with other departments? Ultimately you want to figure out how to best use your time. First and foremost you have to recognize the role of a teacher or administrator at the high school level. They generally do not have the resources or time to create the experiences that you can create with ease. The work necessary to put on these programs and create this engagement in this article is being simplified, however it is clear that college faculty generally have greater bandwidth than the average high school teacher or administrator.

Line of Sight

One of the immediate reactions you may see from faculty is the notion that recruitment is not their responsibility. I would argue that recruitment is everyone's responsibility at a college or university. In a 2006 study of such partnerships, the authors explained that “our success is built upon an infrastructure which is supported by the entire university structure” (James et al., 2006). I believe in the concept of “line of sight,” suggesting that everyone from your facilities staff to the president can impact a potential student. The level of engagement with recruitment is a different matter. Some enrollment management teams don't want faculty involved in recruitment. Some faculty are very happy with the number of

students that they have. However if your numbers are decreasing then perhaps it would be a good idea to help admissions. My goal is to complement and compliment the work that admissions does, not just by supporting their strategies but doing things they can't or shouldn't. One actionable item is to meet with them twice a year so that they have talking points and are aware of your programming. It's important to use the word “complement” when talking about admissions. As faculty we are responsible for equipping the admissions team with what they need to best represent the program. We also need to partner when there is low-hanging fruit at a specific high school. The admissions team may not be able to attend every college fair that exists. That means at times we should be willing to attend on behalf of the institution. We may not need to share everything about every program, but we can provide brochures/contacts and certainly highlight ours.

College Readiness

Every program is 49% recruitment. You may ask what programs? Engaging high schools means giving them something to engage with. It's not just about doing the traditional things that they expect like college readiness programs and bridge classes (college courses for high school students). That being said, the schools that have hospitality, tourism, or culinary programs should be visiting your campus at least once a year. What this looks like is a critical mass of high school students spending three or four hours on campus in the spring or fall. During their visit they may attend a class, take a tour of campus, speak with admissions, meet financial aid representatives, and most importantly speak to existing students. The interaction with current students is vital so that they can ask questions they don't want to ask faculty or staff. You also want to make them feel special with signage (e.g. Welcome Grover Cleveland High School!) and gift bags if you have the budget. There are usually a few departments that keep items on hand for recruitment purposes, including career services, athletics, student life and of course admissions. Also make sure to feed them if they are visiting over the noon hour, or at least provide beverages.

Internships

Another avenue to explore is high school internships. You can be the conduit for internship sites that partner high schools can get connected to. NAF, DECA, and C-CAP all have internship programs, and if they don't have a site you can help them identify one. Another option is to host an intern on your campus. There are plenty of programs around the U.S. where students from high schools can be funded to work on your campus. High school interns can help create the programming for other high school students. It's a very good arrangement. Most of those students will want to become college students on your campus if you take good care of them. Junior interns are perhaps better than seniors, but remember that even if they don't come to you right away they can always transfer later. You want them to know that they have a home on your campus and in your department now or later.

HTM Programming

Beyond the standard programs, you want to pinpoint things that would attract and excite visiting students. Find out what's trending in the industry and build programming around it. Over 18 months you should be covering every corner of the industry outside of the classroom. This not only benefits potential students but also your current students who get to design and execute the events. From an HTM perspective, this means doing something related to hotels, restaurants, nightlife, cruise ships, event planning, airlines, travel and tourism, sports, recreation, and culinary. Gisele August-Washington, a teacher at Long Island City High School builds the programs offered by SJC into her academic calendar.

Airline Expo was a wonderful opportunity for my students to explore careers related to aviation and travel. My students were inspired by each speaker's message of following your dreams and finding an area that interest them, and making a career out of it. My students were delighted that the presenters were open and were excited to share their career experiences, and provide advice." (personal communication, May 2, 2019)

In the beginning, doing programs along these lines will take up a lot of your time. Once you get used to that pace, you can start to add additional events that are not specific to HTM. An example of this is programming related to interviewing, networking, technology, etiquette, and soft skills. This will allow you to attract students from programs outside of HTM. At full steam, your program should be hosting events for high schools every three weeks during the fall and spring semesters. This translates into six major programs throughout the year. A caution is that the high school calendar shifts a bit each year, so confirm dates will work for your partners. It's also helpful to gear programs for certain grades so that the same students aren't being recycled. It's hard for a high school teacher to justify bringing them over and over again.

At High Schools

There are many ways that you can interact with high schools. If they can't come to you, find an opportunity to go to them.

- *Advisory Boards:* Leading hospitality, tourism and culinary high schools have meetings 2-3 times per year with partners who influence their curriculum and improve experiences for their students. Another avenue for engagement is being willing to serve on these advisory boards for the high schools. This means being available for meetings each semester and other opportunities throughout the year. "The committee's (board) responsibilities include planning, coordinating, and carrying out partnership efforts" (Thorkildsen & Stein, 1996).
- *Special Events:* There are a number of events that require people from the outside. Examples include judging competitions, staffing cookouts, etc. Teachers in dedicated HTM programs generally need people from the outside for things like NOCTI where students are being tested.

- *College Fairs:* At least once a year high schools host a college fair. Some do it independently while others collaborate. If the school has a dedicated HTM program, you should be there alongside your admissions colleague.
- *Field Trips:* Once liability has been addressed on either side, find opportunities that high schools can piggyback on. The field trips are primarily for your students at the college, but by extending the invitation to high schools you are reinforcing the relationship. It's also a casual way for high school students to ask your college students questions during the trip.
- *Career Events:* There are a number of events that take place each year at a high school involving exposure to professionals. Some are conferences, some are career days, some are conferences. You can help by being there or bringing in people from your own network.

The more you interact with the high schools and their leadership, the more your program will be “front of mind.” Of course there are limitations to one’s efficacy. According to Thorkildsen and Stein, “while a strong leader is critical to a successful partnership, it is important to be aware of the effects such a leader may have on a partnership” (1996).

Partner Benefits

You want to make the high schools feel special. After you've established articulation agreements or partnerships, extend benefits that go along with that. A very basic benefit is no application fee, and a discount on bridge courses that are designed to give high school students college credit for a fraction of the normal price. One caveat is to make these courses 'portable,' and not just credits for your institution. We want the relationship to be authentic and not just transactional. For the teachers and administrators, think of what you can do for them from a social and professional development perspective. Socially, a gathering on your campus or in a central location can only improve the relationship. An example is to invite them to alumni and faculty gatherings that are open to friends of the institution. Professionally, just as faculty are often seeking promotions or tenure, teachers and administrators are also on a similar path. You can provide support in these areas by hosting programs just for them, writing letters of support, or collaborating with organizations that offer ‘PD’ training (professional development). An example is sponsoring membership for a teacher in CHRIE, the professional association for hospitality and tourism educators. According to Leticia Milan, a teacher at Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis High School - "The opportunities and events provided by SJC for our students to meet and interact with top industry professionals are not only fun but invaluable!" (personal communication, April 30, 2018).

Funding Sources

What about funding? If done correctly most of the big programs put on should not cost a lot of money, but for some bigger events there are three ways to pay for the overhead. One is through sponsorships, another is through partnerships, and the other is through your own department’s budgeting.

- Partnerships can be very effective, especially internally. If you collaborate with other departments you can create a pot of money to fund almost anything. Especially with HTM, there is so much overlap with other disciplines that you would be foolish not to partner often.
- Sponsorships are there if you're willing to make the ask. There are plenty of companies that would love to put money towards programming that improves the career readiness of students - especially in HTM. For example you can talk to restaurant and hotel groups and they will bring people or resources to your events. There are also plenty of brands that have money to support programs for young people.
- Your department should have money budgeted for events and activities. If they don't, you can submit proposals for the future. It is helpful if you can figure out a mechanism for collecting ticket fees, as this can go towards funding future programs or scholarships.

In most instances your cost for speakers should be zero to low. If you approach colleagues in the industry the right way they will gladly come on campus and speak for free. Now that doesn't mean you don't do something for them, it just means that you don't have to pay thousands of dollars to bring them in. Make sure to thank all of them many times over and always keep an eye out for them. They should receive at minimum a very nice thank you card (hand-written), signed by you and perhaps some of the students. An even better touch is a thank you package with college items and letters from the students. Just like we teach from the perspective of hospitality, a warm and authentic thank you goes a very long way. No matter what, partners in the industry appreciate the opportunity to scout talent for future employment and internships.

High School Realities

You have to meet high school teachers and administrators where they are at, and understand the daily challenges that they face. Because teachers are resource-strapped and have many people telling them what to do, they are grateful for "just add water" opportunities. According to Heather O'garro, AoHT Erasmus High School, "attending SJC events not only benefits my students, it gives me a chance to meet and interact with other teachers and professionals in a way I normally wouldn't have the opportunity to" (personal communication, April 28, 2019). Make the programming super easy for them to manage by providing all of the pieces they need. Recognize that they don't have access to the internet like we do on the college campus (many websites are blocked), which means that we can't just send them links to everything. They appreciate simple flyers and simple forms. If you are in a metropolitan area, there are also restrictions for public transportation as it relates to high school students. They cannot leave their school until a certain time if they are going to use the subway or bus. They may also have to leave campus by a certain time, so adjust as needed. If you have the resources then it is a great thing to be able to send them a bus. Another consideration is planning your event on their campus. A simple example of this is a panel discussion.

Specific Programs

So let's talk about examples of programs. *Art in a Bottle* is dedicated to the marketing and business behind beverage and condiment brands. *Not So Scary Foods* is all about the future of food; plant-based, insects, tofu, etc. *Airline Expo* is about careers in the aviation and travel industry; from pilots and flight attendants to airport staff and travel writers. *HospiChallenge* is our hospitality olympics; challenges from FOH skills to sustainability case studies. *Interview360* is a combination of interview skills combined with networking and soft skill training. According to Ken Limbach, a colleague at John Dewey High School - "our students enjoyed the Interview360 event. They felt well-prepared for their summer internship interviews after practicing with industry professionals and receiving useful feedback" (personal communication, April 29, 2019). Lastly, *BlockVariable* is about cryptocurrencies and exploring the potential for blockchain technology. These are programs that were created specifically to; a) address areas that are underserved by most collegiate HTM programs, b) peak the interest of both high school teachers and students, c) give college students in HTM programs an outlet for event planning. While this case study is not about specific programs, more information about them can be found at Hospitalented.org.

Return On Investment (ROI)

You may be feeling anxious, thinking "how can I do even one of these programs? I'm too busy teaching my classes and advising my students." You're right, it's not easy. The bigger question is ROI - leadership will ask if this is worth the investment of time and resources. That is for each college and department to determine. There are many things that are done by colleges to stay "front of mind" that are not correlated with a specific outcome. Examples include athletics, student organizations, marketing campaigns, etc. Many things that are done are justified as best practices, but often they are just things that have been most done. There is research that will validate their use, but ultimately it's hard to pinpoint exactly why some students will choose the school they do. It may have nothing to do with what we put out there.

Data

When you are in a position to ask for resources you will often get the question "how do you know... That this will work? That students will enroll? That it won't be a waste of money?" That being said, it is helpful to establish early what your baseline is. Put together numbers for the previous three years using interest cards, admits and deposits for students from each high school you are working with. Document all interactions and deliverables from these high schools. You want to be able to demonstrate what you've accomplished each semester and each year. Unfortunately there is no direct correlation between the work that you do and the eventual enrollment of students. For the most part, you can only look at the potential that you have created. For some administrators this is enough to justify the commitment of resources and time by you and the program. If you can dig deeper and identify how a student came to the college, that would be great. In the fourth year of doing this kind of work you should be able to

recognize this that you have recruited to campus through your programming. They may not end up in your department but you can still take credit for them getting to campus.

Conclusion

Even if you do all of the things that are shared in this case study, the reality is that you will likely not see any increases in enrollment for several years. You cannot abandon the process too quickly, or else that investment will be wasted. It must be authentic too, not just transactional. There is also no guarantee that these strategies will work in your part of the world, and it is possible that the entities mentioned here do not exist where you are. Still, you have an opportunity to do more than you are doing currently. See where some of these ideas could be implemented and map out a path that works for you and your program. Remember that partnerships between institutions are based on relationships between people. Just as you have to invest time in relationships with friends, family and colleagues - you have to put time into relationships with partners.

Dr. Duchamp is department head for hospitality and tourism management at St. Joseph's College in Brooklyn, New York. He is the founder and executive director for Hospitalented, a global hospitality education NGO. Dr. Duchamp conducted his doctoral research in Ghana related to perceptions of the tourism industry. He is committed to developing a vibrant tourism ecosystem there, and is currently writing a book on the topic. In addition to his academic role and Hospitalented, Dr. Duchamp serves on the board for Travel Unity where he seeks to improve diversity, equity and inclusion issues in the travel sector. He is passionate about tourism entrepreneurship, technology and sustainability. Learn more at ProfDuchamp.com and Hospitalented.org

References

- James, L.E., Laatsch, S., Boss Bosse, M.J., Rider, R., Lee, T., & Anderson, C.J. (2006 йил Fall). Science Center Partnership: Outreach to Students and Teachers. *The Rural Educator*, 33-39.
- Thorkildsen, R., and Scott Stein, M.R. (1996). Fundamental characteristics of successful university-school partnerships. *The School Community Journal*, 6(2), 79- 92.