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From the Center

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# Synergies for HR in Hospitality

I am looking forward to March, not only because winter is nearly over here in the Northern Hemisphere, but because it means that we will attend the Annual National HR in Hospitality Conference and Exposition to be held March 16 to 19 at the Wynn Hotel in Las Vegas. This year's conference, the second of its kind, represents the culmination of a vision shared by the leaders of Cornell's Hotel School and its ILR School, as well as two prominent alumni. Before identifying these people and explaining the conference, a little background is necessary.

Cornell's School of Hotel Administration has for eighty-five years enjoyed the reputation as the world's preeminent hospitality management school. Similarly, Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations, now known as the ILR School, has been regarded as the best school of its kind since being founded in 1948. The germ for the idea of a cosponsored conference began in spring 2006 when the ILR School named Harry Katz as dean. Dean Katz built bridges between the two schools when he agreed to become a cosponsor of the Hotel School's Labor and Employment Law Roundtable and its Human Resource Roundtable. In July 2006, Michael Johnson became dean of the Hotel School. Around that

same time, ILR alumnus Bruce Raynor, president of Unite Here (the hospitality industry's largest union), and Ken Kahn, president of LRP Publications (a Center Partner that, in addition to its publications, develops and runs conferences on variety of topics), agreed to work with both the Hotel School and the ILR School to develop an HR in Hospitality Conference.

Universities are not, however, conference planners. With that in mind, Ken agreed to provide all the planning, logistical support, marketing, and all other tasks necessary to run a large conference. He then asked Deans Katz and Johnson to provide the content. With the help of Artie Nathan, an ILR graduate who opened the Wynn Hotel, and a number of ILR and Hotel School faculty, as well as numerous industry professionals, last year's First Annual National HR in Hospitality Conference and Exposition was a rousing success. More than five hundred people attended, and the reviews were outstanding. There was, however, one request. Participants wanted to "dig deeper" on certain topics and wanted true discussions. This year's conference features these types of sessions.

This year's conference will kick off with hot topics in Human Resources and Employment Law. ILR and

School of Hotel Administration faculty will provide an overview of topics including effective staffing strategies; safeguarding against sexual harassment and retaliation; demonstrating the value of HR; Federal Labor Standards Act–related developments at the federal, state, and local levels; HR data that drive business performance; and managing workplace privacy. Next, each faculty member, along with two industry leaders, will conduct a series of roundtables to discuss these issues with participants. The industry leaders who will participate in the roundtables and other sessions include such Center Partners as Joe Baumgarten and Bob Batterman from Proskauer, Rose; Gregg Gilman from Davis & Gilbert; and Jo-Anne Kruse from Travelport. In addition, lawyers and HR professionals from companies and law firms such as Hilton Hotels; Harrah's; Texas Wings; Shea, Stokes, Fox, Rothschild; Sysco; Club Corp.; Brinker International; and Loews Hotels and Resorts will be presenting or leading roundtables.

This year's conference also features separate tracks for restaurants, food service, and labor relations over two and one-half days. In addition, there is a preconference session

on alternative dispute resolution and the proper method for responding to EEOC and FLSA charges.

From the Center's point of view, it is an honor to be part of such a professional conference filled with exciting and informative content. From a personal point of view, as a faculty member at the School of Hotel Administration and an ILR School graduate, I am thankful for the efforts of Deans Johnson and Katz along with Ken Kahn and Bruce Raynor for making this great idea a reality.

One final note: in the last issue of the *CQ*, while discussing the history of the Center, I inadvertently failed to include the contributions of Professor Leo Renaghan, who was the Center's director from 1994 to 1998. During his tenure, Leo brought in nine partners, held the first Amedeo research competition, and awarded several research grants. I wish to apologize for this omission, thank Leo for all that he did in the continuing efforts of the Center, and make it clear that the Center continued to grow during Leo's tenure.

—David Sherwyn