

**Pueblo of Laguna Development Corporation and New Mexico State University  
Hospitality Internship Program  
Albuquerque, N.M.**

Recently, the Pueblo of Laguna Development Corporation, partnered with New Mexico State University's (Las Cruces) School of Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management to create a Hospitality Internship Program. Students took five classes over the course of a year and a half. "The classes, worth three credit hours each, were offered online," said NMSU Associate Professor Daren Bloomquist, who traveled from Las Cruces to Albuquerque every other weekend to meet one on one with his students. Lectures and exams were offered online in the learning lab created by the development corporation at Albuquerque's Route 66 Casino. The corporation funded everything from the lab to tuition to textbooks.

"These were not 'traditional' students," Bloomquist noted. "They ranged in age from their mid-20s to late 50s. They all were working full time, and many had family responsibilities. They worked hard, and I was impressed with their dedication." The course range was also impressive. Students completed studies in Introduction to Hospitality, Hospitality and Travel Marketing, Restaurant and Operations Management, Front Office Management, and Introduction to Tourism. A project at the end of each course gave the students the opportunity to apply what they had learned to real-life situations. The rigorous program started out with 29 interns and graduated 15 in April 2008.

Dr. Al Kozal of the Laguna Development Corporation was the in-house coordinator and go-between for the interns. "The program was outstanding and a springboard for the intern's careers," he said. "As a result of their involvement in the program, many of the interns were promoted immediately to management positions."

The development corporation stated in a graduation press release that the interns were "not only role models for the Pueblo of Laguna but a credit to the Laguna Development Corporation." If, as Anatole France once said, "Nine-tenths of education is encouragement," those seeking careers in the casino industry are receiving the encouragement they need with even more to come.

*Sabra Brown Steinsiek, daughter of an Aleutian mother, is a freelance writer and novelist based in Albuquerque. She can be reached through her Web site at [www.sabrasteinsiek.com](http://www.sabrasteinsiek.com).*

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