UF Disney Academic Exchange Program - Recap

The purpose of this program is to provide international students the opportunity to earn academic credit for courses in hospitality and tourism at the University of Florida as well as a paid six-month internship at Walt Disney World®. The students begin taking course online in May, come to the University of Florida in July, head to Disney in mid-July and complete their internship in Orlando, FL by mid-December.

This group of students were hand picked by the University of Florida and Walt Disney World representatives through an application and interview process. They represent the highest quality students at their institutions and we are proud to have them represent the Gator Nation at the happiest place on earth. The students are placed in various parks and hotels and work a wide range of roles including character performer, hospitality/front desk, and quick service food and beverage.

Dr. Greg Dunn and Ms. Arielle Gousse had the pleasure of welcoming another group of Canadian students to the Gator Nation for the UF Disney Academic Exchange Program. This year we had 14 students from University of Waterloo, Brock University and Wilfrid Laurier University join us for 10 days at various destinations around North Central Florida.
While the students were at the University of Florida they received the opportunity to tour various hotels and destinations as well as meet various leaders in the tourism and hospitality field on a one-on-one basis.

Below is a list of a few of the professionals the students received the opportunity to meet:

1. Mr. Jim McManemon - General Manager of the Ritz Carlton Amelia Island Resort (A 5-Diamond Property)
2. Ms. Joni Barkley - General Manager of the Casa Monica Hotel in St. Augustine, FL (A historic boutique hotel)
3. Mr. Roland Loog - Former Director of the Alachua County Visitors and Conventions Bureau
4. Mr. Bill Hughes - General Manager of the TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach, FL (home of The Player’s Championship Golf Tournament)

Meeting industry professionals around North Central Florida was definitely a highlight on their time in the Gator Nation. We will keep you posted on the progress of these students as their internship continues throughout the year.