



LEARNING, GROWING AND MAKING NEW CONNECTIONS THROUGH MENTORING

As part of the UCLA Housing & Hospitality (H&H) family, those who work at the Luskin Conference Center and Lake Arrowhead Lodge are consistently encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities that will keep them engaged with their work, excited about their careers and future possibilities, and allow them to make connections with and learn from people from across the organization and campus.

One of these options is a nine-month mentoring program that pairs mentees with more seasoned professionals. By tapping into the vast wealth of collective work experience at the university, and more specifically in the subject area of housing and hospitality, the program aims to increase team member engagement, develop leadership and teach new skills.

When Pauline Garcia began her role as an assistant front office manager at the Luskin Hotel and Conference Center in 2019, she was new to the hospitality industry.

“I learned that folks representing different aspects of the hospitality program at UCLA would be involved and it felt like a good way to get introduced and more familiarized with the ‘big picture,’” said Garcia, who was mentored by UCLA’s assistant director of organizational effectiveness and development. “I appreciated the opportunity to build bridges of communication and see what other folks do.”

Team members who are accepted into the program work intensively on identifying career goals, creating an individual development plan to achieve those goals alongside their mentor, and building a support network. Included in this experience is the attention to continuous learning and its importance to their overall professional development.

Mentees are required to attend an offsite mentoring retreat to launch the program and participate in monthly workshops during the full academic year.

Joseph Russo, director of rooms at the Luskin Conference Center, knows the benefits of mentorship and the value that mentors can play in peoples’ lives.

“I have been lucky enough to have had amazing mentors in my 30+ year hospitality career, and I thought, if I could pay it forward, and be a positive resource for someone else, the Mentoring Program would be the ideal platform,” said Russo.

“In the two classes I was part of, I saw so many of the mentees blossom and gain confidence that allowed them to set attainable goals, both personal and professional,” said Russo. “A mentor can be beneficial to all of us, no matter what job we hold or how long we have been doing it, but especially for anyone who wants to better themselves and expand their knowledge.”