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PRESS RELEASE

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CSUSB Palm Desert Campus students return from transformative study abroad experience in Italy

PALM DESERT, Calif. – Hospitality management students from the Cal State San Bernardino, Palm Desert Campus have returned from an enriching short-term study abroad experience in Italy, where they explored the heart of global hospitality, culinary excellence and cultural heritage.

The immersive program, which took place during their spring break in April, was designed to provide students with firsthand exposure to the vibrant hospitality industry of Italy and offered participants hands-on learning and professional development opportunities.

Led by hospitality management program director Joe Tormey and faculty member Michelle Russen, students discovered the vast appeal of Italy, which is ranked among the top tourist destinations in the world.

Students had opportunities to interact with business owners and operators in the manufacturing and services sectors of wine, food products, retail, hospitality and tourism.

Visiting the cities of Reggio Emilia, Bologna, Modena and Florence, the group participated in a variety of activities, including guided tours of historical centers, as well as food production and cultural stops.

The itinerary integrated academic coursework with a focus on Italian gastronomy, tourism and transportation systems, restaurants, destination marketing, art, history and hands-on activities.

The group visited Florence University of the Arts, an affiliated partner school of CSUSB, and enjoyed a morning tour of the Central Market in Florence, followed by the preparation of a three-course meal with a chef instructor from the university.

They engaged with local education and hospitality leaders, participated in culinary workshops and explored historical and cultural landmarks. Faculty, staff and alumni also joined the journey.

“This study abroad trip was an incredible opportunity for our students to experience hospitality on a global stage,” said Tormey. “They were able to connect classroom knowledge with real-world practices and build lasting international perspectives that will benefit their future careers.”

PDC students expressed appreciation for the trip’s balance of academic enrichment and cultural discovery.

“I loved being immersed in Italian culture — the food, the people, and the history made every day feel meaningful and exciting,” said Zane Ramirez. “Italy was exactly how I imagined — beautiful, rich in culture and full of life. It was refreshing to see how welcoming and inclusive Italians were to international visitors. Even with language barriers, locals made the effort to communicate and connect, which showed how hospitality goes beyond just words.”

“The best things about the trip were the culture, the views, the food and the welcoming atmosphere,” said Edith Alcala. “The hospitality service practice in Italy is truly something you have to experience in person at least once and it makes me want to plan another trip there soon.”

The success of the Italy trip underscores CSUSB’s ongoing commitment to providing students with transformative learning experiences that extend beyond the classroom. Through initiatives like these, the university continues to empower students to become global citizens and leaders in their chosen fields.

For more information about the hospitality management program, visit the [CSUSB Hospitality Management webpage](#).

About the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus: The CSUSB Palm Desert Campus is dedicated to providing a transformative educational experience in the Coachella Valley. With a focus on academic excellence and community engagement, the campus offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs designed to meet the diverse needs of its students and the region.

For more information about the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus, contact Mike Singer in the Office of Marketing and Communications at msinger@csusb.edu or (760) 341-2883, ext. 78107, or visit the PDC website at www.csusb.edu/pdc.