



University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Dean

**William F. Harrah College of Hospitality
Las Vegas, Nevada**

THE SEARCH

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) seeks a visionary, strategic, and collaborative leader to serve as the next Dean of the William F. Harrah College of Hospitality (Harrah College). In this role, the Dean will have an extraordinary opportunity to build upon the legacy of one of the world's top hospitality schools – nurturing students, supporting faculty, and serving the community of Las Vegas, a city widely recognized as the epicenter of the hospitality industry. The Dean will articulate a distinctive vision for the College to grow its reputation as a thought leader in hospitality, golf management, and gaming while strengthening existing relationships and building new ones with industry partners both in Las Vegas and around the globe. As the leader of a flagship program at UNLV, the Dean will contribute to a university-wide goal of improving the student experience by linking personal and career choices to improved academic programs and supporting the full range of student diversity.

Founded in 1957, UNLV is a thriving urban research institution of more than 30,000 students that is supported by over 5,100 faculty and staff dedicated to teaching, research, and service. It has become an indispensable resource in one of the country's most diverse, enterprising, and rapidly-growing cities. The UNLV campus mirrors the city in which it sits, ranking as one of the most diverse undergraduate campuses in the country in 2022 by *US News and World Report*. The University offers professional degrees in hospitality management, business, law, engineering, medicine, architecture, dental medicine, and leading programs in liberal arts, nursing, urban affairs, public health, fine arts, sciences, and education.

UNLV is the-top ranked university in the United States and second in the world for Hospitality and Leisure Management according to the [QS World University Rankings](#) and, since its founding in 1969, the Harrah College of Hospitality (originally known as the College of Hotel Administration) has garnered international acclaim for its “theory meets practice” approach to education with a heavy emphasis on hospitality and gaming operations. Situated blocks away from the world's greatest hospitality laboratory—the Las Vegas Strip—Harrah College enjoys unparalleled access to the hotels and resorts that are shaping the industry. Harrah College students take advantage of hands-on experiences, including internships, mentorships, and research opportunities with prominent industry professionals, while learning hospitality management principles inside Hospitality Hall – a modern, interactive learning laboratory that closely mirrors the industry.

UNLV has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the recruitment of the new Dean. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence as noted at the end of this document.

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS

In its 65-year history, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas has undergone an amazing transformation, from a dusty outpost on the south edge of town to a thriving urban research institution. As a result of its innovative frontier spirit, UNLV has kept pace with one of the country's fastest-growing cities. Today, UNLV is home to more than 5,100 full-time faculty who teach more than 30,000 students, including over 4,200 graduate and professional students. Less than 10 minutes from downtown, UNLV is truly an urban university, deeply engaged in the vitality of Las Vegas and the surrounding region.

The University began as a branch of the University of Nevada, Reno before gaining independence in 1968, surpassing Reno in student enrollment just nine years later. Over the next three decades, UNLV continued this rapid rate of development, erecting more than 100 buildings, creating partnerships with the community, fielding nationally ranked sports teams, founding an alumni association, promoting scholarship, establishing a fundraising foundation, and recruiting diverse and talented students from across the country. Since 2000, UNLV has greatly expanded its graduate degree programs campus-wide, which includes a School of Dental Medicine and the Boyd School of Law, both firsts for Nevada, as well as a School of Public Health and, most recently, a School of Medicine (2014). In 2018, UNLV was elevated to Research I (R1) “very high research activity” status by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, becoming one of only 146 R1 institutions in the country. A complete list of UNLV’s academic units can be found [HERE](#).

UNLV has an operating budget of almost \$900 million, of which approximately 37 percent comes as an appropriation from the state of Nevada. In fiscal year 2022, UNLV had research expenditures over \$125 million, including significant grant funding from the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Energy. UNLV received approximately \$65.6 million in philanthropic donations in FY 2022.

UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

President Keith E. Whitfield

Dr. Keith E. Whitfield was appointed president of UNLV by the Nevada System of Higher Education Board of Regents in August 2020. With more than three decades of experience in higher education, Dr. Whitfield is a seasoned university administrator and prolific scholar in the fields of psychology, health, and aging. Whitfield is UNLV’s 11th president and is the first African American president in the University’s history. Prior to his appointment as president at UNLV, Whitfield served as provost, senior vice president of academic affairs, and professor of psychology at Wayne State University. An active administrator and researcher, Whitfield has authored or co-authored over 200 publications and has earned nearly \$20 million in funding from agencies including the National Institutes of Health, the National Institute on Aging (NIA), and the National Science Foundation. He is a member of the NIA’s National Advisory Council on Aging, and he has served on committees for the National Academies of Sciences and Medicine and the National Institutes of Health.

Provost Chris L. Heavey

Dr. Chris L. Heavey was appointed interim executive vice president and provost of UNLV in 2019 and was named the permanent provost in 2020. In this role, he serves as the university's chief academic officer and works closely with the president in overseeing academic, administrative, and budgetary policies and priorities for the campus. As a professor of psychology, Dr. Heavey conducts research to improve

understanding of the inner experience and its relationship to mental health. He is one of the nation's leading scholars in the thoughts and feelings that make up the consciousness of people as they go about their everyday lives. An experienced administrator, Provost Heavey has held multiple leadership positions during his career at UNLV, including senior vice provost, vice provost for undergraduate education, dean, director of general education, and president of the Nevada State Board of Psychology.

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

Las Vegas is one of the fastest growing cities in the country, and with almost 2.3 million people in the metropolitan area, it accounts for approximately 70 percent of Nevada's total population. The population is young, with a median age of 37, and diverse—approximately 40 percent of its residents are people of color. The Las Vegas Valley serves as the leading financial, commercial, and cultural center for the state of Nevada, and the city of Las Vegas annually ranks as one of the world's most visited tourist destinations. It is a top destination in the United States for business conventions and a global leader in the hospitality industry, claiming more AAA Five Diamond hotels than any other city in the world. Las Vegas has also recently become home to three major league sports teams including the *Las Vegas Golden Knights* (NHL, 2017), the *Las Vegas Aces* (WNBA, 2018), and the *Las Vegas Raiders* (NFL, 2020). The city is often named as one of the most entrepreneur-friendly cities in the country and has recently become a popular landing spot for tech firms, both large and small. The low taxes have helped make Nevada a haven for small businesses as well. Besides having neither personal income nor estate tax, Nevada has neither business income nor franchise tax. Nevada has more corporations than any other state except Delaware.

The quality of life makes Las Vegas an attractive place to live. The city is well known for its world-class dining and entertainment; however, it also offers a host of outdoor activities, including golfing, hiking, rock climbing, biking, skiing, water sports, and camping. Within a 35-mile radius, one can reach beautiful sites like Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Mount Charleston (which offers cool temperatures with skiing, hiking, and horseback riding), and Red Rock Canyon, one of the best rock-climbing destinations in the country. In a wider radius, Southern Nevada is positioned to access some of the most beloved national parks in the United States including Death Valley, Zion, Bryce Canyon, Joshua Tree, and Grand Canyon National Parks.

WILLIAM F. HARRAH COLLEGE OF HOSPITALITY

Academics

Harrah College is consistently ranked among the top hospitality programs in the world and offers its students a recently reconceptualized curriculum focused on preparing future industry leaders. Approximately 40 full-time faculty and 40 administrative staff members serve more than 1,400 undergraduates and over 150 graduate students across three departments: Food & Beverage and Events Management; Hospitality Management; and Resorts, Gaming, and Golf Management. The College offers a combination of in-person, hybrid, and online courses with a variety of programs. At the undergraduate level, the College offers a Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management with concentration areas in Event Design and Management, Gaming Management, Hospitality Beverage Management, Human Resource Management, Innovative Restaurant Management, and PGA Golf Management. At the graduate level, the College offers a Master of Science in Hotel Administration as well two dual degree programs in partnership with the Lee Business School (MS/MBA in Hotel Administration and the Master of Science in Management Information Systems and Master of Science in Hotel Administration). A multi-conceptual and highly competitive PhD program in Hospitality Administration is also offered, along with several online certificates and non-degree courses.

Hospitality Hall

Located in the heart of the UNLV campus, Harrah College is housed within [Hospitality Hall](#), a state-of-the-art academic hub which opened its doors in 2018. The building features experiential learning spaces that mirror amenities typically found in resorts and boutique hotels, including 16 interactive classrooms (with the latest classroom technology), four conference rooms, 80 offices, and a 120-seat auditorium. Other highlights include a 10-station learning kitchen, a student-run cafe, an executive learning kitchen, a function space overlooking the Las Vegas Strip, and a learning center for the PGA golf management program. The College's catering team, with the help of students, operates banquet spaces in UNLV's Stan Fulton Building and Beam Hall. Hospitality Hall was built with the help of numerous donors whose cumulative gifts matched the state allocation of \$30 million. Donors include Caesars Entertainment Foundation, Konami Gaming, Inc., Las Vegas Sands, MGM Resorts International, Boyd Gaming Corporation, Red Rock Resorts, Inc., J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation, Engelstad Family Foundation, among many more.

Harrah College Centers

[The Bob Boughner Center for Career and Alumni Services](#): Named for industry mogul and college benefactor Bob Boughner, the Boughner Center for Career & Alumni Services was established in 2007 and is the College's one-stop shop for students and alumni in search of hospitality-related professional experience and networking opportunities. Located within Hospitality Hall, the Boughner Center offers services to both students and alumni including job and internship postings, referrals, information on management training programs, mentor support, coordination of mock interviews and professional assessments, and exclusive hospitality career fairs and other engagement opportunities. Each year, the College invites over 100 recruiters to UNLV, and students complete over 600 internships. The Hospitality College Mentor Program connects almost 200 students each year with industry professionals who are eager to provide their time, knowledge, and experience to support students as they begin making career choices.

[The Dwaine Knight Center for Golf Management](#): The Dwaine Knight Center for Golf Management provides students with the latest tools in golf management and technology as well as opportunities to interface with some of the top leaders in the sports/resort industries. The Center includes a club design and repair lab, a golf research lab, an indoor golf simulation, a retail store, and an outdoor putting green.

[The Sands Center for Professional Development](#): The Sands Center for Professional Development was named in recognition of the \$4.5 million gift donated by the Las Vegas Sands Corporation to help launch the center in 2014. The goal was to create a resource that helps advance the careers of non-degree-seeking hospitality professionals around the world. As the professional education arm of the Harrah College of Hospitality at UNLV, the Sands Center enjoys access to expert faculty, research that taps into the latest industry trends, and state-of-the-art learning facilities.

Research

The College has long served as a thought leader for the hospitality industry, with faculty members regularly publishing both scholarly and practitioner-oriented research articles and consulting with the industry on operational problems and strategies. As some of the world's foremost experts in the fields of hospitality and leisure, event management, and gaming, Harrah faculty are consistently engaged in research that explores pressing topics like customer loyalty programs; hotel booking trends; marketing strategies in gaming, hospitality in healthcare; and more. The College's strong relationship with the international hospitality

community helps create unparalleled opportunities for students. In addition to being regularly featured in top-tier journals, faculty members contribute to the [UNLV Gaming Research and Review Journal](#) in collaboration with UNLV's Gaming Institute. Each semester, the Harrah College of Hospitality holds a series of college-wide research workshops to foster a deeper understanding of current developments and techniques and serves as a collaborative space for faculty and students to engage in discussion.

Alumni

The Harrah College of Hospitality has more than 18,000 alumni around the world, half of whom graduated in the last 15 years. Many of Harrah's graduates have gone on to have stellar careers in various facets of the global hospitality industry—from Presidents/CEOs of major international hotel conglomerates to highly successful television personalities, such as Guy Fieri. The College administers and stewards the work of the Harrah Alumni Chapter Board of Directors to advance the efforts of alumni engagement, student engagement, learning and development, and philanthropy.

Finances

Harrah College of Hospitality has an operating budget of \$21 million in FY23. This includes state allocations, revenue-generating programs and centers, course fees, and gifts. In addition, the College holds an endowment with a current market value of approximately \$47 million, which has an estimated annual payout of \$1.3 million. The annual payout includes an average of \$350K restricted to scholarships, which is distributed annually.

THE ROLE OF THE DEAN

The Dean of the Harrah College of Hospitality will provide overall academic and administrative leadership for the College. Working collaboratively with University leadership, the Dean plays a prominent, visible leadership role within the University and in the worldwide hospitality community. The Dean leads the development and articulation of a compelling, distinctive strategy that will uphold and advance the College's reputation as a leader in hospitality education. The Dean is responsible for the development and implementation of innovative academic programs as well as the College of Hospitality's research enterprise, and has administrative and budgetary authority for related operations.

Building relationships with external stakeholders is a vitally important part of the Dean's role. Working with admissions, career services, and development, the Dean engages with hospitality businesses and community leaders, professional organizations, legislators, alumni, and other friends of the University throughout the world. The Dean is the "face" of the College of Hospitality, and serves as its chief advocate and ambassador.

The Dean's direct reports include the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, Associate Dean of Research, Assistant Dean of Student Success, Assistant Dean of External Affairs, Director of Communication, Director of Finance, Director of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians and UNLV Tribal Education Initiative, and an Executive Assistant.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

UNLV seeks a strategic, entrepreneurial, and energetic leader to be the next Dean of the Harrah College of Hospitality. The Dean will build upon the strong academic foundation of the College and its increasingly deep

connections with the global hospitality environment and the Las Vegas community in which it cooperates. The Dean will address several challenges and opportunities that will largely determine the College's ability to reach an even higher level of success among the world's top schools of hospitality management. Some of these opportunities will be measurable in specific quantitative outcomes, and others will be seen and felt by members of the College of Hospitality community as it becomes an ever more exciting place for faculty, students, staff, alumni, and partners in hospitality and the community to be engaged. The institution seeks a visionary Dean who will build upon recent momentum and successes and raise the College's real and perceived excellence by addressing the following challenges and opportunities:

Develop and articulate a compelling vision and corresponding strategy that build on the strengths of the College of Hospitality and seize opportunities to advance the College to its next level of achievement and reputation.

The Dean will work collaboratively with faculty, staff, students, alumni, and other stakeholders to shape and execute a strategy that articulates a clear vision for the future success and competitive positioning of the College of Hospitality. This strategy will align the College as a critical component within a diverse, metropolitan region and leverage its integration within a top research institution. Under the Dean's leadership, the College will continue to strengthen its brand around high-quality research and programs focused on the unique aspects of the Las Vegas region and the worldwide hospitality industry. The Dean will be convincing and inspirational, galvanizing the faculty, staff, students, alumni, and other stakeholders around the College of Hospitality's vision. A key objective for the Dean will be to maintain the U.S. and global rankings of this hospitality program. This will require an individual who can think and act beyond the traditional borders of academia.

Recruit, develop, and retain the next generation of outstanding faculty and promote research.

Given UNLV's classification as an R1 Institution, the Dean will encourage research and provide the necessary guidance, professional development, and motivation to all faculty. The Dean will champion the vital role that a diverse faculty plays in strengthening the quality of research and teaching; retaining and hiring a diverse, talented faculty will be an important priority for the Dean and the College. In addition, the Dean will champion relationships across departments, centers, and faculty ranks to foster impactful research, strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration, and enable mentoring programs for faculty. This is a unique opportunity for the Dean to steer the future direction of the College and to build out the College's research profile—research that is relevant and germane to the hospitality industry today and in the future.

Develop new, innovative academic programs to increase student enrollment and improve the quality of the student experience.

Like many hospitality programs around the world, Harrah College has experienced a decline in enrollment due to the pandemic's effect on the hospitality and tourism industry. Enrollment growth and student retention will be an important goal for the College for the foreseeable future. The College will work to create a valuable experience for all students, including non-traditional students, international students, transfer students, and students enrolled in fully online programs, by enriching the current suite of offerings and developing promising new programs that address unmet needs in the industry. The Dean will collaborate with colleagues in the Enrollment Management division to promote Harrah College's offerings and recruit and retain an exceptional and diverse student body. The University is also dedicated to constant improvement in student success, measured in retention, student learning, and satisfaction. In the College of

Hospitality, this means integrating and expanding opportunities for experiential learning, linking personal and career choices to improved academic programs, and supporting the full range of student diversity. As part of this initiative, the Dean will lead the effort to explore innovative pedagogical approaches that can foster inclusive teaching, including in-person, hybrid, and online teaching methods.

Actively engage with the hospitality community in Las Vegas and worldwide.

The College of Hospitality and the Las Vegas hospitality community connect closely on multiple levels and it is a relationship that has been enhanced and guided by previous deans at the College. Strong connections with hospitality leaders in the Las Vegas community and around the world will be critical to the continued success of the College of Hospitality, and the Dean will play the leading role in this effort. The Dean will be a visible and energetic participant within the hospitality community, leverage and strengthen the College's Global Advisory Board, strengthen relationships with current partners, and enroll new ones. The Dean will listen to the needs of the global hospitality community and work to develop programs that meet those needs while making the case for the College's programs and graduates in the market. The Dean will be an energetic leader and promote a deep engagement with both university colleagues and community leaders on strategic academic initiatives and partnerships, and nurture relationships with employers that enhance recruitment, and drive the College's visibility to higher levels of recognition.

Generate new revenue streams and steward finances for the College.

The Dean provides strategic management of the College's resources and will focus on generating and diversifying new revenue streams from external sources and fundraising. Engaging hospitality leaders in the Las Vegas community, the College's alumni base, and other relevant constituencies, the Dean will lead advancement efforts in coordination with university leadership. With a compelling vision for the College's future, a clear and well-executed strategy for realizing that vision, and the personal skills to engage donors and solicit their support, the Dean will seek to increase fundraising success and play a key role as a spokesperson for the University. The Dean will exemplify the professionalism, savvy, and dynamism envisioned for the Harrah College of Hospitality and communicate its compelling story persuasively.

Foster an environment that embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Embracing UNLV's diversity is at the heart of the University's culture. The College of Hospitality actively works to support diversity and recognizes that more work must be done to achieve its high aspirations. The Dean will continue and expand the effort to build a diverse academic culture—in all its forms—by recruiting faculty, staff, and students actively; focusing on retention efforts for women and historically underrepresented groups; developing a curriculum that embraces diversity and intercultural competency as essential learning outcomes; and fostering transparency, fairness, and data-driven decisions in which all faculty, students, and staff are valued and supported.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The successful candidate will have a record of scholarship and/or leadership experience worthy of tenure and appointment at the rank of full professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Additionally, the Dean will have a significant record as an exceptional academic and/or industry leader with strong administrative and financial skills. The Dean will have a demonstrated ability to attract talent, empower colleagues, and hold them accountable. While no candidate will embody every quality, the successful candidate will bring many

of the following professional qualifications and personal qualities:

- Demonstrated capacity for strategic leadership and the ability to move an organization forward; this would include developing an aggressive vision and demonstrating the ability to successfully execute that vision.
- Energetic, entrepreneurial, and collaborative leadership experience to inspire faculty, students, and staff and foster pride in and commitment to the College of Hospitality's vision;
- Ability to develop and oversee programs, lead administrative efforts, work with faculty, and speak the language of the academy and of the global hospitality industry;
- An understanding of and commitment to scholarship, teaching, and faculty governance in the unique organizational structure of a university wherein compliance with bylaws and empowered, collaborative decision-making through consensus are critical components;
- Excellent interpersonal, written, and oral communication skills;
- The experience of leading an academic unit with a racially-, culturally-, and economically-diverse student body and recruiting and supporting a diverse, high-quality faculty and staff;
- Demonstrated facility with and enthusiasm for engaging business executives in the work of the College, connecting faculty and students with opportunities and problems facing the global hospitality community;
- An appetite for fundraising and the ability to contribute to and lead development efforts and other extramural funding activities;
- An effective and strong member of the University's leadership team, who can successfully represent the College and help it thrive as a key player in university strategy;
- A person with integrity and the highest standards of ethical behavior;
- An earned doctorate and a record of academic and professional achievement meriting appointment at the rank of tenured full professor, or extensive business experience, with a record of outstanding achievement in high-level leadership.

TO APPLY

Confidential inquiries, nominations, referrals, and applications with CVs and cover letters are being accepted for the position and should be sent electronically in confidence to:

Gale Merseth, Partner
Micah Pierce, Partner
Lauren Wilkes, Senior Associate
Isaacson, Miller, Inc.

[William F. Harrah College of Hospitality Dean Search](#)

UNLV is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, and candidates are encouraged to apply without regard to race, gender, orientation, religion, national origin, or disability.