

Students Study Hospitality

Assisted Living Program Partners With Disney

George Mason University (GMU), Fairfax, Va., has partnered with Walt Disney World to send students majoring in assisted living administration to study and work at Disney's Orlando, Fla., resort.

"People spend as much as \$50,000 a year to live in assisted living," says Andrew Carle, assistant professor and coordinator of the GMU program in assisted living administration. "If Disney can make a family feel special on a three-day trip, we ought to be able to do it for every assisted living resident."

The new partnership allows GMU students to spend a semester working in a Disney hotel and taking classes in hospitality and human resource management. The internship work and classes are structured around areas shared by both the resort industry and the assisted living profession, such as concierge-front desk, guest relations,

food and dining, housekeeping, and transportation services. The students also complete Disney courses, which are approved for credit toward a degree.

The experience, says Carle, helps students not only provide a higher quality of resident care, but also develops productive attitudes as future employees. At Disney, employees are taught to put aside personal issues while at work and stay focused on guest satisfaction and maintaining a high-quality environment. "The Disney internship can drive home for students that when you are at work, you work for the resident," says Carle.

The effect on students, he says, is permanent. "Once you see something done well, how do you do it any other way?" says Carle, who sees Disney's approach as a "perfect deliverable" for assisted living.

—Amy Waye