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# UNLV students learn golf-industry professions

Golf Management Program offers several career paths



By Chris Cawthern  
Photos by Bennie Palmore

Like many students interested in the golf industry as a career, Alison Lombardo loves the game.

And, after working one summer in an office setting, the Southern Californian realized she wanted to make a living doing something outside the typical 9-to-5 office setting. She began looking for professions in the golf industry.

While the east coast had multiple schools with golf management programs, the west coast only had a few. Wanting to stay near home and her family, she discovered a new curriculum at UNLV – the Professional Golf Management (PGM) program.



Program Director,  
Chris Cain

"I didn't know what I wanted to do," said the 21-year-old UNLV senior. "I played golf my whole life and really wanted to do something outside. So, my father and I decided to look

into [the program]."

Within a year from graduating and working as a teaching professional, Lombardo credits UNLV's program for keeping her close to her family and providing a profession that suits her likes and interests.

## Course of study

Those that might think a golf management program sounds like an easy way to get through college can think again.

"There's far more pressure than you might expect," said Lombardo, who enjoys teaching juniors the game.

According to Chris Cain, the program's director for the last five years, the course of study isn't a simple day at the range, but rather an intensive

curriculum covering a vast array of golf-industry disciplines.

"Our students learn golf-management skills and do it through both a classroom and practical standpoint through internships," said Cain, whose program is administered through UNLV's Leisure Studies program at William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration. "It's a unique integrated PGA curriculum and 16 months of internships into a four-and-a-half-year program."

Accredited by the Professional Golfers' Association of America, the program offers students a Bachelor of Science degree in Recreation with a concentration in Professional Golf Management. Students must garner 124 credit hours in four primary areas of study including golf management, general studies, elective courses and recreation and leisure.

"The program has impressive, well-rounded classes," said Gary Xavier, a 24-year-old PGM student at UNLV. "Golf professions really have so much more to them than playing golf including dealing with people, learning to better communicate, working with budgets and of course the hospitality aspects."

Through program facilitation, students pass through PGA/PGM checkpoint testing and completion of the PGA Player Ability Test (PAT). In addition, the program requires students to complete 16 months of internship experience, helping them prepare for real-life work and situations in the field.

UNLV's PGM program is designed to provide a challenging and comprehensive academic experience. Through well-defined internships, students are placed in exemplary professional capabilities in all facets of golf management at courses across the country.

"Our local golf community has been wonderful in offering internships and even part-time work to our students," said Cain, who has nearly 70 students in various stages of the program.

## What the future holds

Just a love of the game isn't enough to gain acceptance into the PGM program at UNLV. Students

must have a 2.5 high school grade point average or higher and a verified United States Golf Association handicap of 12 or less or have already passed the PAT.

For those who qualify and graduate with a degree in the program, multiple careers in golf await. To graduate, students must complete all the required courses and achieve a 2.5 GPA, pass the PAT and complete PGA/PGM checkpoints for Level I, Level II and Level III.

Students must also finish a 16-month internship with a minimum of four weeks in food and beverage management.

According to Cain, several of the programs are already working in golf-industry professions. UNLV's first class of students graduated within the last year.

"We already have a few students working full time including one as an assistant golf professional here in Las Vegas," Cain said.

Professions available to graduates range from director of golf, teaching professional, tournament director and college golf coach to careers as merchandise director, golf course development, head golf professional and director of instruction responsibilities.

Xavier said the variety of golf-industry careers helped attract him to the program. "From the management side of golf to working as a touring pro or golf journalist, there really are multiple options for us," he said. "(Students in the program) have a passion for golf in some aspect. And, there's a career for them out there."

The awareness of UNLV's program has been spreading through word-of-mouth measures by students and also the school's presence in golf tradeshow and booths at professional golf tournaments.

"We may see our enrollment double in the next four years," said Cain.

For Lombardo, she passed one of the most difficult hurdles – the playability test – and plans to graduate in fall 2007 and pursue a career as a teaching professional.

"I am so excited to graduate and get started," she said. ▀



**For more information about UNLV's PGM program, contact the PGM office at (702) 895-2932 or check out its website at [www.hotel.unlv.edu/PGM](http://www.hotel.unlv.edu/PGM).**

