

Greenberg Traurig UNLV International Gaming Institute Program Readies Next Generation of Gaming Leaders

By Bo J. Bernhard, Ph.D.

In February of 2011, the law firm of Greenberg Traurig reached out to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas' International Gaming Institute (IGI) to create what has become a major educational partnership in Southern Nevada: The Greenberg Traurig IGI Student Development Program. Together, Martha Sabol, co-chair of Greenberg Traurig's gaming practice, and IGI Director of Gaming Outreach, Patricia Merl, created from a scratch a unique new program. This program offers gaming students at the undergraduate and graduate levels a rare opportunity to observe and work alongside leaders in the global gaming industry, all at the largest gathering of industry professionals in the world. Last fall, more than 50 students benefited from Greenberg Traurig's generosity by experiencing a unique "back of the house" role at the Global Gaming Expo (G2E), working alongside conference organizers, panel speakers, Greenberg Traurig gaming attorneys, and industry professionals throughout the entire event. In addition to this work experience, these students were given full access to the G2E floor – access that would typically be prohibitively expensive for your typical starving student.



To illustrate the enduring benefits of this new program, we might follow the impressive educational trajectory of just one of its participants, UNLV senior Eli Tredup. Eli graduated this past spring with an undergraduate degree in gaming management and a host of academic awards, but his

life (and now career) path diverges from that of the typical university student.

From a very early age, Eli Tredup's ambitions were curious for a small child. While his peers would drone on about careers in tractors, or outer space, or veterinary medicine, Eli's dream was different: he wanted to be Steve Wynn. He even told his elementary school teachers as much, as well as his parents, and his tiny friends, and passersby – and anyone who would listen. As such, and as one might expect for someone reared in the expansion era in Las Vegas, Eli put his erector sets to work building Treasure Islands – of the casino kind, rather than the literary one.

Fortunately for Eli, his academic strengths were nationally competitive, which ultimately led to interviews at the very top Ivy League institutions. Once again, however, Eli chose a less trodden path: he went to "the Ivy League of gaming management education" (in his words): the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He immediately excelled in his courses, and his instructors marveled at his skills.

"When Eli was an underclassman, we actually assumed that he was a graduate student, his work was so worldly and impressive," said Tim Melnyk, a former Manitoba (Canada) gaming regulator who came to UNLV to pursue his Ph.D. "In our class on the gaming industry and society, Eli immediately grasped the complex, global nature of the industry today. His future is exceedingly bright: I'm sure we will all be working for him someday!"

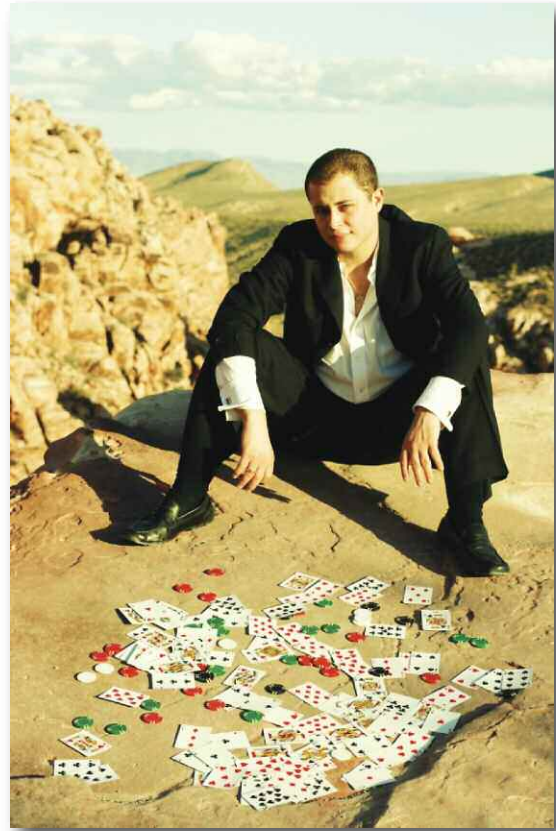


When the opportunity arose to obtain real-world experience through the Greenberg Traurig IGI program, Eli jumped at the chance. "G2E is the most important convention in the international gaming industry, and growing up I always dreamed of attending – but I never would have been able to afford to go without the support of this program," Eli said. While there, Eli was able to meet with executives at almost all of the major gaming manufacturing companies represented at the show, and also obtained free career and resume advice through the program. "In the classroom, you can learn a lot about the gaming industry, but the Greenberg Traurig IGI program gives you the gift of real-world interactions with upper-level executives, and it really does a great job helping you become more polished."

This polish became even more evident recently when Eli was accepted into an elite joint MBA-JD program offered through the Boyd School of Law at UNLV. Starting in the fall, Eli will be enrolled in classes that focus on legal, regulatory, and business curricula – still with hopes of becoming an entrepreneurial-type in a rapidly-changing industry. "UNLV and the Greenberg Traurig G2E experience broadened my horizons and helped me recognize that there is a whole world of gaming out there." In three years, Eli will graduate with two prestigious graduate degrees -- and surely a host of interesting job opportunities. Programs such as these help the IGI fulfill its role as an intellectual hub for the global gaming industry – a place where future leaders learn, grow, and then often return once their careers take off, to share their gaming expertise with others. This education takes place not only in classrooms on campus, but also in the world's greatest gaming laboratory in the university's figurative back yard.

"Our firm is built on intellectual creativity, professionalism and hard work for the good of our clients and the growth of our firm. We support IGI's continuing development as the intellectual hub for the global gaming industry," explained Martha Sabol, Co-Chair of Greenberg Traurig's Global Gaming Practice. Michael Bonner, Co-Managing Shareholder of Greenberg Traurig's Las Vegas office, added "stories like Eli's and the other participating IGI students make us truly proud to have sponsored The Greenberg Traurig IGI Student Development Program."

Thanks to the kind support of Greenberg Traurig, dozens of students will enjoy similar experiences for years to come – and maybe some, like Eli, will even retain GT's legal services as operators of the next generation of mega resorts.



Dr. Bo Bernhard is the Executive Director of the International Gaming Institute, UNLV, and a fifth-generation Nevadan. He holds associate professorships in hotel management and sociology at UNLV, where he first learned the crawl stroke in the university pool over 30 years ago. During the course of his career, he has lectured on six continents and advised dozens of governmental and private sector organizations on gaming policy. A double major honors graduate of Harvard University, Dr. Bernhard is a past recipient of the Spanos Family Teaching Award, given annually to the top teacher at UNLV. He has also held the Sam and Mary Boyd Distinguished Research Professorship, given to the outstanding researcher in the UNLV hotel college. Bo encourages e-mail conversations: bo.bernhard@unlv.edu.