



TOM ZASADZINSKI

PKF Consulting helps alumni and students launch careers

Building Futures

BY LISA MCPHERON

(from left) Tristine Lim '05, Collins College board member Bruce Baltin, Matthew Kou '06 and Brandon Feighner '05 of PKF Consulting in Los Angeles.

The JW Marriott & Ritz Carlton hotels under construction in Los Angeles are an impressive sight, especially from the top floor of the nearby TCW Building. This is where work was done years in advance to demonstrate the hotels' viability at L.A. Live., which is downtown's redevelopment project home to the Staples Center and Nokia Theatre.

Bruce Baltin, a longtime member of The Collins College's Board of Advisors, and his team at the PKF Consulting practice in Los Angeles, conducted the feasibility studies and economic impact reports for the new hotels. Each day, they witness the fruits of their labor as progress on the projects change the downtown skyline.

The Los Angeles office is a premier provider of financial and market studies and valuations involving hotels, resorts, restaurants, golf courses, and a variety of mixed-use developments and other hospitality products throughout Southern California.

The office is also a breeding ground for Collins College students and alumni. Brandon Feighner '05, Matthew Kou '06 and Tristine Lim '05 make up one third of Baltin's employees.

"We take on interns with the hope of them becoming full-time employees," said Baltin, senior vice president and executive in charge of the Los Angeles practice. "It's worked out nicely with the students from The Collins College. In all honesty, they come well prepared."

When Feighner and Kou first began their hospitality management educations, they each expected to become chefs. As they took classes, they quickly learned that hospitality encompasses a whole arena of job opportunities far away from the kitchen.

They developed knacks for analytical work, and with

encouragement from professors Margie Ferree Jones, Gary Hamilton and Don St. Hilaire, Kou and Feighner pursued internships with PKF Consulting. Upon graduation, their internships turned into full-time positions.

"My last year of college, I interned two to three days a week," Kou said. "After I graduated, I was able to hit the ground running because it felt like I had already been working there for a year."

Baltin's team conducts a range of studies for hotels and tourism groups across Southern California, including free monthly hotel occupancy reports. In addition to L.A. Live, PKF Consulting has done projects for the cities of Anaheim, Ontario and Ventura. The office is often called upon to do projects for numerous convention and visitors bureaus.

Baltin's expertise has also been tapped at Cal Poly Pomona. In 2006, Baltin's group conducted a study of potential market demand for Kellogg West Conference Center & Lodge. This report, which was updated in 2008, laid the foundation for current efforts to renovate Kellogg West. PKF Consulting and The Collins College also co-host the annual Southern California Visitor Industry Outlook Conference each fall. This conference brings notable tourism and economic experts together to address pressing issues in the Southern California tourism industry. More than 200 people attended the 2008 conference titled, "Surviving Tough Times."

"Bruce is the epitome of a good partner," said Dean Andy Feinstein. "Not only does he bring valuable professional perspective to our Board of Advisors, he has opened the door for our students. He sees promise in our students, and that is terrific."