

Celebrity Career Leadership Forum 2018 Evaluation



A Council for Educational Change program



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CELEBRITY CAREER LEADERSHIP FORUM

Cruise vacations are the fastest growing travel sector in the world. Millions of people take a cruise each year.¹ In the United States, the cruise line industry is one of the largest in the world and the revenue generated is estimated to be nearly \$40 billion. There are over 300,000 cruise industry jobs and that number will certainly grow with twenty-six new cruise ships currently on order.² The clientele of a cruise ship is heavily North American, and most employers demand their employees have a command of the English language.³ Never the less, on most large cruise liners, the majority of staff and crew are from foreign countries.⁴ Research conducted at Florida International University's Metropolitan Center looked at the possibility of locating Amazon's second headquarters in South Florida. One finding was that South Florida lacked an educated workforce with a concentration in stem areas. It follows that cruise line jobs are not frequently filled with individuals from South Florida.⁵ The CEO of Celebrity Cruise Lines is determined to reverse this trend and diversify employees.

U.S. News reports that Celebrity Cruises are among the highest rated by cruisers and experts alike as a result of its upscale design and innovative cuisine. Because many of Celebrity's fleet depart from Miami and Port Everglades they embraced the idea that South Florida would be a perfect place to inspire principals, teachers, and students to consider careers in the cruise industry.⁶ But first, these participants needed to become aware of the opportunities and excited to gain the skills needed.



CELEBRITY CAREER LEADERSHIP FORUM

The Council for Educational Change, in partnership with Celebrity Cruise Line's CEO, developed a career leadership forum to address the existing gap between the needs of the cruise industry and students' lack of awareness and skills for potential job opportunities. The goal of the forum was to expose students, along with their principals and teachers, to careers students might not hear about in a class or at a traditional job fair, including those that do not require a college degree. Then, principals could facilitate strategies that were developed into action plans to bring the knowledge and enthusiasm garnered during the forum back to the rest of their student bodies.

CELEBRITY CAREER LEADERSHIP FORUM SESSIONS

Sixteen schools were selected to each create a team consisting of a principal, faculty/staff member and student(s). Under the guidance of four facilitators and driven by their forum experiences, teams collaborated to create action plans to disseminate information about cruise industry career opportunities. Each session was designed to offer a unique perspective of career opportunities as follows:

¹ <https://www.cruising.org/about-the-industry/research/2017-state-of-the-industry>

² <https://www.statista.com/topics/1004/cruise-industry/>

³ <http://www.cruiseshipjobsnetwork.com/cruise/cruise-ship-industry/>

⁴ <http://mentalfloss.com/article/70240/14-behind-scenes-secrets-cruise-ship-workers>

⁵ <http://www.palmbeachpost.com/business/south-florida-faces-long-odds-for-amazon-hq2-fiu-researchers-say/r9EFjV4Ad6qqMjuxMZ3dzL/>

⁶ <https://travel.usnews.com/cruises/celebrity-cruises-289/>

1. **SESSION I (INTRODUCTION)** was conducted at the Royal Caribbean campus. It featured twelve speakers who discussed the depth and breadth of their positions in the cruise industry both on and off-board ships. Among the presenters were a Hotel Operations Manager, Cruise Director, Restaurant Operations Manager, Ship Captain, and others. The introduction by Lisa Lutoff-Perlo, President and CEO of Celebrity Cruises, made participants eager to gain knowledge about the untapped resources that existed in their backyard. Her story was particularly inspiring for the female students who often have difficulty imagining themselves in leadership positions and STEM careers.



2. **SESSION II (SPEED DATING)** took place at Coral Gables Senior High. Representatives of various jobs at Celebrity Cruise Line offered an overview of their positions including training needed, educational preparation, salary ranges, and steps for promotion. They then engaged participants in small group discussions in a “speed-dating” fashion. This format provided the opportunity for small group, in-depth, one-on-one conversations and potential mentorships. Many students felt more comfortable making inquiry in small-group settings and often drove the conversations in the groups.
3. **SESSION III (ON BOARD AND BEHIND-THE-SCENE TOUR)** was by far, the session that provided the most excitement, particularly for the students; many of whom had never been on a cruise ship before. The tour took participants to many of the public areas of the ship including the penthouse suites, the theatre, and dining room. There were also visits to the engineering center, the navigation, and the little known “I-95 Corridor.” There were ample opportunities to interact with the captain, chief engineer, head of housekeeping, entertainment director, security personnel, and hospitality director. After lunch, two of the chefs mingled with participants and answered questions.
4. **SESSION IV (ROYAL CARIBBEAN ENTERTAINMENT STUDIOS AT FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY)** provided further exploration of career pathways focus on careers related to entertainment and technical support for productions on ships.



Participants got to experience a live performance by dancers and singers followed by interactions with the performers, as well as a tour through the training facility. One student, who is a dancer, shared that he “feels that there are few post high school experiences for dancers except to go to a dance school and become a professional dancer or open up a dance studio. I like the idea of dancing while traveling on a cruise ship and getting paid for it!” The session

culminated with a “graduation” of sorts which included recognition of the participants, facilitators, and those from CEC and Celebrity that made the forum possible.

KEY FINDINGS

- **OVERALL SUCCESS:** The forum provided a real-life career connection for students, opened doors for teachers, and provided a framework for principals' support. Participants rated the Leadership Forum 4.87 out of 5. When asked to describe the experience in one word, participants most often said it was enlightening, eye opening, awesome, and inspiring. It was also described as intellectually stimulating, highly informative, and exhilarating. In other words, it "greatly outperformed expectations." There was an overarching desire to have the Forum repeated with more schools and more students. A principal shared that "all the activities generated tremendous energy and excitement; some things just can't be created in a classroom back at the school." A facilitator further explained:

"Overall, the four sessions brought noteworthy awareness of the various facets of the Cruise Industry—its opportunities, experiences, and career pathways. This awareness of Cruise-line topics will translate into more meaningful lessons, project learning, and students' preparation for real world successes."

- **ACTION PLANS:** Most action plans appeared to be in their infancy. Working lunches were often rushed and dominated by the principal. It would be beneficial to have some opportunities for principals, teachers, and students to gather in role-like groups to share ideas and further develop strategies. Because working lunches were time-driven, they often, lacked opportunities for reflection and synthesis of information. Regardless, a plethora of innovative ideas were generated on all levels.
 - **Principals' plans** consisted of disseminating information to faculty, counselors, and team leaders in the indicated that he would be "opening dialogues and conversations with staff, local businesses and stakeholders to match needs and availability to open/create internship opportunities for our students and possible permanent employment." Another felt it was "essential to transform the real-life experience for others to imagine the many opportunities form of announcements, sharing the experience at meetings, and focus groups. One principal available." Facilitators indicated that "continued support from principals, particularly those that participated in multiple sessions, will be essential to move these plans to fruition."
 - **Teachers' plans** aimed at dissemination through faculty, academy/magnet, and curriculum council meetings in order to align targeted classes with specific magnets. Common planning meetings could foster development of strategies to engage students in interdisciplinary lessons and group projects: "Core teachers can develop projects with emphasis on careers, culture and environmental concerns as they relate to different ports of call." Plans to use social media were inspired by "how amazing [to hear about] Celebrity having so many ways to use social media for all aspects." Other teachers had plans to "follow up on the Forum by having students write reflections on the experience and a story using what they learned," "spotlight careers on morning announcements," "invite panel of speakers to participate in Open House and Senior Parent Nights," and "coordinate school site visits with employees of Celebrity."

- **Students' plans** had the greatest use of social media including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snap Chat. Students also went back to their schools and had one-on-one conversations with peers, discussed career information in their Hospitality, Travel and Tourism classes, Business Management Magnet, and Academy of Finance and Revenue Sharing. They also met with officers of their senior class, student council members, and student government groups. Additionally, discussions included ways to create awareness posters, short videos, and how best to use social media both in the school and as individuals. Many students were also eager for information and opportunities to gain internships since hospitality and tourism students must complete a 120-hour paid internship for their program. Other students were seeking mentors and job-shadowing opportunities.
- **VOCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:** While most students were impressed with how many positions required science and math courses followed by college degrees, students enrolled in adult education centers focused on vocational training and GED/ESOL programs were also inspired; not every student is college bound. Adult learners were anxious to learn about entry-level positions that may only require a high school diploma or equivalent. The career opportunities included those where students could immediately apply for positions in the cruise industry. Providing this level of inclusiveness should be commended. One student was particularly excited and wrote:

“The leadership forum was an educational experience for me. I learned about Guest Relations as a possible career choice. Before the tour, I only knew that I liked working with people and after, I realize that Guest Relations would be perfect as a career for me. To anyone that likes working with, being around, or talking to other people, I would tell them to consider Guest Relations as a career...was truly an eye opener for me.”

○ SPECIAL PARTICIPANTS

- **Dr. Larry Feldman**, Miami-Dade County School Board member, supported the venture, attended all four sessions, and was an active participant. He engaged with principals, teachers, and students alike. Students were particularly enthralled by the interest he took in them as individuals and the pertinent questions he asked. During the last session he presented everyone with an award to recognize their efforts and participation. He also has plans to schedule a formal recognition to be presented at a School Board meeting.



- **Steve Wasserman**, Council for Educational Change Chairman of the Board, initiated a career preparation theme for students so that they graduate and can successfully enter the job market. He attended most of the sessions, interacted with participants and voiced his overwhelming support of the project.

○ **CELEBRITY PERSONNEL HIGHLIGHTS:** The LeaderSHIP Forum was a morale-booster for Celebrity personnel. It also served as a venue for Celebrity to recognize them for their service and gave them the opportunity to enhance their leadership and communication skills. It appeared that some were a bit uncomfortable speaking in front of large crowds, but in time, their comfort levels improved and they were able to gauge the appropriate level of complexity for their talks that was commensurate with the audience. All personnel from Celebrity were incredibly enthusiastic, knowledgeable and welcoming. One of the facilitators described them as “outstanding. All interacted with all ages quite beautifully. Their backgrounds in the private sector prior to joining Celebrity greatly added to their responses making the answers quite specific and relative.” Below are just a few who stood out:

- **Adora English**, Corporate Communications Consultant, maintained a high level of excitement through all sessions. Her enthusiasm was contagious, and she was described as warm, welcoming, passionate, and extremely knowledgeable. Students remarked that “she was the most significant...She was clear and very humble which reflected her job and what she does...No matter what was happening, she always had a smile on her face and made us feel special.”
- **Maria Kommata**, First Bridge Officer spoke with students on the bridge. As a 27-year-old female, she was uniquely positioned to provide the female students with an inspiring experience. A facilitator explained that “here was a role model, a young woman who has traveled the world and has such tremendous responsibility.”
- **Gloria Rodrigues** provided one teacher with lots of ideas to take back to her school. She stated: “Ms. Rodrigues provided information regarding sales and that aspect of the cruise line industry. It was interesting to find out that 80% of the bookings are done through travel agencies and that there are no price differences whether booking online or through agents.”
- **Andreas Chazandroulis**, Chief Engineer piqued the interest of many students who were interested in the area of STEM particularly engineering. He was articulate and patiently answered questions in a way that the students could understand.
- **Victor Gonza Mancilla**, Executive Chef and Executive Sous Chefs: Jeff Casinillo, Christos Galanopoulos, Adalberto Palma Herrera, and Claudiu Cupeanu were most gracious when they came out of the kitchen after lunch and took the time to chat at each table. Hospitality and tourism students were particularly interested in asking detailed questions since they were already interested in culinary arts and positions in hotels and/or restaurants.



MOVING FORWARD: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCEMENT AND REPLICATION

LOGISTICS

- Create a “No Cell Phone” rule for most of the sessions. Constant use of phones can be distracting and counterproductive particularly during speaker presentations.
- Schedule the ship tour as close to the beginning of the Forum as possible. Participants, particularly students, were awestruck on board the ship; “their eyes and imaginations enlarged as they gained a deeper understanding of the range of opportunities before them.” That energy and enthusiasm would fuel the rest of the forum.
- Consider including more students from each school identified by a set of criteria so they represent more academies, clubs, and magnets. More students would also allow for students from different grades. High school juniors and sophomores would benefit from the experience and also facilitate greater continuity when seniors graduate.
- Since students are extremely interested in internships, mentorships and shadowing opportunities, incorporate information about such experiences into presentations.
- Emphasize the need for a consistent team and regular attendance for all four sessions. Participants should make a commitment to not only attend all sessions, but also to complete all assignments.
- Allow an opportunity for all teams to present their actions plans as a culminating activity to the entire group. These plans should describe specific strategies rather than general ideas for dissemination.
- Facilitator roles are a critical component of the Forum. They need to:
 - Ensure engagement and accountability of their team.
 - Monitor/assist in the development of implementation plans.
 - Prepare teams for maximum participation/interactions/questions.
 - Review action plans after each session and remain with teams throughout the experiences and activities to enhance the benefits and connections.
 - Create a synthesized summary of action plans, highlights, and recommendations based on the individual information submitted for all four sessions.

ADDITIONAL REPLICATION SUGGESTIONS

- Ask principals to nominate principals at other schools during school selection. If there is already a relationship, a mentored relationship would ensue.
- Develop strategic criteria for selection of students and increase the number of students from each school.
- Plan all sessions and select dates in advance.
- Engage in reflective synthesis feedback loops midway through the forum. This will allow all the facilitators to get together to discuss successes and areas of concern in order to make formative changes as needed.
- Have all participants complete an evaluation that includes transfer of learning.

STUDENTS

Students are active participants in their learning. In order to enhance the experience students, a list of potential activities follows. The intention is not to incorporate all of the activities and/or assignments into a subsequent forum, but rather to select those which are deemed appropriate.

1. Students write a cover letter in response to an actual or potential job opening. Students would have to write about work experience or education, personality traits such as friendly, warm personality, approachability, upbeat, etc., work ethics, love of travel, willingness to learn new skills, and proficiency in multiple languages.
2. Students select a particular cruise industry job and determine the requirements of selected job. This can be done by having each student select a job of interest or have job title written on cards that are color-coded for (1) STEM, (2) hospitality/food/beverage, (3) entertainment, and (4) logistics/corporate: marketing/public relations, sales, accounting, transportation, or retail sales.
3. Ask students to prepare questions on cards prior to each session. These cards would be submitted to facilitators who could preview questions and facilitate students asking questions at appropriate junctures during the session.
4. Have students form four teams, each group representing one of the four categories identified above. Students in each group would become “experts” on the opportunities and characteristics in their chosen category through a series of activities. The student could then engage in cooperative learning through a “jigsaw” technique where groups are rearranged in new groups that include students from all four categories. Thus, students would create their own learning by sharing information.
5. Identify students from schools with audio, video and/or TV production studios. Have these students form a team that documents each session and then disseminate an overview to all participants. This could be in the form of a You Tube type posting, PowerPoint or album of photographs. If feasible, have a Facebook page where students post items about their experiences.
6. During the on-board visit, students could participate in a scavenger hunt or “bingo” activity where they document what they see or participate in. For example, students could mark the titles of the staff they meet, parts of the ship they visit, and/or what they see in different parts of the ship including equipment, retail stores, activities, etc.
7. Another version would be to create a “Fact or Fiction” list of items that students would have to explore by listening to different members of the crew, doing their own explorations or research. Items could include such things as “Where is the captain from?” “How many jetted bathtubs are in the penthouse cabin?” “What is the ratio of passengers to staff?” “Can a married couple work on the ship and share a cabin?” “How many languages spoken on the ship?” “Can you check-in to your cabin with an app?” etc.
8. The Students can be given assignments that can be worked on and returned at the next meeting. For example, at the last session, it was mentioned that performers on average have a starting salary of \$600/week. Students could figure out what the benefits are worth (living expenses, insurance, retirement account, travel benefits, family perks, and discounts), then compare salary to a similar position off the cruise ship.

9. Focusing on careers on land and aboard ship, students can be assigned to research qualifications for different career paths. A cross-content project with core teachers can be developed with emphasis on careers, culture and environmental concerns as they relate to different ports of call. (Hospitality and Tourism Academy Teacher, Homestead Senior High).
10. Vocational education students could gain information to create a cruise ship industry center at their school similar to the auto repair or café centers that exist.

TEACHERS:

- Have teachers and counselors create an artifact that represents part of their action plan.
 - Teachers could create an interdisciplinary lesson plan.
 - Advisors or counselors could create a fact sheet or advising flyer.
 - Another option could be to create a meeting agenda, and/or PowerPoint presentation for use with students and/or faculty.



Forum participants overwhelmingly applauded and appreciated this opportunity and asked over and over again for a repeat. The following student thoughts sum it up:

"I learned to never give up, life is full of opportunities and jobs. Always be humble, do what you love, have fun with what you do...I am now so excited about what the future may hold...this was a life-changing experience...awesome."

EVALUATION

ANN G. BESSELL, PH.D. is President of Bessell Evaluation Training & Research, Inc. (BETR), the successor organization to the University of Miami Evaluation Team (UMEET). She has worked extensively in the area of program evaluation and has been the principal investigator and director for multiple UMEET projects. Under her tutelage, UMEET conducted large evaluations within complex systems such as Miami-Dade County Public Schools Smaller Learning Communities project involving over 30 high schools, NSF studies involving collaborative relationships across the University of Miami, Florida International University, and Florida Atlantic University's Schools of Education, as well as initiatives that partnered UM's Engineering School, School of Communication, Film School and School of Education and Human Development in a single project. Dr. Bessell continues her work in private practice serving as the external evaluator for the Barbara Bush Foundation, Council for Educational Change, School of Engineering at Florida Atlantic University, and Dollar General. Dr. Bessell has a Doctorate in special education, Masters' degrees in health occupations education and microbiology, and a bachelor's degree in medical technology. Her research emphasizes the importance of communication among professionals and teaching effective educational strategies. Her advocacy work has focused on quality of life issues for children facing medical challenges by providing consultancy and mentoring to numerous families grappling with issues concerning the educational and psychosocial needs of a child with serious health problems and, at times, concerning the needs of families dealing with palliative care, death, and/or bereavement. Dr. Bessell has consulted and published research in evaluation and exceptional populations and is a frequent speaker at national- international conferences as well as community functions.

