
News Release

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Contact:
Carole Christianson
Western Association of Food Chains, Inc.
562-497-1012; carole@wafc.com

WAFAC MISSION OF EDUCATING LEADERS STRONGER THAN EVER, DESPITE COVID-19

Lakewood, CA - During this unprecedented year, the WAFAC's work in "Advancing the Food Industry through Education and Leadership" continues to thrive.

Over 400 food industry employees have graduated from the community college Retail Management Certificate Program since January 2020. There are over 3,500 graduates total with several thousand currently enrolled across the nation. With the RMCP courses available 100% online, the approved community colleges did not skip a beat when the entire nation shifted to virtual education in March.

The USC Food Industry Executive Program was modified and enhanced for online implementation in September 2020 with 35 participants attending the eight-day session.

The first Cohort class of the USC Masters, Food Industry Leadership will graduate in November 2020. The WAFAC awarded \$140,000 in Scholarships to the inaugural class. The second Cohort began in August 2020 with WAFAC providing \$220,000 in grants.

"Despite the impact of Covid-19 in the lives of our employees, it is truly inspiring that so many continue their developmental journey. We have record levels of enrollment in the RMC program with associates actively taking accredited college classes, online. Now, more than ever, educating our future leaders is paramount. I am so proud of the creative solutions the WAFAC team have developed to continue advancing education in this unprecedented time" said Greg McNiff, President Chairman of the WAFAC, USC FIEP graduate 1992 and President of Stater Bros. Markets.

The 2021 USC Food Industry Management Program will begin in January. It is anticipated that classes will be online. Applications are in process with enrollment forecasted to fill all 35 seats. Each student is granted a full tuition scholarship from the WAFAC. Companies that have already selected one or more of their associates to attend include Albertsons – Corporate, Southern California, Denver, and Seattle Divisions; Broulim's; Califia Farms; Cub Foods; Ferrara; Gelson's; King Soopers; Nestle; and Raley's. Other Retailers and CPG partners are working to select their candidates this month.

"We are so grateful to the companies and individuals who donate annually to the WAFAC Education Fund. Despite the challenges of 2020 our work in providing advanced education to industry associates continues. As we embark on the 100th year of WAFAC, the true legacy of our work rests in the success of the executives that have emerged to lead the business, deemed "essential", to benefit the people they serve" said Mike Hendry, WAFAC Education Chairman, USC FIMP graduate class of 1995 and EVP Marketing & Merchandising of Northgate Gonzalez Market.

Established in 1921, providing more than \$33.4M in grants, the WAFAC's focus is on delivering educational opportunities for food industry employees. The highly acclaimed Food Industry Management Program at the University of Southern California Marshall School of Business has been available to qualified industry participants for 62 years. In 1974 the USC Food Industry Executive Program was established. Sessions are held in March and September annually. Working with community colleges, the WAFAC expanded its scope in the year 2000, establishing the "Retail Management Certificate Program." The RMCP curriculum is currently available online nationally and endorsed by leading industry organizations including FMI, NGA, CGA and AFMA. The most recent initiative, launched in 2019, is the USC Master's Food Industry Leadership, an intense 16-month curriculum with classes beginning in August.

To learn more about the WAFAC, go to www.wafc.com.

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