The Senator Nat G. Kiefer University of New Orleans Lakefront Arena: An Internship Academic Report

Nicholas Cassara

University of New Orleans

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An Internship Academic Report

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in
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By
Nicholas Cassara
B.A. University of New Orleans, 2012
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"That’s the nature of live events, you can have three months or three minutes to prepare for an event. You have to learn how to roll with it. Welcome to event management.” - Marco Perez

Special thanks to my family, friends, and everyone at UNO.
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Abstract

This report discusses my internship with the Lakefront Arena at the University of New Orleans. Included in this report is a breakdown of the Arena’s management and facilities, internship overview, organization analysis based upon my observations, best practices comparing similar venues, and recommendations to the Lakefront Arena. The internship concluded with a job offer as the interim Campus Booking Coordinator, to which I accepted.

Keywords: event management, event coordinator, UNO Lakefront Arena, venue, facility management, arena.
Introduction

This internship report is the culmination of a 480 hour internship that took place at the UNO Lakefront Arena, from January 2015-August 2015. I was afforded the opportunity to work all areas of the Arena including: management, business office, communications, box office, facilities, the UNO Aquatic Center, and the department of Campus Booking. The latter became my main focus after the Campus Booking manager resigned during the internship and I eventually assumed the Campus Booking Coordinator position. This report will not cover budgets, because of confidentiality. Also, the Arena does not engage in any fundraising or development activities. Fundraising is done through the UNO Foundation. Furthermore, the facility does not organize its own programming. The Lakefront Arena rents out its venues for programming. This report will examine the history and managerial structure of the Lakefront Arena, my internship experience, a SWOT analysis, observations with recommendations, and finally discuss what lessons I took away from this experience.
Chapter 1

Mission

UNO Lakefront Arena

“The Senator Nat G. Kiefer University Of New Orleans Lakefront Arena provides The University of New Orleans community, the Athletic Department, event organizers, and patrons the most comprehensive experience in entertainment, generates revenue for The University of New Orleans, and maintains the facility to ensure public use and attractiveness. The staff develops and provides the services to preserve the Arena’s status as a premier university public assembly facility.”

UNO Aquatic Center

“The mission of the Aquatic Center is to provide the University of New Orleans and the community an outstanding water environment that is exceptionally clean and safe for maintaining a balanced multi-purpose schedule for recreational swimming, instructional swimming and organized athletic competition.”

Campus Booking Statement of Purpose

“Campus Booking is the University Authority for coordination of all public events on the campus of The University of New Orleans. Campus Booking provides all aspects of scheduling & event coordination for public events at the Human Performance Center, Homer L. Hitt Alumni and Visitors Center, and other UNO main campus facilities. Campus Booking assists with event placement to better fit the needs of event organizers. Professional services available for set up, break down, janitorial, and production.”

1“Mission Statement” Lakefront Arena EB SmartSite n.d. Web. 25 August 2015.

2“Aquatic Center Home Page” UNO Aquatic Center aquatic.uno.edu. 2008 Web. 22 August 2015.

History

The UNO Lakefront arena, as it was formally known, opened its doors to the public on November 26, 1983, which coincided with the University of New Orleans’ 25th anniversary. The building was constructed within a few years on the UNO east campus; however the fight to get the appropriate legislative funding took nearly a decade. Thanks to the persistent vision of founding UNO chancellor Homer L. Hitt and with legislative support from Louisiana Senator Nat G. Kiefer, the dream was finally realized. Chancellor Hitt’s proposal to the architecture firm, “Specifically we envision the Assembly Center as a multipurpose facility with a seating capacity of 8,000-10,000 that would make possible large student convocations. We would propose to sponsor large student activity programs in this facility, including athletic contests.”

Since its founding, the Lakefront Arena has been a host to a multitude of events including concerts, family shows, trade conventions, commencements, athletics, theatrical productions, foreign delegate visits, and a papal visit from Pope John Paul II in 1987. In that same year, the Arena was rechristened the Senator Nat G. Kiefer University of New Orleans Lakefront Arena to honor Senator Kiefer who had passed away in 1985. The Arena sustained significant structural damage during Hurricane Katrina in 2005, putting the venue on a three year hiatus until reopening again in 2008. The Lakefront Arena also includes its own natatorium, the UNO Aquatic Center. Opened in conjunction with the Lakefront Arena, the facility boasts two Olympic sized swimming pools, one indoor and one outdoor, a separate diving area, and seating to accommodate 260 people. The department of Campus Booking also comes under the management of the Lakefront Arena, which hosts and accommodates both academic and public

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4 Dupont, 126
functions on the UNO campus. Campus Booking handles reservations for events in the Homer L. Hitt Alumni and Visitors Center, the Human Performance Center, and the Lindy Boggs International Conference Center. The Lakefront Arena with all of its facets, strives to provide first rate venues maintained at the highest quality to service its guests.

**Organization Personnel**

The Lakefront Arena is its own university department, answering to the Vice President of Business Affairs, Greg Lassen. There are a total of 9 departments within the Arena: Management, Facilities, Business Office, Box Office, Communications, Concessions, Security, Aquatic Center, and Campus Booking. (See appendix A).

**Lakefront Arena**

**General Manager** - oversees and manages the entire Arena facility, and Arena departments. Provides management for the Aquatic Center, Campus Booking, and East Campus grounds.

**Assistant General Manager** - assists with booking of the Arena, also oversees bookings at the Lindy Boggs Center and Campus Booking, the social media manager, and is the contact for promoters and Arena staff.

**Facilities Manager** - directs all mechanical, custodial, and production staff. Also graphs CAD layouts for venue.

**Assistant to Facilities Manager** - manages the in-house production crew, coordinates custodial operations, and assists with event setups and breakdowns.

**Business Manager** - is responsible for all financial accounting of the Arena. Also supervises the Box Office, Payroll, and Human Resources.
Payroll and HR Manager - manages payroll, employee leave, and Human Resources.

Box Office Manager - is the liaison to Ticketmaster, the financial reporter, and handles box-office customer service.

Assistant Box Office Manager - supervises and trains box-office staff, and handles box-office complaints.

Concessions Manager - is responsible for sales, prices, and marketing of concessions. Also oversees the SPOTLIGHTS lounge facility and manages Arena catering.

Assistant Concessions Manager - handles daily operations, inventory, and supplies ordering. Also supplies concessions for Campus Booking events.

UNO Aquatic Center

Aquatic Center Manager - schedules usage of the facility to teams, clubs, and camps, oversees and maintains pool operations and schedules pool staff.

Assistant Aquatic Center Manager - Schedules life guards, inspects and maintains pool chemicals, coordinates pool events, and preserves equipment.

Campus Booking

Campus Booking Manager - Coordinates and hosts events in the Human Performance Center, the Homer L. Hitt Alumni and Visitors Center, and the Lindy Boggs International Conference Center. Schedules appropriate staff to work events.
**Arena Employment Statistics and Credentials**

The Lakefront Arena employs five hundred employees including full time, part-time, contract, as well as volunteer staff. The Arena is a part of the ArenaNetwork that is a national organization of arena venues from across the United States. This is a resource the Lakefront Arena uses when booking shows or concerts. The ArenaNetwork also stages conferences calls in regards to upcoming concerts and shows. Marco Perez and David Armond are active members of the International Association of Venue Managers, IAVM. IAVM is a source of information regarding the venue management trade. IAVM also publishes *Public Assembly Event Management* which is a scholastic text. Marco Perez has used this textbook when teaching sports management. I also used it when researching this report. I also used this when researching for this report as it is a valuable tool for both professionals and students.

**Finances**

As previously mentioned, the Lakefront Arena functions as a department of the University of New Orleans. They do not engage in any fundraising or development endeavors. The Arena exists as an auxiliary service to UNO or as Assistant General Manager David Armond explains, “We still get expenses from the university, plus surplus, but we still have to make revenue.” The facility is self-sustaining with its yearly budget based on upcoming shows and taking into account the types of shows put on the previous year.

The Arena, like the rest of the university, is impacted by both revenue increases and decreases. General Manager Marco Perez explains the yearly budget, “There are huge fluctuations. There will be some years that are gangbusters while others are flat. It is completely contingent on touring shows.” The same principal also applies to the Aquatic Center and Campus Booking. Campus Booking, though part of the Arena, is in full service to the main campus and the Lindy Boggs International Conference Center. “Campus Booking manages any events that it knows about, and will funnel those funds back to the general fund.” These event revenues are generated for the university and thereby provide a steady income for UNO.

**Programming**

The Lakefront Arena does not create any original programming. The Arena, and its associated facilities, function as rental facilities only, providing the public venues for business, athletic, and entertainment experiences. Its only original programming is the University of New Orleans’ commencement exercises and basketball games. The basketball courts can be assembled and disassembled, making for easy transition between events. Commencement amenities are a stage and appropriate floor seating. This can range from a few hundred chairs (see appendix B) upwards to one thousand (see appendix C). The Aquatic Center is exclusive to swim meets and other aquatic activities. The natatorium also regularly hosts Delgado Community College’s offshore safety training program as well as U.S. Navy diving programs. Campus Booking holds receptions and athletic oriented events in the Hitt Alumni Center and Human Performance Center

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6 Perez, Marco. Personal Interview. 19 Aug. 2015.

7 Perez, Marco. Personal Interview. 19 Aug. 2015.
respectively. Business conferences, meetings, and luncheons take place in the Lindy Boggs
International Conference Center.

**The Facilities**

**Lakefront Arena**

The Arena seats between 8,000-10,000 occupants, with floor seating depending on the event configuration. Some of the configurations include *theatre with 3,000* accommodating 3,043 (see appendix D), *expanded theatrical* accommodating 4,695 (see appendix E), *full house* accommodating 5,468 (see appendix F), and *basketball* accommodating 8,743 (see appendix G). All configurations are based on the needs of the promoter and the event. The arena also includes an auxiliary gymnasium for basketball practice complete with a separate weight room. The Arena floor acts as the main court. During commencements, the auxiliary gym serves as a staging area for graduates before they proceed onto the main floor (see appendix H). In addition to the event area, there are office spaces for event production, accounting, management, and other production staff outside the Arena floor. There is press box seating across from the ADA floor seating for the physically disabled event goers. SPOTLIGHTS is a lounge area were guests can enjoy refreshments in an intimate setting prior to a show or can host their own special events (see appendix I). The Privateer Room can serve in a multitude of ways: artist meet and greet area, lounge, or green room, depending on the nature of the event (see appendix J). These closely approximated amenities make the Lakefront Arena an accessible and multifaceted facility catering to both the artist and guests of the event.
**UNO Aquatic Center**

The UNO Aquatic Center supports two olympic sized swimming pools, fifty meters each. The eight lane indoor pool ranges from a shallow end of four feet to a deep end of twenty-five feet (see appendix K). The indoor pool can host swim meets, state swim finals, and swim club events. The six lane outside pool is four feet deep across (see appendix L). The outdoor facility is a popular spot for pool parties and other aquatic events and there are both mobile and permanent snack bars for concessions. The Aquatic Center facilitates two LED scoreboards for team usage.

**Campus Booking (Lindy Boggs International Conference Center)**

The Lindy Boggs International Conference Center was constructed in 2002 to serve the meeting needs of the business, government, and professional communities. The Boggs facility occupies 20,000 square ft. and is located at the Research and Technology Park at the rear of the main UNO Campus. The facility is comprised of twenty meeting rooms on two floors with rooms that are also in a shared hallway next door in the Center for Resource Management, also known as the CERM Building. The Boggs’ first floor includes two major auditoriums, one fixed and one multipurpose with five adjacent breakout rooms. There are two multipurpose rooms on the second floor with maximum seating for ninety each. On the CERM side of the building there are three breakout rooms each with capacity for sixteen and three medium sized conference rooms each with capacity for forty. Adjacent to the breakout rooms are two slightly larger conference rooms accommodating ninety total. On the second floor, CERM side, a multipurpose room connected to a servery that seats one hundred and fifty. Each of the rooms, depending on
square footage, can be arranged in either banquet style or classroom/lecture style (see appendix M). Banquet setup involves round tables, with ten seats each. Classroom/lecture setup involves all the conference tables facing forward, in separate rows with four seats per table. Other setups with conference tables can be boardroom or workshop setups. Major changes occurred to the Boggs in May 2015, with the New Orleans Police Department assuming control of two-thirds of the facility for its police academy.

**Campus Booking (Homer L. Hitt Alumni and Visitors Center)**

Built in 2000, to honor the founding Chancellor Homer L. Hitt, this facility, like the Arena, serves multiple functions. It is home to both the UNO Alumni Association and the UNO Federal Credit Union. For the purposes of this report I will be focusing on the Alumni Center ballroom, the Geoghegan Grand Ballroom (see appendix N). Campus Booking serves as the scheduling coordinator for all of the Hitt Center functions. The ballroom can be configured to accommodate receptions, board meetings, showers, banquets, and wedding ceremonies. However, the room is more suited to banquets than to meetings because of its layout and amenities. It is a reception hall used for academic and public functions. The ballroom also boasts a spectacular view of Lake Pontchartrain complete with a balcony. For the guests' convenience, the room also provides a pull down screen with built in projector with audio-visual for presentations. Guests also have the option to rent out the downstairs foyer if the event requires more space. This option is often needed for weddings and larger receptions. Guests also have access to the prep kitchen for storage of any refreshments.
Campus Booking, (Human Performance Center, HPC)

This facility is located in front of the main campus. It initially served as UNO’s home base for its basketball teams until the program re-located to the Lakefront Arena. Campus Booking only coordinates use of the main gym floor as the department of Recreational and Intramural Sports oversees the adjacent fields. The HPC has three basketball courts with square footage of 15,470 including bleacher seating capacity of 880 on opposite court sides, with total seating capacity 1,760. There is an upper mezzanine for dinning space or extra seating. The HPC is booked exclusively for athletic oriented events. The building is home to UNO Volleyball which gets first priority scheduling of the facilities. Some examples of the types of events that have been held at the HPC are sports camps, karate tournaments, cheerleading clinical, and roller derby (see appendix O).
Chapter 2

**Internship Narrative**

This internship was a collaborative effort between the three departments of the Lakefront Arena: the Arena, the UNO Aquatic Center, and Campus Booking. My initial responsibilities were to assist all managers in all departments that report to the Lakefront Arena. I was the first graduate intern to work at the venue and this experience was a comprehensive internship, exposing me to all aspects of the facility. I also worked on one continuous independent project throughout the internship, the new Campus Booking website. However, the Campus Booking manager resigned in the early portion of my internship, causing a refocus and shift in my responsibilities to be geared more towards the department of Campus Booking. Towards the end of the internship, I was hired on as the interim Campus Booking Coordinator. This position afforded me more managerial responsibilities in Campus Booking events and operations.

**Initial Responsibilities**

**Lakefront Arena**

I attended managerial staff meetings during which the organization discussed past events, departmental comments, and planned upcoming events. I was assigned weekly tasks with different Arena departments. Management permitted me to observe meetings that related to event scheduling and facility walkthroughs. I assisted the business and payroll offices with processing event financial receipts and analyzed payroll spreadsheets. I followed the box office employees through event ticketing operations. I spent the majority of my time during events with Arena
Facilities taking on multiple job duties, such as providing facility information to guests as an usher and cleaning the main staging area between events. During school commencements, I facilitated audio technical support as well as rearranging the arena floor seating to turn around the venue for the next graduation.

**Campus Booking**

At first, Campus Booking assigned me to be an event coordinator. This task involved contacting the event representative to introduce myself and find out about any last minute changes to the event. I was also charged with setting up the venue configurations for the Homer L. Hitt Alumni and Visitors Center, Human Performance Center, and the Lindy Boggs International Conference Center. Campus Booking monitors the entire event with appropriate staff to resolve any unforeseen issues. I acted as the departmental representative at these functions. I reported any matters needing attention from the previous event and presented them to the Campus Booking manager for evaluation.

**Aquatic Center**

In the Aquatic Center I managed the front desk. This role involved checking in guests and keeping a tally of all pool attendees. There was also the financial aspect of signing guests up for pool memberships and swim lessons. I also organized and composed a draft of the summer schedule for swim lessons. Finally, I set up and broke down all miscellaneous pool equipment and event amenities.
Special Project

Campus Booking Website

Marco Perez gave me the opportunity to revamp and update the Campus Booking website. The previous website had become obsolete and catered to only UNO personnel. When the new website is completed it will cater to both UNO and outside events, using the data collected from all the university venues. When made online accessible, the site will advertise the different spaces on campus and act as a consolidated online request form expediting the venue selection process. Users are provided with venue specifications such as square footage, room configurations and potential rental fees, all dependent on the nature of the event. Finally, when the site is fully active, it will serve as a great communication tool between venue coordinators as emails will be sent directly to them when an individual or group is requesting a booking. All the concise information is displayed in an easy-to-read email sent to all the proper venue facilitators.

Internship Transition

Upon the Campus Booking manager’s resignation in late February, Arena Management assigned me to act as the Campus Booking liaison to the Lakefront Arena. In this role, I attended Campus Booking staff meetings that dealt with the upcoming schedule of events, employee feedback, and strategy for improvement. I was tasked with contacting the event representatives, as in my prior duties, but this time informed the guests of the departmental changes and new policies. In addition, one of my new tasks was managing the Campus Booking files. I had to ensure that all of the event details were documented in the folders and that all payments were procured and deposited. I attended both staff meetings for Campus Booking and the Lakefront Arena, keeping myself informed of all the changes that happened to the department and its effect
on the rest of the Arena. In early May, the Boggs facility was leased to the New Orleans Police Training Academy and I served as the point of contact between NOPD and the University for Boggs events. I was also responsible for recommending a new weekend employee to be hired to relieve extra demands on the existing employees.

**The New Interim Campus Booking Coordinator**

In July I assumed the managerial duties of Campus Booking. This job greatly expanded upon my prior duties with the department. I now oversee all events and operations that pertain to Campus Booking. Using EventBooking, the calendar program used by the Lakefront Arena, I am able to see what events are confirmed or on date request hold. When an event is on hold, it means there is no license agreement between Campus Booking and the event representative, nor have any financial transactions occurred. The License Agreement (see appendix Q) is the official agreement between the University of New Orleans and the event representative. It outlines the prices agreed between both parties, the event holder’s responsibilities, venue regulations and limitations, and finally the university’s liability. The two agreements are slightly different pertaining to Lindy Boggs and Hitt Alumni Center, but outline the same contractual components. In regards to the HPC, Campus Booking requires the renter to be insured. It is mandatory that a proof of insurance must be shown to Campus Booking. An event is officially confirmed once the license agreement and all proper documents are signed and full payment is received. All financials are deposited with the university and handled through the Arena business office.

I serve as the primary communicator between Campus Booking and the event representative. I schedule facility tours for the event host, to assist them in visualizing the venue dimensions and room setup in its entirety. These tours are especially helpful for first time event holders new to
the lakefront campus. I determine what events are capable of being held in our venues based on building capacity and event duration. Larger events are routed to alternate venues on the main campus, such as the University Center or UNO Newman Center, which are not managed by Campus Booking. I collaborate with the Academic Space Advisor to identify UNO related events that need academic space on campus because Campus Booking no longer handles classroom rentals. These instances become the Academic Space Advisor’s responsibility to properly place the event in the appropriate facility.

This internship underwent major changes. It progressed from a comprehensive internship to a sudden, immediate focus on one department. Each area of the Arena serves in different capacities, but all the relevant core functions of each department: scheduling, venue management, and finances carried over to the new position.
Chapter 3

**SWOT Analysis**

This chapter of the report focuses on the SWOT analysis of the Lakefront Arena organization. SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, this analysis is based upon my observations during the internship.

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**Strengths**

I. Dedicated Staff

All members of the Lakefront Arena staff are committed to their jobs. There is outstanding communication with a sense of camaraderie amongst employees. Throughout the
internship I noticed staff members consistently helping out and lending their services to the other departments.

II. Reputation

Since its founding in 1983, the Lakefront Arena has hosted the biggest names in entertainment. From music acts such as Eric Clapton, Lionel Richie, and Nirvana to comedy shows such as Robin Williams, and family entertainment such as the Shrine Circus and Harlem Globetrotters, numerous entertainment stars have performed at the venue. To ensure event success the Lakefront Arena maintains an excellent standard for its visiting guests, but also for the promoters renting the Arena. The dedicated staff maintains the facility to an excellent standard that guests have come to expect from the venue. During my internship, Marco Perez paid great attention to details such as keeping the area clean, being attentive, and most importantly, always having the guest’s best interest in mind. Guests and promoters have become accustomed to the Arena’s high standard and the venue continues to maintain this high standard.

III. Venue Configuration

The Arena was built with multipurpose function in mind to serve as both an athletic and entertainment facility. The venue can be turned from a basketball court or a large concert hall with a rationally intimate theatre configuration. The facility with its 10,000 seats provides an intimate space as opposed to the larger venues downtown. The Arena’s symmetrical design seating and great acoustics ensure guests never have a bad seat and can hear from anywhere in the venue.
IV. Multiple Social Media Channels

The Arena’s main channels of marketing are Facebook, Twitter, *Lakefront Lagniappe*, and the main Arena website. Presently, the Arena has nearly 1,000 followers on Twitter and 7,000 likes on Facebook with 53,500 site visits. *Lakefront Lagniappe* is the Arena’s email newsletter that promotes upcoming shows, discounts on tickets, and pre-ordering via Ticketmaster. Its main website offers all Arena services in easily found links with a centrally focused events calendar. The Arena’s multifaceted marketing channels assure connectivity with its guests and is constantly updated with any new event information such as advertising of upcoming events or any show cancelations.

V. Long Standing Relationships with Promoters

The Lakefront Arena maintains an excellent standard not only for its visiting guests, but also for the promoters renting the venue. Yearly shows such as *Sesame Street Live* and *Disney On Ice* have become staples of the Arena’s entertainment calendar. The Arena has long ties and agreements with the event promoters, Vee Corporation and Feld Entertainment. The Lakefront Arena is also an active member of ArenaNetwork which handles concert tours, marketing shows, and communication between client venues. The facility engages with national promoter LiveNation and New Orleans’ own Beaver Productions for concert tours and shows. The staff work closely with promoters in all aspects of the show from the initial planning to event set up and final breakdown. These longstanding ties ensure high quality shows keep coming to the Arena, which in turn fills up its event calendar with yearly revenue producing events.
Weaknesses

I. Staff Shortage

Like the rest of UNO, the Arena is susceptible to budget cuts. The staff chart indicates, (see appendix A) the number of employees that have been laid off as a result of the cuts. An example of these cuts occurred when all the full-time Lindy Boggs employees were laid off and the department of Campus Booking assumed control of the facility and its booking. Also, new federal regulations were passed last year that put limits on part-time employee hours, now limited to only twenty-nine per week. This causes major labor shortages in event staffing. To resolve this the full-time staff take on additional responsibilities and other departments lend their own employees to assist the event staff.

II. Facility Structure Issues

The Lakefront Arena is only able to accommodate up to 80,000 pounds per show that includes light rigging and effects. Because of this weight restriction the Arena has had to pass on shows. Also, the Arena floor’s hexagonal shape cuts off potential space that could be utilized for more floor/seating space. Another issue is the Aquatic Center has a dropped ceiling, which is not the best design for a pool space as individual tiles could potentially slip into the pool. The tiles also fluctuate whenever there is a pressure change in the area.

III. Inconsistent Website Presence

The Campus Booking’s website is extremely dated compared to other UNO websites. This is taking into account the new Campus Booking website currently being built. When the Campus Booking manager resigned and the majority of Lindy Boggs was leased to NOPD, none of the website’s content was revised to reflect these changes. This caused confusion with
potential clients as guests assumed all of the Boggs facility was still available for lease and they asked for the previous manager. Campus Booking also lacks a mission statement. Its website only lists the department’s function as opposed to an easy to comprehend statement. Both the Arena and the Aquatic Center have a mission statement.

IV. No Volunteer, Internship, or Student Worker Program

The Arena currently lacks a volunteer program. Given that the part-time staff who relieve the full-time staff during events, now is limited as well, volunteers could be utilized to help at no extra costs. There is also the untapped resource of utilizing UNO students from programs such as Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism (HRT), or Arts Administration, for possible internships or student employment.

V. Location Visibility

While the facility has a social media presence, the venue's location hinders it greatly. It is far removed from the downtown area where most of the major entertainment facilities are located and is not on the main university campus. The Arena is also not a prime campus destination for students, resulting in minimal attendance at athletic events. These issues are reflected when compared to the Cajundome in Lafayette, Louisiana, with 29,000 likes on Facebook with 116,000 visits and 5,000 followers on Twitter. The Cajundome is also located next to the University of Louisiana at Lafayette’s major sports fields. The facility also has its own online mobile application.
Opportunities

I. Aquatic Center grant

Janice Roth, the Aquatic Center manager, is currently writing a grant to the Sugar Bowl Foundation to purchase new starting blocks for the pool. These new blocks can benefit the facility by modernizing the pool area which can then attract more potential swim teams and clients to increase pool attendance.

II. Increase in Promoters Moving to New Orleans/Gulf Coast Area

These past few years have been beneficial for the local entertainment venues in the Gulf Coast Region as AEG Live and LiveNation have established offices in the New Orleans area. The number of shows should increase in the coming years giving more event opportunities for big name acts to appear at the Lakefront Arena and bring more exposure to the venue.

Threats

I. Further Budget Cuts

There exists the continual threat of further budget cuts to higher education in Louisiana. The effect of these cuts includes reduced department budgets and minimal staffing that then narrows the number of events at the Arena and its fellow departments.

II. Growing Number of Similar Venues in New Orleans

The Arena exists in a separate market from the Mercedes-Benz Superdome and Smoothie King Center because of the different venue capacities. However, there is a fairly new facility, located next to the Superdome called Champions Square. This outdoor venue, opened in 2010, is capable of hosting concerts for 10,000 attendees and is able to cater smaller events such as

weddings and corporate gatherings. This venue could draw potential clients and shows away from the Arena.
Chapter 4

Best Practices

I. Volunteer Program

Cuts to higher education have impacted the Lakefront Arena tremendously. These budget cuts have led to significant staff layoffs on top of new federal regulations have that have reduced part-time employee hours to twenty-nine per week. These layoffs have caused the existing Arena staff to take on additional responsibilities with limited part-time employees to fully staff the Arena. There are alternatives to help work within the budget constraints without putting much strain. One of these remedies is the use of volunteers. An article from The NonProfit Times discusses budget cuts and their impact on non-profits:“While waiting for an economic turnaround, nonprofits will continue to deal with decreased federal and state funding and finding solutions to help them remain operational. For some, an increased reliance on volunteers and corporate partnerships have become a stop-gap to the human capital and fiscal crises they face.”

Some colleges and universities, like non-profits, have resorted to using alternate creative means to help alleviate the budget, but The Arena currently lacks a university volunteer program.

Harford Community College, located in Bel Air, Maryland, offers a unique example of a university arena utilizing volunteers. Its APG Federal Credit Union Arena, which opened in 2012, is similar to the Lakefront Arena in that it accommodates both athletic and academic functions. What is intriguing is the use of volunteers for not just the arena facility, but also for

the rest of the university. Volunteers can apply for positions such as ushers, event personnel, and customer service representatives, using an online application.\textsuperscript{10}

University volunteer programs are also active at larger schools such as St. Petersburg College, a state college located in St. Petersburg, Florida. The program started in 1993, has an impressive number of volunteers and scope of service: “Last year, approximately 970 people gave their time, energy and care to help students and the community through volunteer service at St. Petersburg College. Annually, volunteers contribute roughly 20,000 hours to nearly 70 college departments and programs.”\textsuperscript{11} These types of volunteer programs should be utilized by the University of New Orleans to help alleviate staff shortages at the Arena.

II. Online Content

The Arena’s public face is not only the facility itself, but in this tech-centric age, having an online presence is key. The Arena has established itself with multiple social media accounts including Facebook, Twitter, and their own \textit{Lakefront Lagniappe} email blasts. The Arena and its associated websites have extremely different webpage interfaces and lack site uniformity. These sites are how the departments communicate their business to the general public online. \textit{Public Assembly Facility Management: Principles and Practices} states the importance a facility’s communication, “There is a correlation between a facility’s success and the processes and procedures by which it accepts business.”\textsuperscript{12} Websites with different interfaces can create user

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{10}“Current Volunteer Opportunities” \textit{Harford Community College} Harford Community College. n.d. Web. 25 September 2015.
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Esckilson, 55
\end{itemize}
confusion and a lack of consistency in the organization can send away potential customers. The University of Louisiana at Lafayette’s Cajundome website serves as an example of a good consolidated website. The venue is of similar size to the Lakefront Arena with a seating capacity of thirteen thousand. In addition to the main facility, patrons can rent out the Convention Center located adjacent to the Cajundome. The website includes links related to the main facility and its various departments and services and is concise with uniform tabs for all the departments. Additionally, each tab is single paged with downloadable PDF files of room floor plans and an availability calendar. While the current UNO Campus Booking site offers an online form, this form is only available to the UNO campus community. Keeping all online content consistent minimizes consumer confusion, and by providing adequate information helps potential clients who decide to book campus facilities stay informed.

III. Mission Statement

Another point of confusion comes from the office of Campus Booking. It is the only Arena department not to have a mission statement. The website only describes the department’s function. Similar university event planning departments lack mission statements too, only stating provided services. However, the departments that have a mission statement clearly illustrate to the consumer using the facility the capabilities and scope of service. “As a communication tool, the mission statement can drive interest in your organization, contributing to the achievement of the ultimate nonprofit's noble goals.” The mission statement not only conveys the purpose of a


department, but can cut down on unnecessary extra content. Throughout the internship, I would often have to repeatedly explain to potential clients the function of Campus Booking. With a mission statement readily available I believe these calls would become rare occurrences.

One example of a mission statement for a university booking facility is at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. The university has policies covering all aspects of campus and its venues, with the general policy philosophical statement at the top of the web page:

“Willamette University's facilities and grounds are primarily designed and reserved for supporting the educational mission of the institution. Secondarily, Willamette space is used to facilitate related activities of significant interest to the University. The facilities and grounds also may be made available to other users for approved purposes (activities directly related to Willamette's mission) if space and staff support is available after meeting all other needs.”

This policy states the exact purpose and function of renting university venues and clearly states the scheduling priorities for events in only three sentences. This philosophical statement is also in line with the university’s mission statement. UNO would benefit by having its Campus Booking office have a mission statement. This statement would help clearly define Campus Booking’s services with a mission statement in line with UNO’s educational mission. The consumer will be attracted to the website with a clear definition of the services provided and streamline the booking process.

IV. Social Media Visibility

The facility boasts a following for its public shows and the community at large. However, the venue lacks a campus presence with low student attendance at functions like basketball games. The attending crowd is always dwarfed by the number of open seats. The Arena was built...

with the intent of hosting both university and public events. Throughout my internship, there was never an incentive to attend basketball games. It was not because of the team’s athletic ability, but there was nothing attracting the crowds to the Arena. The venue is underutilized by the campus. The social media strategy should not only serve the public need, but also the needs of the university community.

The Rupp Arena, located in Lexington, Kentucky and home to the University of Kentucky basketball team, engages its university community through social media. The Rupp Arena has boosted its social media presence, resulting in the venue becoming an online powerhouse next to the likes of legendary venues such as Madison Square Garden and The Staples Center. Part of that appeal is how the marketing staff engage the students. “Twitter lets members of the marketing team visit campuses to hide event tickets and give clues to their location even as students are searching. They are getting a benefit by clicking.” Rather than just post updates on upcoming events, the facility is actively engaging with its students, and also having fun with the event promotions. The venue is selling its experience to the students.

Another example of increasing social media presence is developing mobile applications. For-profit stadiums such as the new Levi’s Stadium in San Francisco and non-profits such as the National WWII Museum in New Orleans have developed mobile apps. The Levi’s Stadium app with its concession service, showed increased revenue produced from guests using its app, “Having a mobile app that allowed for in-seat food and beverage delivery helped produce

$802,791 in revenue at Levi’s stadium last season.” In addition to advertising services, apps can serve as a guide to the venue. The National WWII Museums’s app contains facility maps, links to services such as ticket purchasing, and an events calendar all consolidated into one convenient application. The Lakefront Arena can benefit with investing in mobile technology. Using mobile apps can boast a venue’s revenue stream and also improve the guest experience.


Chapter 5

Recommendations

Using the SWOT and best practices as a framework, here are my recommendations for the UNO Lakefront Arena organization.

I. Increase Social Media Interaction with UNO

As previously mentioned, the Lakefront Arena lacks a student presence. It works great as a public entertainment venue, but is low on student involvement. The Lakefront Arena needs to be more active in marketing specifically to the UNO students. The Arena could make their presence known at UNO. “Greater support for the team from the student body can help their energy and encourage them on the court. At the same time, large student attendance will probably increase the amount of potential recruits.”

The facility can hold social media contests for free tickets to UNO athletic events or collaborate with concert promoters for VIP event packages, like a meet and greet with an artist or speaker. Driving student interest in the facility will help increase both attendance and interest in the venue and likewise become a great opportunity for university growth.

II. Implement a Volunteer/Student Worker/Internship program

The Arena has been through multiple budget cuts and employee layoffs, causing the existing staff to take on additional job duties. One possible solution is the creation of a volunteer office at the Arena or to have Human Resources create volunteer applications. This would bring additional event personnel to the arena without dramatically affecting the yearly budget. Another

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way to get more employees without dramatic cost increase is to hire more student workers during events. UNO employs student workers in its various departments and the Lakefront Arena should utilize this option.

There is also an internship program. The International Association of Venue Managers, IAVM, engages in mentoring programs with venues and students across the country who are interested in public assembly management.20 UNO’s program in Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism deals in events and guests relations and is a well suited program from which interns can be recruited. The Lakefront Arena would also be an ideal place to intern to help hone the HRT students’ skills in hospitality. Another potential academic department is Arts Administration, which specializes in teaching non-profit management. The Arena exposes students to all sorts of events, including the planning, coordination, and execution of live events, all while working at a non-profit organization.

III. Create a Lakefront Arena Mobile App

The Arena can help increase its online presence with the introduction of a mobile application. This proposed application could include event specific facility layouts for parking and a venue seating chart complete with customer service and restroom locations. Given the current trend towards paperless ticketing, it could even include electronic tickets to present to the ushers. While a concessions service would not be as advantageous for concerts at the Arena, this service could be especially useful at the family events. I noticed during my internship that parents would accompany large groups of children. The Arena app would help out the parents tremendously with ordering food and locating restrooms, making their visit much more

enjoyable. An app with these features would provide guests with the best event experience while simultaneously producing revenue for the Lakefront Arena.

IV. Rent Out Arena Space During Non-Event Days

Since part of the Lindy Boggs International Conference Center is now being leased out to the New Orleans Police Department, Campus Booking can no longer book as many events. Meanwhile, the Arena only advertises SPOTLIGHTS during the Holiday season for personal events such as holiday parties and receptions. “These smaller scale events, although extremely valuable to the corporate and private business bottom lines, are wonderful for filling up your event spaces those 355 days.” Booking SPOTLIGHTS and the Privateer Room year round would provide an additional source of revenue for the facility during down time between larger events. Campus Booking can assist the Arena staff in booking the two rooms while collaborating on event setup and help fill the gap left by the loss of the Lindy Boggs facility.

V. Implement a New Campus Booking Mission Statement

Campus Booking is the only division within the Lakefront Arena organization not to have a mission statement. It looks out of place next to the other two departments of the Arena and the Aquatic Center. The mission statement should be well written and concise to ensure that potential clients fully understand the department and its services. One example of mission statement for Campus Booking can be:

The Mission of Campus Booking is to accommodate both academic and public events on the campus of the University of New Orleans, Homer L. Hitt Alumni and Visitor’s Center, Lindy Boggs International Conference Center, and Human Performance Center. The University offices and departments maintain first

21 Collins, Jana. “Outside the Box: Non-game days are the time to capitalize on marketing your stadium’s corporate and private event space.” Facility Manager Aug./Sept. 2014: 34. Print.
priority scheduling while also extending these venues for public events. These locations utilize the spaces for receptions, conferences, meetings, and organized athletic competitions with excellent service and proper staffing to guarantee event success.

This statement is clear, concise, and augments the services of the department.
Conclusion

The Lakefront Arena has served the University of New Orleans and metro area for over three decades by providing audiences a first rate venue for entertainment events. The Arena has a reputation as a premier venue in the New Orleans area with a long standing relationship with national and local event promoters. The Arena’s well trained staff has committed a standard of excellence to the facility. I observed through my internship the hardships the Lakefront Arena faces with limited staff and budget cuts. If these budget cuts continue, the Arena will continue to be limited in its capacity in leasing the facility to promoters and revenue generating events. The facility must also make a greater effort to reach out to the UNO community, for which it was intended to support. The Arena must find new creative ways to generate revenue that will alleviate its limited budget. With national promoters establishing new offices in the New Orleans area, the communication between promoters and the number of potential events should increase in the coming years.

The Arena made a significant staff change in Campus Booking. During the internship, I was hired as the interim Campus Booking Coordinator, overseeing all event operations for the department of Campus Booking. Through my time as both an intern and staff member, I learned the importance of customer service, attention to detail, and hospitality. Since the end of the internship I have engaged in the development of the new Campus Booking website along with a new departmental mission statement. These steady changes to the department will ensure its success in further developing its service to the university community and general public.
Works Cited


Collins, Jana. “Outside the Box: Non-game days are the time to capitalize on marketing your stadium’s corporate and private event space.” Facility Manager Aug./Sept. 2014: 34. Print.

Works Cited Cont.


Perez, Marco. Personal Interview. 19 Aug. 2015.


Appendix List

A. Lakefront Arena Organization Chart
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C. Large scale graduation,
D. Theatre 3000 w/barricade
E. Expanded Theatrical
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Campus Booking License Agreement

LICENSE AGREEMENT

THIS AGREEMENT, made and entered into this October 16, 2015, by and between the University of New Orleans, a member of the University of Louisiana System, hereinafter called "University," and University Events, 141 McDuffie Street, Suite 200, New Orleans, LA 70118, hereinafter called "Licensor.

1. USE OF PREMISES. For and in consideration for the license fee and charges hereinafter specified to be paid by the Licensee, the University does grant to the Licensee the use of the

ALUMNI CENTER – GEDDES GRAND BALLROOM

and all premises and/or facilities associated with this event in and around the facility for the following purpose and for no other purposes whatsoever without the written consent of the University:

Wedding Reception
Scheduled Event Date: Monday, September 20, 2015, 7:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.
Scheduled Move-In/Out: 8:00 p.m.
Scheduled Move-Out: immediately after event

in conjunction with the move-in of the Event until the completion of the move-out of the Event homoconomica works.

2. LICENSE FEE.

2.1 LICENSE FEE.

The Licensee agrees to pay a license fee in the amount of $5,400.00 due in full 21 days prior to start of event in the form of a check or money order payable to the University of New Orleans.

The Licensee agrees to pay a damage deposit in the amount of $1,500.00 that will be returned 14 days after the event, less any and all deductions necessary to cover damage charges which University would encounter or charge in connection with the Event. Any ore charges will be deducted from the damage deposit.

2.2 LIQUIDATED DAMAGES.

A concurrence to the license fee and the damage deposit, if any, due to a breach of this Agreement shall be made by the University, as liquidated damages, if the Licensee shall, for any reason whatsoever, cancel this contract within 120 days prior to the commencement date, at least 21 days prior to the commencement date, in any event of any cancellation by the Licensor, regardless of notice given, University shall be entitled for any and all deductions under the University's right to retain said deposit as security for damage to the real estate or personal property to be lost or damaged by reason of any breach of the terms contained in this Agreement, and for any and all costs, expenses and/or attorney's fees incurred by University as a result of such breach. In the event of any breach of this Agreement, the University shall not be liable for any and all damages or property damage caused by the act, negligence of the University and its respective officers, agents, servants and employees, fire and against any and all claims, demands, expense and liability arising out of injury or death to any person or damage, loss or destruction of any property which may occur on or about the premises or which may arise therefrom, or in any way grow out of, or in any way result from, the Licensor, its agents, subcontractors, employees, and/or the use and occupation of the premises by the Licensee or its agents or any use of the said premises by the Licensee or its agents, subcontractors, or employees.

3. DISPOSITION OF LEASE IN DEFAULT. Licensee shall defend, protect, indemnify, save and hold harmless the University and its respective officers, agents, servants and employees, fire and against any and all claims, demands, expense and liability arising out of injury or death to any person or damage, loss or destruction of any property which may occur on or about the premises or which may arise therefrom, or in any way grow out of, or in any way result from, the Licensor, its agents, subcontractors, employees, and/or the use and occupation of the premises by the Licensee or its agents or any use of the said premises by the Licensee or its agents, subcontractors, or employees.

4. EVENT PERIOD.

The University shall obtain necessary staffing, including security, medical personnel, police, custodial and other personnel deemed necessary by the University. All events shall be the sole responsibility of the Licensee. The University shall be the exclusive, on-site contact for all events of the Licensee. The University shall not be held liable for any of the foregoing for which it is not held liable in any event of any event of the Licensee. The University shall not be liable for failure to perform any of its obligations under this Agreement. The University shall not be liable for failure to perform under any such event or any event of the Licensee. The University shall not be liable for failure to perform any of its obligations under this Agreement. The University shall not be liable for failure to perform any of its obligations under this Agreement. The University shall not be liable for failure to perform any of its obligations under this Agreement. The University shall not be liable for failure to perform any of its obligations under this Agreement.
14. LOSS OF USE OF BUILDING. Should the space covered by this contract or any part thereof be destroyed or damaged by fire or by any other cause, or if any other casualty, riot or civil disturbance, strike, act of God, or seizure of the police power or other similar occurrence shall render the fulfillment of this contract by University impracticable, the University shall not in any way be liable or responsible to Licensee for any damage or loss sustained thereby. If because of an emergency such as, but not limited to, a major storm, flood, utility failure, fire, civil disorder, a proclaimed state of emergency, or an emergency-related University closure and the Event is canceled or terminated, the University shall not be liable or responsible to the Licensee for any loss or damage sustained thereby.

15. DEFAULT BY LICENSEE. In the event that Licensee should default in the performance of any of the covenants contained in this license on or in the event that Licensee should dissolve, cease doing business as a going concern, or become insolvent or bankrupt, University shall have the option to terminate the license and all of the Licensee's rights hereunder, and in the event of such termination, Licensee shall be obligated to pay to University on demand any damages sustained by University by reason of Licensee's actions or inactions and the ensuing termination of the license, whether arising because of University's inability to book the premises, or otherwise. The provisions of this paragraph shall apply in conjunction with and in addition to those contained in paragraph 2.2 and 2.3 relative to cancellation by the Licensee and paragraph 7 relative to Licensee's failure to observe University's performance and presentation standards.

16. CANCELLATION BY UNIVERSITY. Said facility is licensed only for the event stated in paragraph one (1) of this agreement. Any misrepresentation by Licensee or other person in obtaining this agreement shall be sufficient grounds for immediate cancellation of this agreement by the University without liability of University, without obligation of University to refund any deposit paid by Licensee, and without loss of any right of University against Licensee. In the event of such misrepresentation or violation of any other provision of this agreement, the University, its agents or employees, shall have the right to refuse to allow the Licensees to take possession of the premises or, if Licensee is already in possession, to cause the eviction of the Event and the eviction of Licensee from the premises.

If an emergency such as, but not limited to, a major storm, flood, utility failure, fire, civil disorder, a proclaimed state of emergency, or an emergency-related University closure occurs within a reasonable period of time University shall have the right to cancel the event and not be liable or responsible to the Licensee for any loss or damage sustained thereby.

17. RESPONSIBILITY FOR PERSONAL PROPERTY. The University shall not be responsible for any loss or damage to personal property placed in or about said facility and belonging to Licensee, its customers, guests, sub-contractors, guests, partners and vendors, and the Licensee shall hold the University harmless from all claims arising out of loss or damage to such personal property. The Licensee shall remove from the premises immediately upon the termination of this agreement all property belonging to the Licensee and all property brought in or placed on the premises by the Licensee or by persons associated with the Licensee in all use and occupancy of the premises. If the Licensee fails to remove all such property, the University shall have the right to cause the removal and storage of any such property at Licensee's sole risk, cost and expense, but for not more than one year after the termination of this agreement.

18. ASSIGNMENT. The agreement shall not be assigned nor shall the premises be used by any person other than the Licensee without the prior written consent of the University.

19. WAIVERS. The waiver of one or more terms or conditions of this agreement shall not be deemed a modification or waiver of any other provision of this lease. No waiver shall be effective or binding upon the University unless it is in writing duly executed by University and Licensee in an agreement to this effect.

20. ATTORNEY FEES. If any action is instituted by the University to enforce compliance with this license, the University shall be entitled to recover reasonable attorney's fees and costs and expenses from the Licensee.

21. APPLICABLE LAW. This agreement shall be governed by, and construed and enforced in accordance with, the laws of the State of Louisiana.

LICENSEE:  

BY:  
Name: Zachary McCrady

UNIVERSITY:  

BY:  
Name: Mark T. Moore, General Manager, Heritage & Special Events

BY:  
Name: Gregg Lasson, Vice President for Business Affairs

MAIN CAMPUS CONTRACT-Alumni Center 5/6/2015
Vita

Nicholas Cassara was born and raised in Metairie, Louisiana. He graduated from the University of New Orleans in 2012, obtaining a Bachelor’s of Arts with a focus in film production. In the fall of 2012, he enrolled in the graduate program of Arts Administration at the University of New Orleans. Nicholas was hired as the interim Campus Booking Coordinator while interning at the UNO Lakefront Arena in 2015.