

Welcome Message from the President: 2021 West Federation CHRIE Conference

Every adversity contains, at the same time, a seed of equivalent opportunity (Napoleon Hill). This is what we thought as we started brainstorming about the 2021 West Federation CHRIE conference. We reached a conclusion very quickly that a face to face conference may not be feasible during this crisis. And the decision to NOT cancel the conference was unanimous. Those of you who attend the West Federation conference will agree with me when I say that it feels like you are attending the conference with your family and friends, and WFCHRIE folks know how to have a good time! We wanted to see our friends and family again, even if virtually.

On that note, I am happy and excited to welcome you at the 2021 WFCHRIE virtual conference hosted by Northern Arizona University on February 18-20, 2021. The conference schedule is in **Mountain Time**. On behalf of WFCHRIE board and members, I would like to thank Dr. Frederick De Micco for graciously agreeing to be our host. Please check out our conference website for all the conference details and the **most updated conference program**: <https://www.wfchrie.com/2021-wf-chrie-conference>.

The 2021 virtual WFCHRIE conference will be fun, engaging, meaningful and innovative with several new elements. For example, we are excited to announce the new **undergraduate research competition** which provides an opportunity to promote undergraduate research in hospitality, and promote our graduate programs to the undergraduate students. The competition is being generously sponsored by University of North Texas. 12 teams from various universities and countries have been selected as finalists to present their research at the conference on **Feb 18, 2:00-5:00 PM**. Please come and support the undergraduate student teams.

Another new event for the WFCHRIE conference is the **Research Hackathon**. We are providing a platform where researchers from different universities and diverse hospitality disciplines work in teams to create a unique and new multi-disciplinary research project proposal. We have six teams comprising of 24 faculty members from various ICHRIE federations and universities participating in our first ever Research Hackathon. Each team will present their proposal to judges, Dr. Fevzi Okumus, Dr. Bruce Tracey, and Dr. Jenny Kim on **Feb 20, 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM** at the conference. Teams were created based on members' expertise in their own discipline and their research interest. The winning proposal/s will get invited to submit their full paper to IJCHM/CQ by Sep 30, 2021 that goes through a fast-tracked review process and a possible publication at IJCHM/CQ. This is a terrific opportunity for researchers to work on a multi-disciplinary research project and possibly achieve a paper publication. Also, this gives a collaboration and networking opportunity to faculty outside their respective programs and universities.

There will be **three panel presentations by keynote speakers**, along with **three professional development sessions** during the conference. The first panel will discuss "The Future of Hospitality and Hospitality of the Future." The topic of the second and third panels, respectively is "Reshaping Hospitality Education" and "Diversity and Inclusion in the Hospitality Industry." Attendees can also choose to attend any of our professional development sessions: 1) Effective teaching techniques; 2) Contemporary research design and analysis techniques; and 3) Career

Planning and Development. These sessions are a great opportunity for attendees to learn from top instructors, researchers, and college administrators respectively. These six sessions will be in webinar format and will be recorded and will be posted on WFCHRIE website. ([Please click to see more information](#)).

There are **three networking/consortium sessions** for: 1. Early stage doctoral students; 2. Late stage doctoral students; and Junior/New Faculty. These networking sessions are open and free for all. Individuals do not need to register for the conference in order to attend this session. We invite you to join your cohort and discuss challenges, solutions, and opportunities and make lasting connections. I invite everyone to attend these sessions and join the discussion and give advice to our future scholars. The networking sessions are on **Feb 18, 2:00 – 2:50 PM.**

We have organized a **graduate program information session** and **academic career fair** for schools to promote their graduate programs and job positions. These sessions will be open and free for all. Individuals do not need to register for the conference in order to attend these sessions. These two sessions will be on **Feb 19, 1:10 – 2:00 PM.**

I also encourage you to attend three exciting information sessions by **Rouxbe**, **KnowledgeMatters**, and **EthicsGame**. Additionally, there is a presentation by **Smith Travel Research**. ([Please click to see more information](#)).

We have 61 submissions. The **paper presentations** are 10 min PPT presentations followed by 3 min Q&A. The **poster presentations** are 5 min PPT presentations followed by 2 min Q&A. I encourage you to attend these exciting paper and poster presentations.

I am excited to announce that there will be three best paper **awards** and a best reviewer award. The awards are being generously sponsored by the Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management at University of Houston. An innovative proposal (research in progress) award is being sponsored by Northern Arizona University.

Finally, no WFCHRIE conference is complete without some elements of **fun (social and games)**. First, please join our **welcome reception** on Feb 18, 5:00 – 6:00 PM. On Feb 19, please join us for **Trivia** (10:00-10:50 AM), **Scavenger hunt** (1:45-2:20 PM), followed by “**Wine Time**” (4:40-5:30 PM) (Regular Registration in US only). On Feb 20, please join us for “**Pet Time**” (11:15-12:00 PM). Please do not miss the **Virtual Lunch** (Feb 20, 12:20-12:50 PM) that we have organized for you. Please track your registered email for a **GrubHub coupon of \$20** (Regular Registration in US only, [please click to see the instructions](#)). We encourage you to get your food delivered to your home address before lunch starts so we can all enjoy our lunch together. Our **awards ceremony** will be from 3:00 - 3:45 PM followed by the **farewell reception** from 4:00-5:00 PM.

I encourage everyone to familiarize yourself with the virtual conference platform: WHOVA and use our customized virtual background during the conference. ([Please click to see the instructions](#)).

Last, I would like to thank all the board members for organizing this conference. My board members and I are honored and excited to organize this conference for you. Have fun at the conference. See you soon!

Respectfully,

Priyanko Guchait, PhD, CHE

Associate Professor

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