Managing a country club in China
GSU hospitality guru will focus on global initiatives

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The expert: Georgia State University's Joe Perdue will teach business skills, such as accounting, marketing, management and human resources, to club managers in China and elsewhere.

The man who helped write the book on club management for the hospitality industry is back at Georgia State University to add a global chapter.

Joe Perdue, 58, is the new executive director of GSU's Global Hospitality Initiatives, a program in the J. Mack Robinson College of Business' Cecil B. Day School of Hospitality.

Perdue will help the university forge new relationships with international universities, as well as develop programs for hospitality management and professional certification both here and abroad.

Back in the 1980s, Perdue came to GSU to develop its club management program, then a new industry for golf and country clubs, he said.

Since then, he has developed international programs for club managers and began working with international hospitality associations.

“Club management, as a discipline, is not available there and these international associations are interested in partnering with a Western program,” he said.

For example, in China, there are 500 new golf courses with club memberships.

Club management, however, “is all new to them,” Perdue said. “The managers need education and professional development. What we are teaching are business skills: accounting, marketing, management and human resources.”
In working with some of the club managers in China, Perdue found them highly educated, “but they don’t have the business skills to manage the whole [country club] operation. They have master’s degrees, but it is in things like turf management.”

The Global Hospitality Initiatives program will also allow the Atlanta university to expand into new countries, said Debby Cannon, director of GSU’s hospitality school.

GSU’s hospitality school currently has an exchange agreement with the Université de Savoie in France and with the Institute for Tourism Studies in Macao, China. The Savoie agreement was established in 2006. The Macao agreement was established this year.

“We want to build cooperative agreements with other universities,” she said.

Perdue envisions taking GSU-branded courses to other universities, including those in China, South Africa, Korea, Russia and Germany.

He’s currently working with club managers in Russia on such a program.

“We want to continue that [professional certification] not only in club management, but also in hotel and food and beverage,” Cannon said. “It’s that executive-level education.”

Even in its infancy, the GSU program is getting global inquiries, Cannon said.

“We’ve had one company ask if they can send their Chinese managers over,” she said. “We like doing professional management programs. That is a niche market for us and we’ve had experience in it.”

Perdue is just the man to bring the program to GSU and the world, said Jason Koenigsfeld, senior vice president of professional development for Club Managers Association of America in Arlington, Va.

“All of our education initiatives he developed and created,” he said. “Essentially, the education platform that CMAA stands on now was developed by Joe Perdue.”

Perdue is really “the father of those programs [at CMAA] in terms of how they are facilitated and directed as part of professional development,” said Jack Ninemeier, a professor at Michigan State University’s School of Hospitality Business, who has known Perdue for nearly 25 years.

The credibility of the professional certification through the association “is all due to Joe’s expertise,” Koenigsfeld said.

“[GSU] is hiring one of the most effective educators,” he said. “He knows the global influences.”
In China, South Africa and Europe, international companies and universities are turning to the United States to share its knowledge in club management, Koenigsfeld said.

Professional development programs internationally have been lacking, he said.

“Some of these groups have strong properties and businesses, but they need better professional development opportunities for their staff,” he added. “All those organizations look to Joe to help them move along. He’s the legend of club management, for sure.”

This past summer, Perdue, who began his second career with GSU on Aug. 16, helped certify the first 10 candidates in South Africa for the certified club managers, or CCM, designation. He plans to head to China in October to help certify the first 14 CCM designees on mainland China.

“It’s a five-year process to sit for the exam,” he said.

GSU is “going to benefit from those contacts he makes internationally,” Ninemeier said. “He has wonderful contacts and that was a wise move by GSU [to hire him].”

The programs will help GSU students as well, Cannon said. “Anyone getting out with a hospitality degree these days will have a global connection, whether directly or indirectly.”

Hotel brands, and many of the larger restaurant chains, have properties all over the world, Cannon said.

Club managers and hotel managers everywhere in the world face the same issues, Perdue said.

“There is nothing different about managing a club in China or South Africa or Atlanta,” he said. “And if we can expose this to our students at the undergraduate level, give our students the opportunity to study in China, we will expand their opportunities in a global economy. They need that international experience, even if they never leave the United States.”

JOE PERDUE

Born and raised: Tuscaloosa, Ala.
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Current job: Executive director, Global Hospitality Initiatives at Georgia State University’s Cecil B. Day School of Hospitality
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