

UNR students want to be leaders in tourism promotion

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

It was just like old times in Reno last week.

Twenty-seven years after then-Gov. Richard Bryan formed the Nevada Tourism Commission and organized the first Governor's Conference on Tourism, the organization observed its 25th anniversary at the Peppermill Resort.

That happened because the killer recession forced the commission and the industry to retreat for two years.

But with visitation statistics on the rise and a hint of optimism in the air, the commission and its staff pulled together Governor's Conference Lite, packing nine panels and presentations, a quarterly commission meeting and a tribute lunch for Bryan into 1½ days.

This year's conference had a different feel from years past. Many of the same leaders attended, although not as many as in the go-go years of the late 1990s and early 2000s. About 250 people signed up for this year's event compared with close to 1,000 back when.

Because the conference was organized in a series of general sessions instead of splitting it into breakout meetings, it was easy to gauge the level of interest – and most of the seats were filled throughout the event. It seemed that people attending this year's conference were hungry for information.

One event that had a low turnout – and, in fairness, it wasn't actually part of the conference because it filled time between the end of the commission meeting and the opening session of the conference – was interesting because it provided a

snapshot of the future of the state's tourism industry.

Between Lt. Gov. Brian Krolicki's poundings of the gavel ending the commission meeting and opening the conference, students from UNR's Reynolds School of Journalism and Center for Advanced Media Studies presented a proposal to promote the Governor's Conference in 2011.

Calling their agency "BluePRint," in honor of UNR's school colors, 20 students affiliated with the Public Relations Student Society of America demonstrated what tomorrow's travelers are going to look like and how to engage them.

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