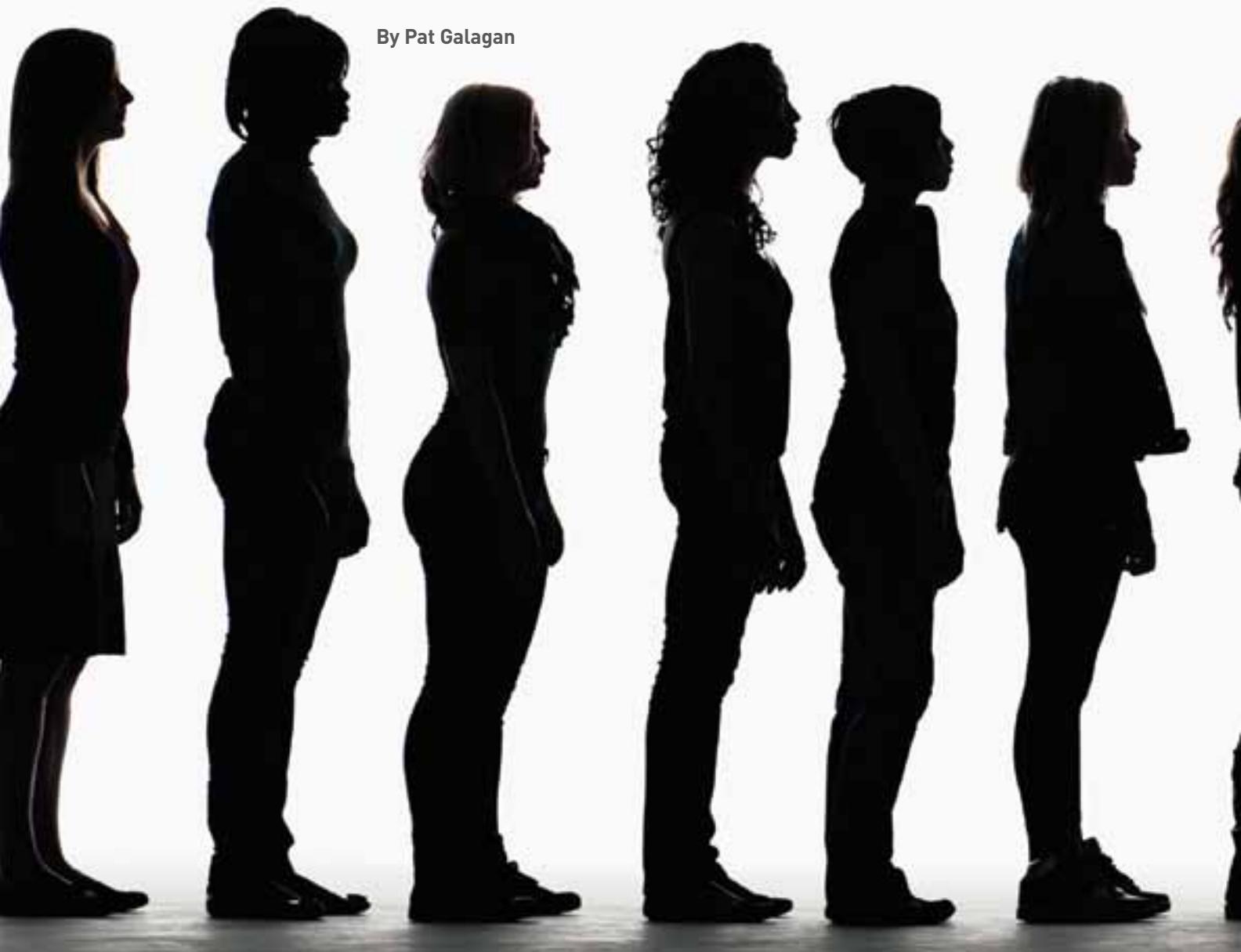


90,000 SERVED

HAMBURGER UNIVERSITY TURNS 50

By Pat Galagan



The fast-food giant solidifies its commitment to learning,



and at 50, shows no signs of slowing down.

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"If we are going to go anywhere, we've got to have talent. And, I'm going to put my money in talent."

—Ray Kroc, Founder of McDonald's

In 1961, Fred Turner, McDonald's former senior chairman and Ray Kroc's first grill man, founded Hamburger University in the basement of a McDonald's restaurant in Elk Grove Village, Illinois, making McDonald's the first restaurant organization to open a full-time training center. That year 14 students graduated with the first Bachelor of Hamburgerology degrees. Today, on average, 5,000 students attend the U.S. Hamburger University (H.U.) each year, and more than 90,000 restaurant managers, middle managers, and owner-operators have graduated from H.U. This month, McDonald's will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the fabled school.

"For 50 years, H.U. has contributed to McDonald's success by fostering career and education opportunities for employees," says Diana Thomas, vice president of U.S. training, learning, and development. McDonald's long-standing commitment to training not only supports important business strategies, such as The Plan to Win, but "it provides the opportunity to get a college degree to employees who might not otherwise have the chance."

Working at McDonald's is a career that can include running, or even owning, a multimillion dollar business. "We are developing restaurant managers to run, on average, \$2.5 million-a-year businesses," says Thomas. H.U. is a global center for operations training and leadership development, emphasizing

consistent restaurant operations procedures, service, quality, and cleanliness. "Our training mission is to be the best talent developer of people committed to those values," says Thomas.

"It was always Ray Kroc's vision and passion to invest in our talent," adds Thomas. "We continue to uphold and honor his philosophy on training, development, and talent. A strong focus on people is part of our strategic plan. We clearly understand the importance of training in providing our customers with consistently great experiences. And it makes good business sense!"

Thomas cites three reasons why H.U. has continued to thrive for 50 years:

- The university has long enjoyed strong top-down support starting with Kroc and continuing to the present with leaders who keep people development a top priority, never a "flavor of the month."
- The university is centered on what internal and external customers need and adjusts to meet those needs.
- The university embraces innovation.

Where credit is due

"As part of our commitment to employees, we offer the opportunity to learn business skills that last a lifetime and help earn college degrees," says Thomas.

Why Has Hamburger University Thrived Over the Last 50 Years?

By Jeanne C. Meister

As McDonald's storied learning center celebrates its 50th anniversary on April 15, 2011, a question that comes to my mind is: Why has Hamburger University grown and thrived for so many years, while so many other corporate universities featured in my first book [*Corporate Quality Universities: Lessons in Building a World Class Workforce?*—1994] have either dissolved, cut back, or lost focus?

My best answer is that H.U. uses the same three tenets that secure the success of any business:

- alignment to core business principles
- customer focus
- innovation.

Alignment to core business principles
McDonald's traces its founding to Ray Kroc's franchised restaurant in Des Plaines, Illinois, in 1955. The company now serves more than 58 million customers each day. Investing in people has been part of McDonald's success and part of the vision held by Ray Kroc from the company's inception. In fact, H.U. was created in 1961—just six years after the launch of the company.

Today, as McDonald's has expanded into 119 countries, so, too, has H.U. extended its reach—to locations in Japan, Australia, Germany, Brazil, England, and China. Diana Thomas,

vice president of training, learning, and development at McDonald's, says this about the importance of the people development and connection: "It is critical for our continued success to ensure that the direction of training remains aligned with the needs of our customers, learners, and business. We need to create the best learning environment where students can learn, collaborate, and connect with one another, and offer resources so that they can improve their performance on the job."

The initial support from Kroc continues today in the form of an ongoing governance council that aligns H.U.'s

Many of H.U.'s courses are accredited by the American Council on Education (ACE), an achievement shared by only a handful of Fortune 100 companies. ACE evaluated the first McDonald's course (Advanced Operations) in 1974 and has evaluated 58 additional H.U. courses since then.

H.U. is the only corporate university that has applied for and met the qualifications to participate in the ACE College Credit Recommendation Service. Of Fortune 500 companies that participate in the program, McDonald's is one of only 11.

One hundred percent of McDonald's restaurant management and middle management curriculum is accredited by ACE. The credits for these courses represent nearly half of the credits required to attain an associate's degree at a two-year college and a significant portion of the total credits needed for a baccalaureate degree at a four-year institution. The ACE review team noted that the new Department Management Capstone program is one of the best simulation courses they have seen or reviewed.

To help employees leverage their college credits, McDonald's has established alliances with 15 local and national colleges and universities. Their College Credit Connection website helps employees understand the value of credits, educates them about colleges and specific degrees, walks them through the ACE process, and provides a convenient way to obtain transcripts.

Commenting on the partnership between ACE and McDonald's, Assistant Vice President James Selbe said, "Meeting the standards required to participate in the ACE College Credit Recommendation Service signifies the delivery of world-class training and a demonstrated commitment to empowering employees and other stakeholders to reach their full potential by providing accessible pathways to >

In 50 years, H.U. has moved from a small classroom in the basement of a McDonald's restaurant to a worldwide campus dedicated to state-of-the-art learning for employees.



Hamburger University, Fred L. Turner Training Center

learning solutions with the company's strategic priorities.

Customer focus

Like any successful business unit, H.U. adopts a customer focus to its work of designing, developing, and delivering training and performance support. A council of owner-operators and regional training leaders provides ongoing guidance and feedback into the work of the corporate team. Ongoing assessment of training includes the typical Levels 1, 2, and 3 evaluation, with the addition of field visits that allow staff to observe the customer experience with training. >

The university has long enjoyed strong top-down support starting with Kroc and continuing to the present with leaders who keep people development a top priority, never a "flavor of the month."





higher education. ACE is proud to have partnered with McDonald's and H.U. for more than 35 years to enhance the quality of their programs through rigorous assessments and to provide their employees with opportunities for lifelong learning."

Solid commitment

While many companies are moving to virtual corporate universities, McDonald's continues to invest in H.U.'s physical plant in Oak Brook, Illinois, along with six global universities and 22 regional training centers in the United States.

"We continue to derive tremendous benefit from the face-to-face training that we incorporate into our blended approach to learning," says Thomas. "We view the H.U. experience integral to transferring our culture, history, and values to our newest leaders."

H.U. undergoes periodic revitalizations and upgrades to its learning spaces to ensure that the building stays relevant to the needs of learners. Recent enhancements include the installation of the latest audiovisual equipment, the addition of a cyber café, and the conversion of auditorium-style classrooms into spaces that foster collaboration and interaction. Eight virtual classrooms connect professors and students around the world.

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The team reviews this feedback to prioritize maintenance and enhancement. Prior to embarking on a complete redesign of curriculum, the team researched the "future learner," creating a vision for how H.U. will need to enhance the design and delivery of training to meet the needs of those future customers.

Innovation

H.U. created a partnership with the American Council on Education so that a single two-week program in advanced restaurant management was assessed as eligible for two semester hours of undergraduate college credit. This partnership has flourished in the last 17

years. As of June 2010, 100 percent of the McDonald's restaurant management and middle management curriculum is accredited by the ACE, for a total of 50 credit recommendations, including 23 credit recommendations for the restaurant management curriculum and 27 credit recommendations for the middle management curriculum.

The latest innovation at H.U. is what I call Classroom 2.0. H.U. recognizes that future learners will require a very different learning experience—one in which classrooms support rapid information sharing and distribution, while providing various ways to interact and learn from peers as well as instructors. Classroom 2.0 gives learners the open

The building also houses several labs for service training, a history museum tracing the evolution of McDonald's throughout the years, and a display recognizing the top restaurant managers. Future plans call for adding the capability to learn in simulated environments. More than \$3 million in improvements to the facility will be invested over the next 18 months. Many of these will focus on classrooms that can enable learning via mobile devices and social networking software.

Through a partnership with Steelcase and Steelcase University, McDonald's has analyzed trends in learning space design and made plans for future classrooms that will accelerate learning through increased interaction. "Over the last two years, we have benchmarked many corporate and higher education learning facilities," says Thomas.

Curriculum enhancements

While upgrading the quality of the learning spaces at H.U., the company also has improved the curriculum for department managers. "Our new curriculum is designed to allow learners of all generations and learning styles to both learn and apply what they learn in real time," says Thomas. Learning is reinforced with coaching and peer support, both virtual and

space they need to share with each other rather than focus solely on an instructor in the front of the room. Now, instructors move throughout the classroom, and content can be projected from any learner's laptop, not just the instructor's. H.U.'s implementation of Classroom 2.0 is an indication of the commitment to being a best-in-class learning organization, where how you learn is as important as what you learn.

—Jeanne C. Meister

Co-author of *The 2020 Workplace* and partner at Future Workplace;
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in person, to enhance retention and support application of knowledge. "We believe that the new manager curriculum will be more efficient and effective in providing the knowledge to drive sales and profitability," adds Thomas.

Features of the new curriculum include

- **Focused, faster, just-in-time training.** Managers learn only what they need for current roles. Training time to become competent is reduced from 15 to 28 months to 4 to 6 months. Managers can test out of content already mastered.
- **Greater accountability and transparency.** Learning is trackable and reportable. Bosses can support and coach their managers' development by viewing progress, completion rates, and assessment scores.
- **Greater applicability of training.** New classroom simulations challenge managers to apply their learning with other managers.
- **Delivery tailored to the ways managers need to learn today.** More blended learning, virtual classes, e-learning, practice with a coach, and simulations.
- **Less classroom time.** Classroom experience focuses on practicing skills, receiving feedback, collaborating with other trainees, and sharing best practices.

- **Training is flexible and always accessible.** The learning management system, a single source for all training, is accessible from anywhere via the Internet, in both English and Spanish.

Justly proud

In 50 years, H.U. has moved from a small classroom in the basement of a McDonald's restaurant to a worldwide campus dedicated to state-of-the-art learning for McDonald's employees—all of it focused on helping the company achieve outstanding performance.

"As an early pioneer of corporate universities, we are exceptionally proud to be celebrating the 50th anniversary of Hamburger University in 2011," says Thomas.

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