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Graduates of DISCUS Academy Leadership Certificate Programs Honored in Beaver Creek, CO

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The Distilled Spirits Council of the United States (DISCUS) today announced the graduating classes of DISCUS Academy (<https://www.distilledspirits.org/discus-academy/>)’s three leadership certificate programs: the Executive Leadership Program, the Developing Leadership Program and the inaugural Developing Women Leadership Program in collaboration with Women of the Vine & Spirits (WOTVS). [Spirits United \(https://www.spiritsunited.org/\)](https://www.spiritsunited.org/)

Graduates traveled to Beaver Creek, Colorado, to culminate the eight-month-long program with a leadership retreat focused on in-person development, networking, team building and community service. The retreat concluded with a graduation and awards dinner.

“The spirits industry is filled with great talent, and these programs ensure we are fostering growth and leadership across our sector to build for the future,” **said Chris Swonger, DISCUS president and CEO.** “We are proud to have more than 70 graduates this year who are now poised to go back to their jobs and share the skills they have learned. Congratulations to each graduate on their hard-earned certifications.”

The leadership certificate programs offered through DISCUS Academy are open to any beverage alcohol professionals across all tiers. All three programs consist of virtual and in-person elements.

The Executive Leadership Program is designed for spirits professionals who have at least five to seven years of experience and have demonstrated responsibility for cross-functional leadership and/or strategy-level decision-making in the distilled spirits industry. The 2023 Executive Leadership Program graduates are:

- Ali Anderson, National Sales Manager, CraftCo
- Julie Bair, Controller, SGWS
- Reed Davis, Unit Manager – Control States, Luxco/MGP
- John Dunn, Chief Operating Officer, Blue Ridge Spirits & Wine Marketing
- Ursula Dunn, Global Quality Manager – Americas, Diageo
- Kevin Eikevik, Commercial Development Manager, Mast-Jägermeister
- Christine Finnegan, Senior Director Commercial Operations & Planning, Campari
- Heather Fritzsche, CEO, The Spearhead Group
- Shaylyn Gammon, Whiskey Director, Blue Run Spirits Yannis Karlos, Co-Founder/President, Park Distillery
- Becca Goldklang, Global Head of BevAlc, Uber Advertising
- Theresa Lewis, Director of Administrative Services, Koloa Rum Company
- Jason Maxwell, Business Unit Manager, Luxco/MGP
- Andrew Meissner, Chief Marketing Officer, Virginia Distillery Company
- Kim Nguyen, Vice President of Marketing, Speakeasy Co.
- Monique Ozanne, Director of DEI, North America-Beam Suntory
- Romain Pianet, Vice President – On Premise, Rémy Cointreau
- Emily Rhoades, Director of Consumer Sales & Marketing, Distillery 291
- Marina Santos, Senior Global Director White Spirits, Campari
- Lindsay Tuohy, Associate General Counsel, Mast-Jägermeister
- Absinthia Vermut, Founder & CEO, Absinthia's Bottled Spirits
- David Wilhoit, Vice President of Sales, Mother Murphy's
- Kevin Wood, Sales Director of West & Control, William Grant & Sons
- Ruojin Zhang, Director FP&A, Edrington

“Participating in the DISCUS Executive Leadership Program was truly a game-changer for me,” **said Ursula Dunn, Diageo global quality manager – Americas and 2023 DISCUS Academy Executive Leadership Program graduate.** “Through immersive sessions, I embarked on a journey that reframed my leadership style, added to my skill set and prepared me to create the next generation of leaders. I am so grateful for the opportunity and excited to implement these newfound strategies to drive the spirits industry forward.”

The Developing Leadership Program is designed for any spirits professional with an interest in growing their leadership skills. The 2023 Developing Leadership Program graduates are:

- Clara Allaman, National Accounts Manager, Anfora and Ron Millonario
- Trent Baker, Manager of FP&A, Hotaling & Co.
- Dustin Caster, Distillery & Packaging Director, VA Distillery Company
- Celeste Curry, Sales Director, Columbia Distributing
- Tiffany Drury, Senior Alcohol Responsibility Specialist, Brown-Forman
- Alex Flynn, Sales Manager, Durham Distillery
- Jackie Fogle, Marketing Project Manager, JobsOhio Beverage System
- Koray Guleyupoglu, Director of Supply Response Planning – North America, Campari
- Maile Hartsook, Environmental Sustainability Program Manager, Brown-Forman
- Petar Ilchovski, Director of Operations, Brain Brew Whiskey
- Trevor Jones, Assistant Distiller/Production Manager, High Mark Distillery
- Lydia Kim, Associate Manager of Marketing Accelerator, Pernod Ricard
- Tristan Leder, Production Operations Manager, Hotaling & Co.
- Sonia Pirolo, Head of Mexican Spirits, Campari
- Chris McSweeney, FP&A Manager, Edrington
- Aleesha Meola, National Account Manager – Hotels & Casinos, Mast-Jägermeister
- Jim Moran, Division Manager, Luxco/MGP
- Sam Nathews, Vice President of Communications & Branding, DISCUS
- Jose Quiray, Regional Sales Manager, Mast-Jägermeister
- Alec Rodriguez, Talent & Learning Advisor, Edrington
- Jeff Rusine, Senior Sales Leader – Beverage & Industrial Alcohols, CIE
- Saquana Seltzer, Founder and CEO, High Silo Farm
- Paige Shelton, Regional Sales Manager – Northeast, Hotaling & Co.
- Donald Torre, Operations & Logistics Manager, Mast-Jägermeister
- Guillaume Vallet, Louis XIII City Director Las Vegas, Rémy Cointreau
- Diana Weston-Dawkes, Senior Manager, Customer Development – Northern California, Pernod Ricard
- Eric Winter, Brand Manager, Whiskey, Luxco/MGP

New in 2023, the Developing Women Leadership Program is designed to support and cultivate tomorrow's trailblazers by teaching early-stage managers how to develop their own leadership style, grow interpersonal skills, and build and manage a high-performance team. The 2023 Developing Women Leadership Program graduates are:

- Tami Aber, Midwest Region Sales Manager, Ole Smoky Distillery
- Grace Pepper, Production Supervisor, Old Dominick Distillery
- Bevin Callahan, Portfolio Manager, RNDC
- Bethany Carroll, Area Manager – Indiana, Mast-Jägermeister

- Nancy Ceron, Senior Finance Manager, Edrington
- Rawnica Dillingham, Director of Specialty Markets, Uncle Nearest
- Rachel Dorcy, Manager of Customer Development Washington State, Pernod Ricard
- Meryl Fiacco, Senior Manager of Treasury & Financial Control, Rémy Cointreau
- Monteva Hodo, Design Account Manager, Brown Forman
- Laura Kanzler, Trade Marketing Manager, Hotaling & Co.
- Joann Klich, National Account Manager, Marussia Beverages
- Priya Lasrado, Business Intelligence Data Analyst, Mast-Jägermeister
- Emily McGill, Sales Consultant, SGWS
- Emma Novak, Territory Sales Manager, Mast-Jägermeister
- Jamie Padilla, Associate Marketing Manager, O'Neill Vintners & Distillers
- Caitlin Quinn, Director of Production, Eau Claire Distillery
- Shanae Randolph, Brand Manager, Luxco/MGP
- Jessica Rasmussen-Williams, Project Manager, Columbia Distributing
- Emily Schmierer, Director of Project Manager Office, Columbia Distributing
- Kate Secor, Field Marketing Manager, Brown Forman
- Melissa Sterns, Regional Sales Manager, Hotaling & Co.
- Katie Tillery, TX, LA, OK Field Sales Manager & AR State Manager, Luxco/MGP
- Amanda Tucker, Area Manager, Edrington

“We were thrilled to collaborate with the Distilled Spirits Council to create the first-ever Developing Women Leadership Program this year,” ***said Deborah Brenner, founder & CEO, Women of the Vine & Spirits.*** “This cohort helped cultivate the next generation of women leaders by growing their skills, knowledge and confidence. Congratulations to the 2023 cohort!”

Those interested in joining any of the 2024 leadership certificate programs should fill out this form (<https://forms.office.com/r/25f9TTfZQX>). Applications for the leadership programs will open in November 2023, and the new sessions will begin in March 2024.

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Executive Leadership Program

The Executive Leadership Program, in partnership with the University of Kentucky’s Gatton School of Business, develops a leader’s ability to communicate strategy, negotiate skillfully, influence team behaviors and deliver results. The program ensures the right blend of soft skills and a strategic mindset to achieve performance outcomes at participants’ companies.

Developing Leadership Program

The Developing Leadership Program, in partnership with Cornell University, transforms early-stage managers into true leaders, by exploring leadership styles, developing interpersonal skills, and learning how to build and manage a high-performance team. Entrepreneurs, new managers and employees with limited management experience are encouraged to apply.

Developing Women Leadership Program

DISCUS Academy expanded its leadership offerings this year to include the Developing Women Leadership Program in collaboration with Women of the Vine & Spirits. The certificate program, conducted in partnership with Cornell University, is designed to empower and advance women in the spirits workforce by developing leadership and managerial skills.

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