



Nicole Okuna

**Guest Services Manager
Class of 2002**

By Laysa Napeahi

Imagine working on a beach at Waikiki, surrounded by tropical palm trees and white sandy beaches and hundreds of tourists who want to experience a vacation in Hawaii. Imagine working at one of the largest hotels in Waikiki. This is Nicole Okuna's daily experience. She is the guest services manager at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel, which has more than 1600 rooms and, along with this, the opportunity to provide a memorable Hawaiian experience to thousands of visitors.

Nicole is responsible for enhancing and caring for hotel guests' experiences and assisting the hotel manager with hotel operations. Her duties are varied and limitless, from working with VIP and celebrity guests, organizing parties and catering functions, training new hires, dealing with reservation and billing discrepancies, and anything dealing with keeping hotel guests happy.

Nicole supervises the associates at the Front Office Management team, who are on the front line of any hotel guests' experience. Guests ask what they want to know where to go for tourist attractions, where to dine and how to keep safe in Honolulu. To help them have a positive experience, she finds out why they are staying at the hotel (anniversary, birthday, or medical reasons), and tries to offer them a guest room that matches their needs, such as being close to the elevator. Her experience has taught her that hotel guests react to their experience with 80% emotion and only 20% logic.

Nicole earned a liberal arts degree at Pepperdine University with a minor in mathematics. She then completed a TIM degree at the UH Manoa's Travel Industry and Management college. A college degree is not necessary to earn a position as a guest service manager, but having a degree will better prepare you for the job's demands. It is extremely important to know the organization mission, vision goals, core values, and strategy of the hotel. It is also important to take courses such as public speaking, resume writing, and interviewing techniques.

A 2002 graduate of Waiakea High, Nicole loved her high school days. She was involved in many high school activities and said that being SGA vice president taught her successful strategies in programming. She was the 100 butterfly BIIF champion on the girls swim team and a member of the tennis team. She was also involved in the Science Club. Her greatest influences were her parents and coaches.

