

LODGING

School of Thought

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When basketball legend David Robinson and former Goldman Sachs executive Dan Bassichis partnered with USAA Real Estate Company (USAA) to form Admiral Capital Real Estate Fund, [philanthropy was a big part of the joint venture](#). The Fund is committed to giving 10 percent of its profits back to the communities where it invests. To keep his humanitarian efforts moving forward, Robinson recently launched Admiral Hospitality Scholars, a training and internship program that puts high school students on track for a career in the hotel industry.

The inaugural program, which will kick off this July in Houston, is receiving financial support from Hilton Worldwide and Admiral Capital Group, and is affiliated with American Liberty Hospitality and the University of Houston's Hilton College for support with education and training.

"From my standpoint, we all have a lot of resources and we all have a responsibility to do what we can," says Robinson. "There are a lot of people in need. It's nice to be able to utilize some of those resources for good."

Teachers and staff members nominated 24 students from schools within the Houston Independent School District. Participants must possess an interest in hospitality and maintain at least a 3.0 grade point average. The students will attend a three-day hospitality camp, be matched up with a personal mentor from the hospitality industry, and complete a one-year internship at a local hotel. A scholarship fund will also be set up to help the participants pursue hospitality degrees.

"I think so many kids don't know what they want to do," says Robinson. "This program is about getting exposed to different things and seeing that there are a ton of choices out there."

Admiral Hospitality Scholars is set up specifically to facilitate opportunities for young people who might not otherwise have the chance to pursue college degrees or hotel careers. Robinson hopes participants in the program will foster continued diversity in future hotel leaders.

"You can talk about diversity all you want, but unless there are people in the pipeline, no one is going to be in those hotel management and ownership positions," he says. "This program will be planting the seeds for the next ten years, where we will be able to see people filling those leadership spots."

Robinson has plans to expand the educational program in the future to other cities where Admiral Capital Real Estate Fund acquires hotel properties. "This is our first class and it's in its infancy, but I would love to see us be able to grow it in other places," he says. "Not everybody is meant to be in hospitality, but for those who are, this is an unbelievable opportunity."