

When Wine Education Matters & Who Are Its Preeminent Leaders?



Sonoma State University (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

Last week, Jose and I attended a very important, educational event. It was about a major financial shot in the arm to the business of wine finance, sales, and marketing. To date, there hasn't been a quintessential degree program, solely devoted to this important aspect of the wine industry. Sonoma State will now have that title, based on their proposed Wine Spectator Learning Center.



Once it's completed, the Wine Business Institute's new center is going to have more than 14,500 square feet of space; this includes for both instruction and student activities. There will be three dedicated classrooms, the Ron Rubin Student Commons, and an industry center. The Commons will have areas for collaboration and student-run businesses; and, the Industry Center will have space for the leadership development of professional and academic faculty and programs.



[Left to Right: Ron Rubin, Marvin Shanken, and Hazel Shanken]



Leading Contributors ~ Preeminent Leaders

In addition to **Hazel and Marvin Shanken's** contribution to the [Wine Spectator Scholarship Foundation](#), generous contributions are also from the following people and organizations, to help support the project:

- **Robin and Michelle Baggett** of [Alpha Omega Winery](#) and [Tolosa Vineyards & Winery](#)
- **Roy and Rachael Cecchetti** of [Cecchetti Wine Company](#)
- **Wayne Chaplin** of [Southern Wine & Spirits](#)
- **Gerret and Tatiana Copeland** of [Bouchaine Vineyards](#)

- The Gallo Family of [E & J Gallo Winery](#)
- The Hamel Family of [Hamel Family Wines](#)
- Gary Heck of [Korbel Champagne Cellars](#)
- Terry Lindley of [American AgCredit](#)
- Wally and Ellie Lowry – the first Director of the [Wine Business Institute](#)
- Charles Merinoff of [Charmer-Sunbelt Group](#)
- The Michael Family of [Peter Michael Winery](#)
- Fred Pierce of [Pierce Education Properties](#)
- Alex Ryan of [Duckhorn Wine Company](#)
- Chris and Vern Underwood of [Young's Market Company](#)



Groundbreaking Event Details at SSU

Wednesday, June 1, at 10:30 a.m.; Rohnert Park, CA

Wine Spectator Learning Center Groundbreaking & Celebration

The Wine Spectator Scholarship Foundation and Wine Business Institute at Sonoma State University hosted this groundbreaking ceremony, for the future of the **Wine Spectator Learning Center**. The day was hot by mid-morning, when the event began. Sun was bearing down, as most of the early arrivals had all found spots in the shade. I brought a long-sleeved sweater, because I anticipated a seat in the sunshine and wanted protection from UV rays.



[The team from [The Rubin Family of Wines](#), left to right: Ron Rubin, Winemaker Joe Freeman, National Sales Manager Diane DiRoma, Associate Winemaker and Cooper Ed Morris, Operations Manager Lori Knapp.]



[Image of emcee Dr. William (Bill) Silver]

We learned

Dr. William “Bill” Silver was the emcee, leading each oration from the following leaders.

- Dr. Ruben Arminana, President, Sonoma State University
 - Annually, more than 600 people participate in wine business programs. This includes undergraduate and graduate students. This involves online and part-time students in management program, and more taking seminars on a range of wine business subjects.
- Dr. William Silver, Dean, School of Business and Economics ~ as himself
 - He sees SSU as being the leader in vision and education. He shared his association with Marvin Shanken. My take on it, not writing word for word, as I was captured by the moment... Marvin Shanken’s values for community, family, and education, along with his commitment to the wine business are admirable and exemplary, as are all of the donors for the renovation of this building.
- Mr. Marvin Shanken, Chairman, M. Shanken Communications, Inc.
 - FROM the [Wine Spectator Website](#), written by **Tim Fish**.
 - “It’s a special privilege to be able to work with such a great institution,” Marvin R. Shanken, Wine Spectator editor and publisher, told the crowd. “The wine industry is just now being born, getting started. The future needs and depends on institutions like this one to train and educate people to go into the wine industry.”
- Hon. Mike Thompson, US Congressman, 5th District of California
 - “This is a huge day for Sonoma State and the entire wine community,” said Rep. Thompson. He disclosed that the wine industry annually contributes \$13 billion to Sonoma County’s economy, and \$62 billion to the California’s wine industry.



- Hon. Gavin Newsom, Lieutenant Governor, State of California
 - What stuck me most is Gavin Newsom's quote from Jerry Garcia:
 - "Don't be the best in the world at what you do; be the only one in the world who does what you do."
 - This is what the Wine Spectator Learning Center is going to represent with its dedicated programs.

Each story began with a touch of humor, and then came right back around to the importance of vision and education, which involves wine sales and marketing .

We were reminded that UC Davis, Fresno State, and Santa Rosa Junior College, for examples, are very successful for studies in enology and viticulture, but a really focused four-year degree program devoted to finance of this industry simply doesn't yet exist. SSU is poised to be the world leader with this new learning center. For 20 years, under President Dr. Ruben Arminana, Sonoma State University's wine business program has helped thousands of students and working professionals who've all gained knowledge and understanding of the global industry. Now it's time to bring the world to Sonoma State and broaden the studies into our global economy. The Wine Spectator Learning Center will serve more than 600 students studying about the wine industry

A Period of Re-Awakened Vision

This renovation of their "Common" space is now the emphasis. This advancement from dedicated fundraising for a new "hub" on campus is intended to take it from its more regional focus to one that is inclusively global...

It was a great day in the sun...



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