Chairman of Florida’s Columbia Restaurants to speak at Stetson University Oct. 19

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Casey Gonzmart, chairman of Florida’s Columbia Restaurant Group, will speak at Stetson University Tuesday, Oct. 19, during “Family Business and Entrepreneurship Day.”

The talk will be from 1 to 2:15 p.m. in the Rinker Auditorium in the Lynn Business Center, 345 N. Woodland Blvd., DeLand. The public is invited to this free event.

The Columbia Restaurant was founded in 1905 in Tampa’s Ybor City by Gonzmart’s great-grandfather, Cuban immigrant Casimiro Hernandez, Sr. Gonzmart started working at the Columbia when he was 12 and later obtained formal education in hotel and restaurant administration at the Ecole Hoteliere in Lausanne, Switzerland, and La Escuela Sidical de Hosteleria in Madrid, Spain. He apprenticed at the Ledoyen Restaurant in Paris and the Inter-Continental Hotel in Geneva, Switzerland, before returning to Tampa to work in the family business with his father, Cesar Gonzmart, who studied violin at Stetson in the 1930s.

As Florida’s oldest restaurant and largest Spanish restaurant in the world, the Columbia has six locations that are owned and operated by fourth and fifth generation members of the founding family. Gonzmart ran the Columbia in Sarasota for more than 20 years before assuming leadership of all of the restaurants with his brother in 1992.

Stetson University’s Family Business Center has been educating students, professionals and family business owners since 1998. Earlier this year, Stetson introduced a Family Business major – the first in the country.