

Passing the Torch

International Travel College of New Zealand (ITC) Director Karen Houston is set to retire in January 2011.

"It's time I got around to all those things I've been meaning to do!" says Karen. But she's not worried about leaving the college she set up in 1996, now a premium supplier of full-time and part-time training programmes for the airline, travel and tourism industries.

Marketing Manager (and Karen's daughter) Claire Huxley; Campus Manager Kerry Priestly; and Business Consultant Shayne Morgan, who has been working with Karen and the college since 2007, will be taking over ownership.

Claire will continue in her current role; Kerry will become managing director; and Shayne will continue to contribute his expertise in the areas of finance, IT and strategy.

"It's staying in the ITC family," says Karen. "We've had offers over the years from interested parties wanting to buy the college, but it's never felt like the right time or the right decision. This is different. It feels like a really good, positive move."

Karen will continue to contribute to the college on a consulting basis.

"We don't want to lose that amazing vision and experience!" says Kerry. "Karen is a strong and respected spokesperson for travel and tourism, and we want to make sure we stay in touch with her original vision of providing business excellence in this industry."

And the three new owners will continue with the innovation and responsiveness to industry needs that have made it so successful thus far.

"Absolutely!" says Claire. "The college has just won an award for innovation at the NZ Tourism Awards, and we all have exciting ideas for the future. But we will always adhere to the underlying principles of the college: That commitment to being the best; to providing highly relevant, high-quality training; and to working closely with the industry we serve. That's what drives this place and its people."

And it's certainly worked so far – ITC is a regular winner of business and industry awards; its students have consistently high job placement rates in their chosen fields; and the college is constantly developing crucial industry links that allow its students to gain real-world experience.

"I have absolute confidence that Kerry, Claire and Shayne are the right people to run the college now. It feels less like I'm walking away from something I've built and more like I'm passing the torch to the next generation. All of them have been so involved with the college; they are already a huge part of its success and I know they will continue to be so."