

# Taking it to Another Level

***Ultimately, GCSAA members will be better equipped to perform their duties as turfgrass managers, facility executives or industry professionals by having to attain the new membership standard***

*Provided by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America*

A basic tenet of the free-market system is that competition is good for business. By-products of such competition are that companies operate more efficiently and consumers benefit from the downward pressure on prices.

Once largely unaffected by competitive economic forces, golf is now experiencing the influences of an increasingly crowded market where participants seek to differentiate themselves. But if golf facilities are to become more efficient and stand out from the competition, they must have the talent to function at a higher level.

Over the past 75 years, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) has provided education, information and representation to the men and women who manage golf facilities. The combined efforts of GCSAA and the golf course management industry have enhanced the efficiency and effectiveness of golf course operations. Golf course superintendents went from on-the-course, trial-and-error training to formalized education and continued learning opportunities. Accordingly, golf course condition quality increased and facilities operated in a more businesslike manner.

But times change, and so does the recipe for success. Recognizing the continued need to keep pace with the marketplace, GCSAA members in February 2001 approved a membership standards bylaw amendment that will showcase the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the golf course superintendent. Beginning in July 2003, GCSAA Class A members will be responsible for completing entry-level and ongoing requirements for continuing education/service, tenure as a superintendent, and a pesticide-application license.

A key feature of the continuing education program is development of occupational core competencies. The establishment of these competencies will further focus and enhance the education GCSAA provides to golf course superintendents and the golf course management industry. One such application of these competencies will occur in the GCSAA certification program. To achieve "Certified Golf Course Superintendent" status, candidates will have successfully completed a rigorous program of study and professional experience over and above that required of Class A, Superintendent Member or Class C members.

Ultimately, GCSAA members will be bet-

ter equipped to perform their duties as turfgrass managers, facility executives or industry professionals by having to attain the new membership standard. For golf courses, a more talented employee sets the stage for improved operations that benefit the facility and its customers. In short, he/she adds value to the facility.

How might added value be manifested for a golf facility? Consider that an experienced superintendent has been on the front line before, and is more likely to respond appropriately in a crisis situation, such as an irrigation malfunction, equipment failure or unexpected onset of disease. An experienced superintendent is generally more likely to manage a staff more effectively and efficiently, eliminating waste or the oversight of details that often distinguish one facility from another. All too often golf course management operations are thought of solely as an expense. However, the work of the experienced superintendent results in input savings that ultimately enhances the bottom line.



*State and local continuing-education opportunities, such as this FGCSA-sponsored, GCSAA-approved seminar at the 2002 Poa Annuu Classic, will play a critical role in achieving performance competencies in the PDI process. Photo by Joel Jackson.*

While education provides the golf course superintendent that foundation for effective golf course management, the facility also benefits from the service he/she provides to the community. The ongoing education/service requirement recognizes the involvement of GCSAA members in supporting junior golf, youth education, philanthropic events and other outreach activities. If there is a common thread among these professionals, it is the service they provide to their facilities, schools, communities and professional organizations.

"The creation of membership standards was never offered as a guarantee that a particular superintendent would be transformed into a higher performer," said GCSAA President Tommy D. Witt, certified golf course superintendent at the Kiawah Island Club. "It tells the golf community that GCSAA

has set a higher standard for its members. It is one that entails experience, rigor and participation in state-of-the-art education and training. The initiative takes the profession to another level that will ultimately benefit the facility and the golfer."

Those intimately involved in the golf industry know that the golf course superintendent has a direct impact on the economic vitality of a golf facility and is a key contributor to a golfer's experience. As a result of the increased standards, the inputs of the golf course management professional will become more valuable and more apparent to the golf community.

## Bringing Everyone Up To Speed on GCSAA's PDI

*Editor's note: A year from now Class A Superintendents will be following a new program of professional standards. The following information gathered and condensed from the GCSAA website is designed to provide you with the latest information on the Professional Development Initiative (PDI). You may access this information at [www.gcsaa.org](http://www.gcsaa.org).*

### PDI Defined

The Professional Development Initiative (PDI) is based on the knowledge, skills and abilities (otherwise known as competencies) demanded by the dynamic marketplace (i.e., what employers want in golf course superintendents). The PDI targets the skills required to meet this demand. When needed, GCSAA will be able to deliver or direct members to quality educational experiences.

These experiences must lead to enhanced skill and knowledge levels that can be documented. Once documented, these credentials can be marketed to employers as tangible and consistent within the profession. As the employers' need change, so will the superintendents' competencies. New programs will be developed to meet the educational needs created by these new competencies.

The PDI links these components through the use of the Professional Development Resource, an Internet-based tool that provides superintendents the ability to assess their competencies and knowledge.

The classification system documents what superintendents are doing on the job. This will provide members with the tools they need to communicate their value to employers and provide GCSAA with the opportunity to integrate this information into our national public relations campaign.

### PDI Communications

A critical aspect of the membership standards bylaws amendment that was approved at the February 2001 annual meeting is communication. Not only is it important to communicate specific changes to the membership, but it is paramount