Michigan golf course owners have formed a chapter of the National Golf Course Owners Association.

President Jim Scott, owner and operator of four courses including Gull Lake View Golf Club and Resort in Augusta, said owners "will now have a better opportunity to share information and work toward solving mutual problems. We also have plans to promote the game of golf in our state. As a state chapter we are looking forward to a close relationship with the national association."

Vice president is Bill Howard of Sankatoon Golf Club in Alto, and secretary-treasurer is John Dodge of Timber Ridge Golf Club in East Lansing.

Mike Hughes, executive director of the NGCOA, said creating organizations in each state is important so owners can easily work together on mutually important issues.

"With the legislative and regulatory pressures coming to bear on the golf business, everyone should realize the need to act on both the national and state level," Hughes said.

Hughes said the Charleston, S.C.-based NGCOA has nearly tripled the number of its members since its inception.

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. — Owners of The Reserve Golf & Tennis Club have signed a letter of intent to sell the facilities to a Virginia-based company. The new owners plan to build a second 18-hole championship course.

Michael Dillman, executive vice president of The Reserve Estates Development, said only the golf and tennis club portion of the four courses including Gull Lake View Golf Club and Resort in East Lansing will now include 900.

"They built University Ridge with the idea of its becoming NCAA national tournament. They built University of Michigan, Iowa State University, Ohio State University, University of Illinois, University of Wisconsin Foundation course. As a state chapter we will now have a better opportunity to share information and work toward solving mutual problems. We also have plans to promote the game of golf in our state. As a state chapter we are looking forward to a close relationship with the national association."

"We've sold a lot of ski tickets at Christmas as stocking stuffers," he said. "They build University of Wisconsin Foundation golf courses at the University of Michigan, Iowa State University, Ohio State University, University of Illinois, University of Wisconsin Foundation. The ticket at $42 apiece. It can be exchanged for a free lift at Copper Mountain Resort in Colorado. Three tickets fetch 18 holes and a cart at the Balsams Grand Hotel Resort in New Hampshire. "If we ever sign on Pebble Beach, it might take something like six tickets," Adams said. "It could cost corporations to distribute the tickets, depending on their greens fees."

"For the first time, the golf industry can obtain its fair share of corporate funds allocated to entertainment budgets," said company founder Jonathan Adams. "It costs courses nothing to join and the tickets are not discounted. A course will be reimbursed within 10 days at 100 percent of its published price when tickets are presented for a round of golf."

"The program is patterned after CSF's Universal Ski Ticket. Corporations buy the ticket at $42 apiece. It can be exchanged for a free lift at $200 in the United States, a different method was needed. Corporations buy the Universal Golf Ticket for $38 apiece. Adams anticipates one ticket will be good for a round of golf at 80 percent of the courses joining the program. But some courses require two, three or more tickets, depending on their greens fees."

"Our goal is to help people develop themselves so that they — and the operation — are the best they can be," said Royal and Tennis Manager. "We first looked at golf maintenance training because it's such a big part of what we do," said Margaret Vaughan, director of human resources for Royal Golf & Tennis, which manages and operates all resort amenities, including 81 holes of golf and 15 tennis courts, at Hilton Head's Turtle Point Royal and Shipyard Plantations. "Our goal is to help people develop themselves so that they — and the operation — are the best they can be."

Jack Kolb, instructor for the Turf Management course, said, "The main thrust of the course is to give students the 'whys' — not to tell them how to cut the greens. We also hit safety real hard."

During 15-hour sessions, the Turf Management course covers tractor safety, equipment and tool safety, human relations skills, plant pest control, plant nutrients and turf management techniques. Royal Golf & Tennis pays the tuition fees for its employees.
Number of university golf courses growing slowly

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Some of the most famous golf course architects have designed university courses including Charles Blair Macdonald at Yale; William P. Bell at Stanford; Robert Trent Jones Sr. at the U.S. Air Force Academy; Pete Dye at Arizona State; Donald Ross at the University of Oklahoma; and Alister MacKenzie at the University of Michigan.

Many university courses, including Yale (1926) and Stanford (1930) were built during or on the fringe of the Roaring '20s. The next major construction boom occurred with the aid of federal money in the 1960s when courses at the universities of New Mexico, Georgia and Missouri came on line.

But with federal monies drying up, "no more than a handful of new university courses" have been built since 1975, according to Whitten. University Ridge, Karsten and Trysting Tree at Oregon State University in Corvallis are among the few.

"You really need a big private contributor to build a university project today," Whitten said.

At the University of Wisconsin, local businessman Karl Dietz and a second anonymous donor were the major contributors, kicking in roughly $1 million each. Director of Golf David Stefan said at Arizona State, Ping President Karsten Solheim provided much of the funding.

Schools have become involved in golf courses for many reasons, Collings said. Often it's to provide a place for the golf team to play. The faculty and alumni may enjoy the game and decide a course would be a nice thing to build or acquire.

Sometimes it's an added amenity to attract new students and alumni back to the campus. It can provide a field laboratory for agronomy and business management students. Or it's simply a way to improve the university for students and the community.

Some schools are also using their courses to attract summer conference business, opening empty dorms as low-cost lodging for conferencegoers, Jones said.

"More universities want to build courses," Collings said. "It gives the public another place to play and is a marketing tool.

Golf courses can be major profit centers. Next to the football team, Stanford's golf course produced more money last year than any other aspect of the school's Athletic Department, according to Andy Geiger, Stanford's former athletic director, who recently took over the same post at the University of Maryland.

Keeping a university course among the top 100 in the nation is difficult, considering the number of rounds and lack of resources at most school facilities, Geiger said. Stanford installed an $800,000 irrigation system, helping it climb back into California Top 20 courses during Geiger's tenure at the Palo Alto school. Geiger said he and others also encouraged Stanford to use some of its 6,800 acres to expand the course, an idea still under consideration.

Maryland is also in desperate need of renovations, said Geiger, who plans to seek university and private funds to improve the facility.

Some question whether building and renovating golf courses is consistent with a school's educational mission. Believing university resources should be used elsewhere, opponents of a proposed golf course at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville helped bring the project to a halt.

"It's been on hold since last fall," said SIUE Assistant Athletic Director Brad Hewitt. "The state's financial problems were largely responsible. The protests have died down and the opponents have moved on to other causes for the most part. Even local competitors (other golf courses) that were threatened made themselves scarce in the face of the complaints about lack of starting times at their courses and see the need for another course."

As for Universal, it makes money in three ways. First, many courses charge less than $32, or some multiple thereof, and Universal pockets the difference. Second, Universal gets its money up front from ticket buyers and gets to use those funds until the ticket is redeemed. Third, not every ticket sold is used (although purchasers of a certain number of tickets can return the unused ones for credit toward next season's purchase) and that "breakage" helps Universal.