

PIERSOL'S PERSPECTIVES:

Internships key to producing industry-ready turf professionals

By John R. Piersol

Most successful turf programs have mandatory internships as an integral part of the curriculum. Producing an industry-ready turf professional requires the student to have practical experience along



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with the science and technical education. Providing practical experience at golf courses under a sea-

soned superintendent is good for everyone involved: the student, the golf course superintendent, the participating school, and the golf industry.

The student benefits from learning the tools, techniques, and management practices needed to successfully maintain a golf course. The superintendent benefits from having part-time workers who are seriously interested in the job, and who have an added incentive to perform since most interns receive a grade for their work experience and use internships as job references. The participating schools benefit from these off campus "labs" and from the expertise of practicing superintendents who are like adjunct faculty members. The real world training of the internship helps to feed the golf industry with competent technicians, assistant superintendents, and eventually superintendents.

ATTRACTING INTERNS

Many golf course superintendents look forward to hiring interns from turf programs. The competition for students can be stiff, as there are usually more sites than students. This is a great situation for the students, but superintendents cannot always be assured of interns.

So what can a superintendent do to attract interns? The following are a few suggestions:

- Provide a meaningful work experience. Talk with each student to find out his/her strengths and weaknesses and provide appropriate experiences.
- Watch and counsel the students. Positive feedback and helpful critiques are important. Weekly meetings can help.
- Take interns to local superintendent meetings and have

them observe at greens committee meetings. These can be eye-opening experiences.

- Providing housing or a housing allowance.

- Provide a competitive wage, as it's customary for golf course interns to be paid.

FINDING INTERNS

Aside from contacting commu-

nity colleges and universities that have turf related programs, superintendents should also consider working with high schools and vocational-technical centers.

It is true that the high school students will be younger, less experienced and less educated than the college student. But there are many jobs that a novice

high school student can do, and it is a great way for the superintendent to recruit a student into turf management. Most high school students are unaware of careers in the golf industry, especially in regard to turf equipment and irrigation. This is the main reason there is such an extreme shortage of these spe-

cialized technicians. Getting a high school student "hooked" on a golf related career through part-time work can be an excellent recruiting tool.

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CORRECTION

In the article titled "Public golf boom continues despite construction slow down" (GCN, December 2001) the city that invested \$8.1 million to renovate the 18-hole Monarch Bay golf facility was incorrectly identified. The work was funded by City of San Leandro, not the City of Alameda.

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