

The Professional Development Initiative— History and Overview

Editor's Note: This article is part of a series.

In the last three years, GCSAA has embarked on a journey to develop a system that would elevate the professional qualifications and recognition of our members, through a project called the Professional Development Initiative (PDI). You may have attended a chapter presentation to learn about it. Or you may have seen the Talking it Over discussion forum on the GCSAA Web site. Or maybe you have just heard about it from your members. Or maybe, just maybe, you are just now hearing about it. So what is it all about?

In designing the PDI, the MSRG identified what the employers of golf course superintendents need, want and value from the golf course superintendent. Then, they began the arduous task of detailing the knowledge, skills and attributes required of superintendents to satisfy employers' needs.

Discussion on the PDI began in 1996 and has continued to this day. It was a member-driven initiative, one designed to establish credentials for members so that the golf course superintendent can be appropriately recognized as a key contributor to the golf course. Shortly after the delegates meeting when it was first introduced, then-President Paul McGinnis, CGCS, appointed the Membership Standards Resource Group (MSRG).

The group developed a mission statement that discussed the need to improve the knowledge, skills and abilities of the professional superintendent that will contribute toward improved playing conditions and the enjoyment of the game of golf. The MSRG believed that increased salaries will measure success, as will enhanced job security, improved job opportunities and intensified recognition by employers. They then began to outline the process for achieving these goals.

Four research projects were conducted to provide the MSRG needed information. These included:

- A job analysis to determine the responsibilities of a golf course superintendent;
- An employer study to determine their attitudes about superintendents;
- A study to determine what our members thought of GCSAA's education; and
- A review of GCSAA's educational programs by curriculum experts.

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Many of the conclusions drawn from these research projects validated preexisting assumptions. For example, golf course superintendents need a broad range of skills and knowledge to perform their jobs successfully. Employers often don't understand what superintendents do. And finally, although GCSAA members like the current education program, research proved it will be inadequate in meeting future needs.

In designing the PDI, the MSRGR used the results of the research. They identified what the employers of golf course superintendents need, want and value from the golf course superintendent. Then, they began the arduous task of detailing the knowledge, skills and attributes required of superintendents to satisfy employers' needs. The MSRGR knew that education provides the means for superintendents to fill any gaps between those competencies that superintendents have and those they need. So GCSAA began to develop a state-of-the-art curriculum that provides the golf course superintendent the tools needed to meet the challenges they face in managing the agronomic conditions of the golf course, the staff and the budget. Furthermore, the MSRGR recommended that GCSAA be positioned to recognize the accomplishments of the professional superintendent with a competency-based classification system.

The MSRGR also began to develop recommendations to restructure the classification system. Their recommendations are intended to provide the marketplace with a benchmark of what it takes to be a superintendent by more closely aligning the membership requirements to marketplace requirements.

The MSRGR recognized that classification is a personal issue and

they began with a set of assumptions before developing their recommendations. For example, they wanted GCSAA to remain an inclusive organization; in other words, everyone who wanted to be a member should have that right. However, they wanted to be able to have the classification system "mean something." The model they are proposing is only their recommendations. They are seeking member input and will be accepting member input **through May** before making their final recommendations at their June meeting.

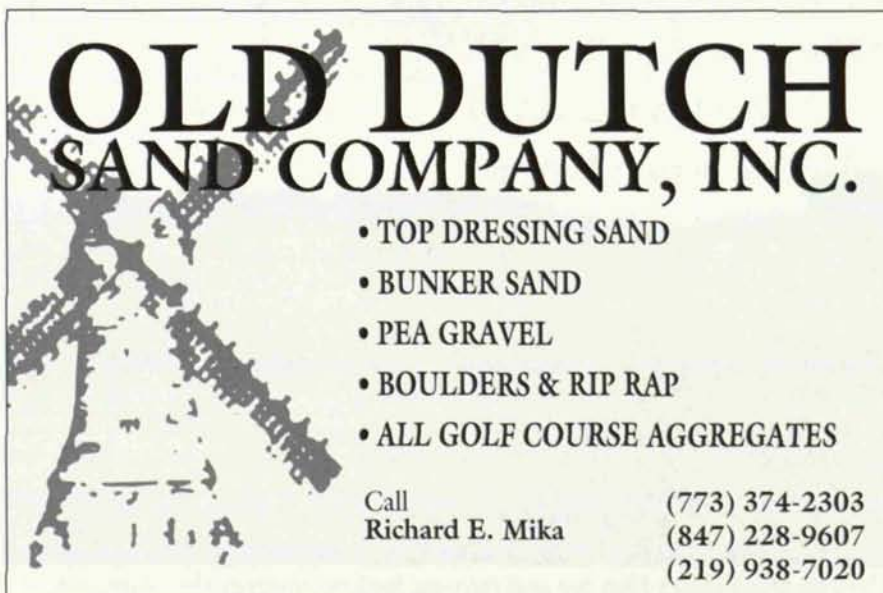
Currently, they propose the following for Class A membership:

- A member must hold the job responsibility of a superintendent;
- A member must take a self-assessment based on the competencies being identified;
- A member must pass a validation of the self-assessment (to be determined);
- A member must have a bachelor's degree or have completed a two-year turf program (with a minimum number of hours) from a nationally accredited college or university; and,
- A member must possess a current pesticide license.

In addition, Class A members would be assessed ongoing requirements which are yet to be determined. The MSRGR recommended that these requirements be fulfilled through an administrative renewal cycle of every three years and that it contain a blend of continuing education and professional education. They also recommended that certification be restructured to align more closely with the Class A membership requirements, but at a higher competency level.

The MSRGR realized that many superintendents have been in the business for many years and have been contributing members of GCSAA. As a result, they recommended that all current Class A members be moved into the new Class A categories and be responsible for only the ongoing requirements. They made the same recommendation for all currently certified members. Finally, they recommended that all current Class B members transition into the Class B category but be allowed to apply for Class A membership by only passing the validation of the competency assessment and experience. Then as Class A members, they too

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would be responsible for ongoing requirements.

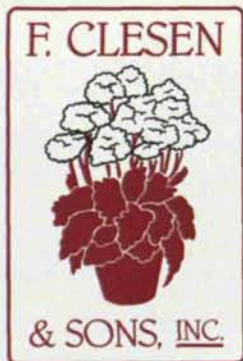
So what happens next? The MSRSG will continue to make presentations throughout the country through May. They will be collecting information from these presentations as well as from individuals on the Web. Then, in June, they will meet to make their final recommendations. These recommendations will be distributed to all members early in August, prior to the chapter delegates meeting in September, and more than six months before any bylaws vote is scheduled in February of 2001. If adopted, the requirements would go into effect the following year, July 2002.

There are many unanswered questions that relate to the PDI, but the MSRSG is working to keep members well informed about this proposal, through constant communication in *Newsline* and with chapters. If you have questions or comments, please feel free to send them by e-mail to pdi@gcsaa.org or by regular postal mail to PDI, 1421 Research Park Drive, Lawrence, Kansas 66049.



mysteriously disappeared somewhere along the line. It wound up in the possession of Bob Williams, who gave it to Ed Fischer a few years ago. Ed was kind enough to donate it to the Midwest, and we will start presenting it to the champion of the senior gross division. The winner's name will be engraved on the trophy and it will remain in his possession for a year. I feel this is a great way to honor our past.

I look forward to a great golfing year and want to thank all of those who have volunteered their time to the Golf Committee.



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