



# Keeping Up With The Neighbors

*The darkness was illuminated by a single spotlight, its intense beam shining on a stool positioned in the center of the room. I cautiously crept toward the stool, vaguely aware that the raised dais encircling the chamber was occupied by hooded figures silently watching my every move.*

*In response to the uproar from the general membership generated by the relocation issue last year, the GCSAA has decided to solicit more involvement from individual members and chapters in the decision-making process.*

“Be seated,” a deep and ominous voice commanded.

Arcane symbols were etched in the floor, partially obscured by the smoke and fog wafting like entrails across the cold marble. The rhythmic thud – thud – thud of machinery added an unsettling counterpoint to an eerie chant that emanated from some unseen source.

I sat.

A hammer struck a gong.

“Speak!” the voice commanded. “The Past Presidents Council will hear your report.”

I babbled, then darkness descended.

I hauled my bruised and battered body from the rain-soaked ditch, and ran through the night driven by a mysterious compulsion to write these words.

*Science is the smallest part of what we do!*

*Discover the art!*

*Unearth the magic!*

Okay, okay, it wasn't that bad, but sitting before the group of distinguished golf course superintendents that make up the MAGCS Past Presidents Council was certainly a humbling experience. The veritable who's who of Distinguished Service Award winners, past and present GCSAA board members, Superintendent of the Year honorees and Charles Bartlett Award winners in attendance really drives home the message that the MAGCS is not just a chapter of the GCSAA, it is among THE chapters of the GCSAA. One look down the roster of past presidents indicates the longevity and tradition of our Association. I'll be honest; there is certainly motivation to measure up.

The outcome of the Past Presidents Council's meeting will be reported elsewhere, but I will comment on one of the discussion points.

So what's up with the GCSAA headquarters-relocation issue?

In response to the uproar from the general membership generated by the relocation issue last year, the GCSAA has decided to solicit more involvement from individual members and chapters in the decision-making process. The Headquarters Location Resource Group (HLRG) is independent of the GCSAA board of directors and made up of GCSAA members charged with gathering input regarding the suitability of Lawrence, Kansas as our headquarters site.

The MAGCS recently completed a survey from the HLRG requesting our chapter's opinion on:

- The GCSAA's mission, vision and goals (MVG).
- Whether headquarters relocation would advance or deter the substantial achievement of the MVG.

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The MVG are summarized below.

## GCSAA's Mission, Vision and Goals

### Mission

GCSAA is dedicated to serving its members, advancing their profession and enhancing the enjoyment, growth and vitality of the game of golf.

### Vision

By 2007, GCSAA members will:

- Be recognized by employers as the key to the economic vitality of the facility.
- Be recognized by influential golfers as a key to their enjoyment of the game.
- Be recognized by the general golf public as the on-course authority regarding issues related to golf course management.
- Receive increased recognition due to GCSAA's reputation as a leading golf organization in the eyes of employers and influential golfers.
- Receive increased recognition from GCSAA's position within the golf and public policy arenas as leading golf's commitment to a positive environmental impact.

### Goals

- To provide opportunities and support that enable our members to achieve career success.
- To advocate vigorously for the interests of our members, the profession and the industry.
- To deliver authoritative, accessible and affordable continuing education and provide efficient access to information on issues related to golf course management.
- To be a strategically positioned, dynamic and responsive organization.

## The MAGCS Response

The Directors of the MAGCS were given the opportunity to respond to the survey questions. I reviewed the responses and sent the following letter, dated February 27, 2004, to Patrick R. Finlen, CGCS, of the HLRG.

Dear Mr. Finlen,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in your survey. I canvassed our Board of Directors and by and large our response can be summarized as follows. Bear in mind that

we attempted to view the issues as a chapter; individual members of our Board of Directors may (and do) feel differently.

It is fair to say that by formulating the Mission, Vision 2007 and Goals (MVG), the GCSAA has made a conscientious attempt to develop a strategy that, if achieved, will result in the advancement of the golf course superintendent (GCS) profession.

Obstacles to the achievement of the MVG, in whole or in part, are internal and external. Internal obstacles include:

- The inherent diversity of GCS and their conditions of employment (no golf course operation is like another).
- GCSAA staff expertise, enthusiasm and motivation (service organizations prosper or decline on the backs of their people).

In terms of overcoming internal obstacles to achieve the GCSAA's MVG, our current location is suitable, if not ideal. GCSAA staff members have made their homes in Lawrence, and superintendent members across the country are equally "inconvenienced" if they need to travel to headquarters.

Would the GCSAA do a better job of internally servicing its members from another location? We think not.

External obstacles to achieving the MVG include:

- The perception that a GCS is a trade versus a profession.
- Granted, great strides have been made in changing people's perception of GCS in recent years, but there is still work to do. Making the transition from "grass farmer" to "turf doctor" will continue to require a strong proactive approach on the part of our leadership. GCSAA does a good job of promoting the science of golf course management, but let's not forget about the art. There is a lot of magic in what we do.
- Provincial attitudes by affiliated organizations in the industry obstructing the notion that the ascension of the superintendent's profession is a win-win scenario for the golf industry.

Is it reasonable to expect that "external stakeholders," i.e., golf professionals, club managers, vendors, educators, architects, builders and

golfers will embrace our MVG just because we do? Do any of these groups have something to lose if we substantially achieve our MVG, and if so, can we expect some resistance?

The question then becomes: Would GCSAA be better positioned to address these "external obstacles" from a different location?

Are we ready to go through the considerable expense, staff upheaval and heartache of moving our flagship to a golf destination all for the sake of enhancing our image in the eyes of "outsiders?"

Golf is about image and prestige. Enhancing the collective prestige of GCS is arguably the single most important job GCSAA has on its plate. Would launching a headquarters move get us a better place at the table?

Go ahead and move, but no half measures. It better be the right location, it better be an awesome place and it better not interfere with member services, because the way we see it, when push comes to shove, the only reason for doing this thing is to impress the neighbors.

Sincerely,  
Fred Behnke, CGCS  
President, MAGCS

I am certain that the views reflected above do not represent the opinions of everybody in the MAGCS. If you disagree or have more to say on the subject, I strongly encourage you to contact the HLRG care of Mr. Finlen at 329 S. Mayfair Ave. #198, Daly City, CA 94015-1404. Or, go online to [gcsaa.org/members/community/hdqrtslocation/chronology.asp](http://gcsaa.org/members/community/hdqrtslocation/chronology.asp) and let them know your thoughts.

