



Building a Stronger Management Team at NIGM

The National Institute of Golf Management conducts a school annually for Public Facility Managers at Oglebay Resort in Wheeling, West Virginia. The program, which was started in 1984, consists of three levels. The Academy for Operation Solutions is for first year students, The Academy for Strategic Management Practices is for second year students, and The Academy of Higher Learning is the graduate class. The program is flexible enough that you can complete it at your own pace. You don't have to attend in consecutive years if your schedule doesn't permit. Some students attend every other year and complete the graduate class in the fifth year. Once you are a graduate of the program, you may return to attend the Graduate Class as often as you like. The program is beneficial enough that some students have returned to the school for several years and have then become instructors. The school is sponsored by National Golf Foundation, Club Car, Oglebay Resort, National Recreation and Parks Association, and the GCSAA. The Oglebay Resort is a training facility used by many groups and organizations. It is located on top of a mountain (seclusion) and encompasses over 2000 acres. It offers 262 sleeping rooms, 50 private cottages, three golf courses, skiing, a restaurant, pub, indoor/outdoor pools, health club, banquet rooms, ice skating, a zoo, and so on. During our visit this year, there were two days when people were skiing and golfing on different areas of the property.

The curriculum portion of the program runs Monday through Thursday 8:30 a.m. till 4:45 p.m. Over the three year curriculum, classes cover a wide variety of topics ranging from advertising to website design. This year some of our classes were:

- Are You Really Maximizing the Capabilities of Your Golf Course?
Steve Mona-GCSAA
- Developing a Master Plan for Your Facility.
Greg Martin-Greg Martin Designs
- Are You Really Optimizing Your Staff and Resources?
Mark Woodward- Torrey Pines
- The Future of the Industry: Are We Doing Our Part?
Ron Stepanek-PGA

Every year the program starts with a "Welcome Reception & Orientation" on Sunday night at 6:00 p.m. They also have a keynote speaker. This year it was Steve Mona. He spoke of a "National Golf Day" in Washington D.C. on April 16th, which will bring all the golf organizations together to help promote the game. Steve also touched on the different "hats" he is wearing now with the GCSAA and World Golf Foundation. He also gave us a theme for the week, "If not us, then who?" that reflected

"88% of golfers prefer playing conditions over challenge. 74% would pay 25% more for better conditions. Yet conditions are the #1 reason for not returning."

Steve Mona
CEO GCSAA, CEO World Golf Foundation

on the direction of the game of golf and who is going to control it if we don't. Outside of classroom time there are other social events during the week at night. The Graduate Class conducts Fun Night on Tuesday. This is a fundraising event for scholarships for students in the program. There is video horse racing, blackjack, 50/50 raffles, and putting contests. Everyone purchases "fun money" to play the games. The fun money winnings are then used to purchase merchandise donated by the students.

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If you are a grad student, Monday night is planning for Fun Night. Wednesday night is Solution Summit, which takes the open individual classroom discussion of Hot Topics to a larger venue with the input from all three classes. Thursday night is the Graduation Banquet, which is a formal affair, with dinner, program, and plaques given to Second Year and Graduate Class students for their achievement. The evening ends, like all evenings, in the resort's only pub, Glassworks, where ideas and interaction between students keeping flowing, as do the beverages.

It may be hard for some of you to envision driving for eight hours to West Virginia and back with your Pro or GM, but I decided to attend this program with my PGA Operations Manager. We started three years ago. I thought this would be a great way to improve on our relationship personally and professionally. I was also interested in having a better understanding of what happens on the on the other side of the business, so I could be in a better position to contribute to our operation. I was surprised at the number of other students from our area that attend the program. I definitely have made some new friends and contacts in this industry. We have found the school very beneficial, and have continued with the program, attending the Academy of Higher Learning this year.

There were 20 students in our classroom, which was setup in a U-shape that made the class's open format work well. At the graduate class level, contributing is what it's all about.

"Trend going towards Family Recreation- Better to be able to accommodate at your facility."

"20 million golfers, 100 million spectators = 80 million non-golf market, why?"

*-Ron Stepanek
PGA Director of Programs*

"80% of what determines the quality of your golf course is underground and not seen."

*-Greg Martin
Martin Design Partnership*

With a class of 20, everyone gets to know each other pretty well by the end of the week. From attending over the years, I came up with a theme that describes the school: "We all have the same problems and issues, but our solutions are different, and that is what we come here to share." This leads to CASE — copy and steal everything — which is what every discussion is about. Take something that has worked for someone else back and implement it in your operation. It ends up with a discussion the following year on whether it worked or how you had to tweak it for your facility, which may end up helping another student. In some cases instructors end up learning as much from the students as we do from them. On Monday we start out as a class by making a list of Hot Topics. These are work issues that we came to get resolved and would like to discuss during the week, in addition to the set curriculum. Our list this year had 32 items on it. The last hour of each day is dedicated to talking about a couple of items on this list.

I realized that the whole experience did not affect me as much as it did my Operations Manager. It wasn't that the information had less relevance in my day-to-day operation than it did in his. It was that being in an environment of sharing ideas and exchanging information doesn't happen within his professional organizations at the national and local levels. Because of the type of individuals superintendents are, and because of the organizations I have been involved with, I have taken this sharing, helping, and giving environment for granted. My Operations Manager has always been a little envious of how we treat, educate, and support one another in our association, and now I understand why.

Keep On Giving! **-OC**

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