

Taking it to Another Level

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Provided by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America

A basic tenet of the free-market system is that competition is good for business. By-products of such competition are that companies operate more efficiently and consumers benefit from the downward pressure on prices.

Once largely unaffected by competitive economic forces, golf is now experiencing the influences of an increasingly crowded market where participants seek to differentiate themselves. But if golf facilities are to become more efficient and stand out from the competition, they must have the talent to function at a higher level.

Over the past 75 years, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) has provided education, information and representation to the men and women who manage golf facilities. The combined efforts of GCSAA and the golf course management industry have enhanced the efficiency and effectiveness of golf course operations. Golf course superintendents went from on-the-course, trial-and-error training to formalized education and continued learning opportunities. Accordingly, golf course condition quality increased and facilities operated in a more businesslike manner.

But times change, and so does the recipe for success. Recognizing the continued need to keep pace with the marketplace, GCSAA members in February 2001 approved a membership standards bylaw amendment that will showcase the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the golf course superintendent. Beginning in July 2003, GCSAA Class A members will be responsible for completing entry-level and ongoing requirements for continuing education/service, tenure as a superintendent, and a pesticide-application license.

A key feature of the continuing education program is development of occupational core competencies. The establishment of these competencies will further focus and enhance the education GCSAA provides to golf course superintendents and the golf course management industry. One such application of these competencies will occur in the GCSAA certification program. To achieve "Certified Golf Course Superintendent" status, candidates will have successfully completed a rigorous program of study and professional experience over and above that required of Class A, Superintendent Member or Class C members.

Ultimately, GCSAA members will be bet-

ter equipped to perform their duties as turfgrass managers, facility executives or industry professionals by having to attain the new membership standard. For golf courses, a more talented employee sets the stage for improved operations that benefit the facility and its customers. In short, he/she adds value to the facility.

How might added value be manifested for a golf facility? Consider that an experienced superintendent has been on the front line before, and is more likely to respond appropriately in a crisis situation, such as an irrigation malfunction, equipment failure or unexpected onset of disease. An experienced superintendent is generally more likely to manage a staff more effectively and efficiently, eliminating waste or the oversight of details that often distinguish one facility from another. All too often golf course management operations are thought of solely as an expense. However, the work of the experienced superintendent results in input savings that ultimately enhances the bottom line.



State and local continuing-education opportunities, such as this FGCSA-sponsored, GCSAA-approved seminar at the 2002 Poa Annuua Classic, will play a critical role in achieving performance competencies in the PDI process. Photo by Joel Jackson.

While education provides the golf course superintendent that foundation for effective golf course management, the facility also benefits from the service he/she provides to the community. The ongoing education/service requirement recognizes the involvement of GCSAA members in supporting junior golf, youth education, philanthropic events and other outreach activities. If there is a common thread among these professionals, it is the service they provide to their facilities, schools, communities and professional organizations.

"The creation of membership standards was never offered as a guarantee that a particular superintendent would be transformed into a higher performer," said GCSAA President Tommy D. Witt, certified golf course superintendent at the Kiawah Island Club. "It tells the golf community that GCSAA

has set a higher standard for its members. It is one that entails experience, rigor and participation in state-of-the-art education and training. The initiative takes the profession to another level that will ultimately benefit the facility and the golfer."

Those intimately involved in the golf industry know that the golf course superintendent has a direct impact on the economic vitality of a golf facility and is a key contributor to a golfer's experience. As a result of the increased standards, the inputs of the golf course management professional will become more valuable and more apparent to the golf community.

Bringing Everyone Up To Speed on GCSAA's PDI

Editor's note: A year from now Class A Superintendents will be following a new program of professional standards. The following information gathered and condensed from the GCSAA website is designed to provide you with the latest information on the Professional Development Initiative (PDI). You may access this information at www.gcsaa.org.

PDI Defined

The Professional Development Initiative (PDI) is based on the knowledge, skills and abilities (otherwise known as competencies) demanded by the dynamic marketplace (i.e., what employers want in golf course superintendents). The PDI targets the skills required to meet this demand. When needed, GCSAA will be able to deliver or direct members to quality educational experiences.

These experiences must lead to enhanced skill and knowledge levels that can be documented. Once documented, these credentials can be marketed to employers as tangible and consistent within the profession. As the employers' need change, so will the superintendents' competencies. New programs will be developed to meet the educational needs created by these new competencies.

The PDI links these components through the use of the Professional Development Resource, an Internet-based tool that provides superintendents the ability to assess their competencies and knowledge.

The classification system documents what superintendents are doing on the job. This will provide members with the tools they need to communicate their value to employers and provide GCSAA with the opportunity to integrate this information into our national public relations campaign.

PDI Communications

A critical aspect of the membership standards bylaws amendment that was approved at the February 2001 annual meeting is communication. Not only is it important to communicate specific changes to the membership, but it is paramount

that they be communicated to the golf industry. To place value on GCSAA membership, employers and influential golfers must be aware of what that membership means. In an effort to communicate that value, GCSAA has enacted a communications plan that was implemented upon passage of the amendment.

The latest tactic is the development of the article that preceded this one. It was distributed to state golf associations, regional golf publications, employer publications, allied associations, chapter publications and selected media outlets. The article focuses on what the new GCSAA membership standards will mean to golf courses. It discusses how an improved education program and a pesticide license requirement will provide better resources for a GCSAA member to condition the game's playing fields.

Some PDI Questions Answered

I am currently a Class A member of the association. What should I be doing now in preparation for the implementation of PDI on July 1, 2003?

Nothing at this point. As a Class A member, on July 1, 2003, you will be grandfathered into the new system as a Class A member, which will allow you to bypass the new entry-level requirements for Class A members. You will only be responsible for meeting the established ongoing requirements for Class A membership. You may begin earning the educational and service points needed to renew your Class A status anytime after July 1, 2003.

In order to phase in these new requirements, GCSAA will randomly group Class A members (other than current CGCSs) into an initial three-, four- or five-year renewal cycle. Members will be notified in May 2003 as to which cycle they have been assigned. Class A members in each cycle will need the following points to retain their membership status:

- those in the three-year cycle will need three points (minimum of 1.2 must be education points).
- those in the four-year cycle will need four points (minimum of 1.6 must be education points).
- those in the five-year cycle will need five points (minimum of 2 must be education points).

After completing this first renewal cycle, each member will then continue on a five-

year cycle for each subsequent renewal period.

Should superintendent members and Class C members who wish to obtain Class A status start taking education courses now, even though the new Class A requirements do not start until July 1, 2003?

As of July 1, 2003, Superintendent Members and Class C members will need three points (two of which must be derived from education), three years of superintendent experience and a pesticide license/passing score on a GCSAA administered exam, in order to advance to Class A status.

Grandfathered Superintendent Members and Class C members may start accumulating education points before July 1, 2003. However, service points will not be available until after July 1, 2003.

I've read that the certification committee eliminated the external CEU component from the certification program. What does that mean?

Effective July 1, 2002, the limits currently set on the number of external CEUs an individual can earn toward the initial requirements for certification as well as for renewal, will be eliminated. This means individuals working toward certification and/or certified superintendents will no longer need to monitor whether the CEUs they are earning are from a GCSAA offering or from another external source. However, CEUs earned from external sources still must be pre-approved by GCSAA's education department.

Please note: there is one exception to this new policy in the certification sliding scale, which outlines the education and experience necessary to become a certification applicant. If an applicant seeks certification qualification in category seven, "No Degree or Recognized Certificate," they still will be limited to 21 CEUs derived from previous golf course management-related college experience or short courses longer than four days and less than 400 contact hours.

Also beginning July 1, 2002, GCSAA will be eliminating the nomenclature distinguishing between "external CEUs" and "GCSAA CEUs." Transcripts produced by GCSAA will no longer differentiate between the two; all CEUs will be recorded in one column. There will be a separate column

for PDUs. Keep in mind, with the implementation of PDI in July 2003, GCSAA will be changing the nomenclature of CEU to "education point" and PDU to "service point."

To find out about your specific situation, contact Penny Mitchell, senior manager of certification, at (800) 472-7878, ext. 484.

I am currently a Class A member. When will I be required to start complying with the new qualifications for Class A membership in order to retain my Class A status?

Beginning July 1, 2003, all current Class A members will be randomly placed on a renewal cycle of three, four or five years. Certified members will remain on their already established five-year cycles.

Class A members on a three-year cycle will be required to obtain three points by July 1, 2006. Class A members on a four-year cycle will be required to obtain four points by July 1, 2007. Class A members on a five-year cycle will be required to obtain five points by July 1, 2008. By the end of these respective cycles, Class A members also will be required to produce a valid pesticide license or pass a GCSAA-administered exam.

Class A members may begin to complete the requirements for their respective renewal cycles after July 1, 2003, but not before. GCSAA will communicate the assignments of three, four and five year cycles during the spring of 2003.

I am currently a Class A member and will be responsible for ongoing requirements starting July 1, 2003. Will the seminars I take between now and July 1, 2003, count toward the required points for my first Class A renewal cycle?

No. Points for renewal cycles must be taken within that particular renewal time frame and cannot be earned in advance of the cycle. In addition, points cannot be carried over to the next renewal cycle if the total number of points has been exceeded.

I am currently certified. Will I be assigned another cycle for Class A starting on July 1, 2003?

No. You will remain on your current certification renewal cycle. Members who let their certification lapse will fall back into a Class A cycle

One Way to Meet the Members

My Public Relations is Going to the Dogs

By Dan Magdalenskii

I cannot remember a time in my life that I did not love the game of golf. It all started at the age of 10 when my Uncle John used to pick me up before dawn to go play golf at a local course. We'd be there even before the work crew but that was OK because my uncle's buddy owned the course. The two of us always had a blast during those early-morning golf games. My uncle would help me improve my game, giving good advice and never being condescending. I have always cherished those

memories of golfing in the early morning with my uncle.

I eventually decided that for a job I wanted to do what I loved and began to work on a small course and entered Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts majoring in turf management. The program at UMASS is definitely hard work but well worth it.

I worked at several courses after graduation, moving up the ladder as I developed. I realize that to move ahead in your career you sometimes have to leave a job you like for another. With experience in cool-season grasses behind me, I wanted to try a warmer climate to work and live in. After careful consideration my wife and I decided to relocate to Florida.

For the past three years, I've worked as

an assistant superintendent at the Wyndemere Country Club in Naples. Wyndemere is an exclusive 27-hole course designed by Arthur Hills. Though I had worked on golf courses for six years in Massachusetts before we relocated to Florida, this is my first position as an assistant superintendent and I have never loved what I do for work more than now.

This gated private golf course community is the most prestigious I have worked on. Knowing that this position would be a great building block for my career, I have always been very conscientious to learn as much as I can not only about turf matters but also supervising the crew and establishing a rapport with the members, most of whom live on the course for at least part of the year. To be honest though, when I started working here I

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and must complete the minimal number of points in order to maintain Class A status. For instance, if your certification cycle ended in 2005 and you did not fulfill your certification renewal requirements, you would then fall back into the Class A cycle of 2003-2008. You would need to obtain at least five points, two of which must be education points, by July 1, 2008, to maintain Class A status.

How much will it cost me to obtain the ongoing Class A requirements of five points, two of which must be education points, every five years?

After July 1, 2003, GCSAA Class A members can earn their five points of credit through a variety of activities.

GCSAA seminars will offer 0.7 education point (currently known as CEUs) for each seven-hour day of education. If a member only wanted to attend seminars, he/she would need to take a little more than seven days of seminars over a five-year period. GCSAA seminars cost approximately \$120 per day, which would equal a little more than \$840 in a five-year period.

There will no longer be a distinction between external CEUs and GCSAA CEUs. All approved education programs will qualify at the same rate. GCSAA also will be granting education points for a much greater number of programs than exist today.

For instance, regional conferences may qualify for education points if the conference is focused on one subject for at least a one-hour period. A member could earn up to one education point per conference depending on the number of hours approved for that particular conference. Turfgrass conferences typically cost from about \$60 to \$200 to attend.

In addition to conferences, GCSAA will be recognizing educational events at chapter meetings that provide at least one hour of instruction on a particular subject. If a chapter had five meetings a year with one education point available for attending each meeting, a member could gain 0.5 education point per year from chapter meetings alone.

GCSAA also is offering education point opportunities through online education and has recently introduced an action learning program to allow superintendents to learn from work-related experiences. Action learning costs \$30 per 0.7 edu-

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cation point. Members can earn three of the five points required through service points (currently known as PDUs). Service points can be earned by attending chapter meetings, writing articles for newsletters, community involvement and a host of other ways.

GCSAA has the obligation to develop more low-cost programs to enable members to participate and improve in areas that will help them be successful in their careers. The total cost of meeting Class A requirements depends on the type of education the member chooses. Depending on the costs of chapter meetings and regional conferences, a member may spend from \$300 to more than \$800 over a five-year period to earn the points needed to maintain Class A status.

How will I be affected by the additional qualifications to become a Class A member?

All existing members will be grandfathered into their current classifications. Beginning July 1, 2003, all Class A members will be responsible for completing ongoing requirements.

To become a Class A member, grandfathered Superintendent Members (formerly Class B) and Class C members will be required to:

- Have three years of superintendent experience
- Earn three points (minimum of two education points)
- Provide a pesticide license or pass a GCSAA-developed exam

After attaining Class A status, members will be subject to ongoing requirements. All other member classifications not mentioned above, and nonmembers as of July 1, 2003, will be required to meet the full Class A entry level requirements.

In order to obtain Class A status, non-

grandfathered members must have a combination of years of experience, formal education, continuing education and service points (see the sliding scale). In addition, all applicants for Class A status must provide an appropriate pesticide license for the state in which they work or pass a GCSAA-developed pesticide exam. The GCSAA exam will be specific to the turf industry.

You can view the requirements members in each class, as of the PDI implementation date of July 1, 2003, must fulfill if they wish to become and/or remain a Class A member.

How does the PDI affect me as an existing Class B member who desires Class A status?

If you are a Class B or Class C member, you will have to meet the minimum number of years required to be a Class A member (three years as a superintendent), three points (with a minimum of two education points) and meet the pesticide license/test requirements. After attainment of Class A, you will be required to meet the ongoing requirements to maintain this status.

How does the PDI affect me as a student member?

This will depend on how far you progress in your career and the classification you attain by July 1, 2003. If you are a student member at the time of implementation (July 1, 2003), you will need to meet the new requirements outlined in this proposal.

I am currently a Class A member who does not have a degree. I have been in the business for 25 years and am working toward certification. What now?

You will be grandfathered in as a Class A and, if you complete your certification eligibility requirements and become an applicant before July 1, 2008, you will qualify under the current certification requirements. There would be no change for you. If you do not qualify and become an applicant by that date, you must then qualify for certification under the proposed new requirements.

I am a new assistant superintendent in 2004 (assume I am not grandfathered) and I have completed one year of college with no degree. What now?

GCSAA will evaluate the college courses completed and count those courses that support and are relevant to the GCSAA established competencies as 1.5 education points per hour up to a maximum of 30 education points. Let's say the courses qualify for 25 education points. A member without a degree would need seven years of superintendent experience and an additional 15 points (the number must total 40, of which 32 must be education points). Of the 15 remaining points, seven would need to be education points but eight could be derived through service points such as attendance at chapter meetings. In this case you would need to acquire a little more than two additional points per year during the seven years superintendent experience period to qualify for Class A.

I am a Class A member with no formal college education. However, I have 10 years in the business. Because of circumstances beyond my control, I lost my job and am not able to continue my professional development. How do I re-enter the classification system?

If you lose your job, you can reclassify

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was more concerned about doing my job as an assistant and less concerned about establishing relations with the members.

I unintentionally got to know some of the members by doing what comes naturally to me, using my lifelong love of animals to meet and pet their dogs. Since I enjoy animals so much, especially dogs, and especially Jake, the Border collie that my wife and I own. I always look forward to seeing the dogs that live on the course. I have always talked to them and given them a pat on the head whenever I could.

While interacting with the dogs a conversation would usually start with the member. I'd ask questions about the dog, maybe about the breed or the temperament of the dog or whatever came to mind at the time. I began to carry biscuits for the dogs in my cart. I'd see a member walking their dog and ask them if I could give their dog a treat.

Of course I got to know the dogs very quickly; in turn I got to know their owners. Now many times during the week while I am working one of the dogs will come up to me looking for a treat and some attention.

Using the dogs as a way of meeting some of our members was a happy accident that has helped build my rapport with them. So if you are looking for a means to establish better public relations with the members of your golf community, going to the dogs isn't a bad way to start.



Dan Magdalenski's love for animals, especially dogs like his border collie Jake, helped him break the ice with some of the members at the Wyndemere C.C.

to an inactive member and have your Class A renewal period frozen. At the time you become re-employed as a superintendent, you will regain your Class A status and will have the amount of time that was left in your five-year renewal period at the time it was frozen to complete the renewal requirements to retain your Class A status.

If you choose to leave the association however, and rejoin later, you will enter as a superintendent member and will need to earn the renewal points that you were lacking from your last cycle, plus an additional five points in order to regain Class A status.

I am a student seeking a two-year certificate in turfgrass management at Michigan State University. How long will it take for me to be certified?

The time needed to become certified depends on your career path and how long it takes for you to become a golf course superintendent. However, to hypothesize, let us say that immediately after you receive your degree from MSU you go to work as a crew member on a golf course for one season. After one season you are hired as an assistant superintendent. During the next two years, you work as an assistant and during this time you are attending local educational events. After two years you are hired as a superintendent at a local golf course, and you move your classification status from assistant (Class C) to Superintendent Member (Class B).

Under the PDI proposal, you would serve as a Superintendent Member for four years; then, if you had obtained five points and met the pesticide requirement, you would move to Class A status. In order to become certified you would need to stay a Class A member for three years. You would be required to self-assess your current competencies against those outlined in the PDR and create a Developmental Action Plan that would outline any professional development or continuing education you may need. You will be required to obtain five education points before submitting your application. At that time, you will be eligible to sit for the examination that is based on the competencies outlined in the PDR, and have your course attested by two certified golf course superintendents. At this point, you would have spent 10 years in the golf course management business, obtaining knowledge and experience recognized by the certification process.

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