



**Jim McLoughlin** is the founder of TMG Golf ([www.TMGgolfcounsel.com](http://www.TMGgolfcounsel.com)), a golf course development and consulting firm, and is a former executive director of the GCSAA. He can be reached at [golfguide@roadrunner.com](mailto:golfguide@roadrunner.com) or 760-804-7339. His previous columns can be found on [www.golfcourseindustry.com](http://www.golfcourseindustry.com).

## FAILING THE MISSION STATEMENT

Through the years, I've visited more than a few GCSAA affiliated chapters delivering educational programming of one sort or another.

Invariably, in recent years (including this year), I've been approached by a chapter board member or two and asked whether I was seeing what they're seeing: chapter members' growing indifference to supporting chapter and GCSAA programming?

When I ask what's the evidence supporting these observations, I'm told indicators are declining membership development and diminished interest and participation in formerly well-received programs such as local education, national certification, tournaments, social events and fund-raising.

My answer to the original question, asked on each occasion, has been yes. I've also seen this same pattern for several years through dozens of interactions with chapter and GCSAA members. When you discuss the plausible reasons why these situations have developed with chapter leaders, it quickly becomes clear there are justifiable reasons for the growing member indifference. For example:

- While an old continuing story, few things bother GCSAA members more than knowing about 80 percent of PGA and CMAA members enjoy the benefit of written contract security but GCSAA members don't.

- Because the chapters are the political power base of the association and wish to maintain control over GCSAA elections, they've been able to discourage individual member voting for some time – only one in 1,000 eligible members vote individually in GCSAA elections each year. (A recent GCI electronic poll showed 76 percent of GCSAA members voting want the opportunity to vote as individuals.)

- Because of the limited program development experience of the GCSAA boards and staff through the years, a long list of

necessary precedent setting educational programming doesn't get into the developmental pipeline.

- Members don't respect the manner in which board members' enjoy a lifestyle well above that of the membership (i.e., expensive family travel and cash perks) when no other organization in golf, including the PGA and CMAA, does this.

- The GCSAA board's long-standing lack of transparency offends many members. For example, board-meeting minutes (with voting records) are no longer published, and the right to have access to pertinent fiscal data and policy-making discussions are denied to members. How, then, can GCSAA members vote responsibly to reelect board members or elevate board members to officerships when the voting records of then-serving board members are also denied to the membership?

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- Members are discouraged because the GCSAA bylaws deny the membership of any opportunity to influence board nominations or to hold boards accountable for their actions.

Is there any wonder why member apathy is spreading throughout the GCSAA when persistent association policy, as described above, has been designed through the years to dumb down the membership and deny it any influential role?

While I readily concede the present and recent GCSAA boards haven't been responsible for establishing this long-standing negative culture, the point must be made

these debilitating policies remain in place and can't be allowed to stand.

Perhaps, the best way to educate and convince the next and immediately following GCSAA boards they must accept the responsibility to change the present organization culture is measure to what degree existing policies support the GCSAA mission statement, which is:

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

I doubt veteran GCSAA members would give more than a "3" rating out of "10" for the quality and effectiveness of present GCSAA performance when measured against the noble intentions as expressed within this mission statement. I don't suggest this low rating to embarrass anyone, but you can't fix what you don't know is broken. The GCSAA mission statement isn't broken, but the association's commitment to serve its membership and to advance a profession is.

The two immediate board objectives that would effectively begin to right the ship (after bringing in a proven program development capability on board) are:

- Quickly jumping on the painful, family debilitating, but very addressable lack of written contract issue (see my October 2007 GCI column); and

- Immediately establishing the policy of presenting board meeting minutes (with voting records) on the GCSAA Web site. Nothing will earn the trust of the membership more effectively than transparent board performance.

I can't imagine a GCSAA board that wouldn't welcome this unique opportunity to serve its membership in a more profound way.

While the coming 2008-09 GCSAA board can't be held accountable for what has transpired in the past, it's being put on notice by the membership that it will be held accountable for the degree to which it supports membership rights and how effectively it restores confidence in, and respect for, the association's mission statement. **GCI**