



John Walsh
Editor

THE RIGHT KIND OF DIVERSITY

At the Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association's annual conference in November, I attended a general session and listened to David Downing, CGCS, president of the GCSAA and past president of the Carolinas GCSA, talk about the reasons why the GCSAA does the things it does.

One of Downing's comments struck me as an example of blatant political correctness with flawed logic – he said the GCSAA needs to “look more like America,” implying the association doesn't have enough female and black members. Because of this, the association is implementing a plan to make the association more “diverse” during the next six or seven years. Well, what constitutes enough women and blacks? Does that imply quotas?

The ethnicity or gender of a superintendent is irrelevant no matter where a course is because course conditioning and hospitality – the two most important factors to golfers (those spending money at a facility) – transcend those two characteristics.

Targeting blacks and women to play golf is a different issue, part of which is because of the stagnant number of golfers and rounds played nationally. Involving blacks and females in the game at a young age will increase the odds of them being more involved in the game, including the business side of it, later in life. There are several much-needed programs addressing this.

However, there's no shortage of golf course superintendents. There are so many students graduating from turfgrass programs looking for jobs that the market is flooded with qualified, capable people. It would be one thing to actively seek people based on gender or ethnicity if there was a shortage of talent entering the market, but there's not. Besides, why would one seek someone based on ethnicity or gender to begin with? It's discriminatory and generally a bad idea. Why should ethnicity and gender trump what people have in their minds and hearts? It shouldn't.

As far as I know, not one person, university or company in this industry is preventing or hindering blacks or women from becoming golf course superintendents. (If there are examples, by all means, let me know.) Furthermore, many institutions of higher learning tend to implement quotas and policies that determine where people can educate themselves based on ethnicity and gender. As diverse as college campuses are, blacks and women are choosing the fields they want to enter. It just so happens few choose the golf course superintendent field.

The simple reason there aren't more female and black superintendents is because they obviously prefer to enter other professions. It's the free market and people's free will at work. Superintendents, as a whole, are salt-of-the-earth, principled, hard-working people – no matter their ethnicity or gender – and the GCSAA shouldn't feel bad about the racial and gender makeup of its membership.

People say diversity is good for business. While that might be true, it's a weak argument to change the makeup of the association's members. Through research, we're told golfers' No. 1 concern about a facility is course conditioning, not the ethnicity or gender of superintendents.

The GCSAA shouldn't have to “look more like America” like Downing says. It should look like the people who want to, and work hard to, become superintendents. When the GCSAA talks about diversity, it should talk about it in the context of people's minds and their different ideas and business philosophies, not in the context of ethnicity or gender. **GCI**

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