

If there are 16,000 courses in the United States with superintendents currently on staff, how do the assistant superintendents in the business move up? How many courses even have a first and much less a second assistant? How many supervisory/management jobs are out there for the turf students graduating this spring, and what are their career expectations? Do those expectations come close to reality or are we setting them up for a fall?

This is not intended as an indictment of our industry or our educational institutions, but rather a call for action to get a handle on the supply and demand for superintendents, which we don't have right now. In fact, the GCSAA's committees on career development, membership services and education are doing a pretty good job of fashioning certification and professional development initiative programs to make superintendents highly qualified and more valuable to their clubs.

After all, one of the stated goals of the GCSAA's efforts has been to improve the retention and job stability of the superintendent. If the programs are successful, that means current superintendents will stick around longer, which means recent graduates may have a harder time moving up in the profession.

Normal business thinking is everyone needs to grow to survive. GCSAA wants more members. Turf schools want more students, and new programs are popping up at community colleges everywhere. Yes, we need a constant stream of new blood to fill the ranks, but isn't the supply-and-demand ratio out of balance?

An obvious warning sign everyone ignores is the overwhelming number of résumés submitted for a posted job opening. The fact is we have more job candidates in the system than we have jobs available, and we keep pumping more students through the programs each year. An oversupply of candidates can create an atmosphere for hiring younger, less-experienced and therefore cheaper superintendents, which is detrimental to the overall salary structure of the profession.

Has the industry and all its supporting associations and branches, including turf

Doing Turf Grads A Major Disservice

BY JOEL JACKSON



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schools, ever collectively addressed the issue?

Likely everyone is concerned with their own survival. How do the chairmen of the leading turf programs go to the school administrations and say, "We really need to limit the number of students in the program? We are oversupplying the market with people who can't fulfill their career goals." That would be suicidal for their careers and programs.

We have had serious and gut-wrenching discussions with established and wannabe turf programs who come to our association looking for our help to drive more students to their schools. Individually, each makes a legitimate case. But while community college turf programs can provide training for the local golf course worker who can't go off to a turf school full time, new programs that aspire to turn out potential superintendents only serve to glut the market.

Has anyone done any statistical analyses on how many superintendent positions become vacant each year and why? How many positions are available annually from normal retirement, death, career change, burn out and *bona fide* firings for poor performance? If those numbers are less than the number of students graduating each year, then we have a problem that needs to be addressed.

We can ignore the issue and say the market will determine the supply and demand. How long is an aspiring superintendent candidate expected to wait? In the meantime, how does the industry justify recruiting and training young men and women for jobs that don't exist?

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