

CGGC *-yes!*

GCSAA CHANGES REQUIREMENTS
OF CERTIFICATION, RENEWING
INTEREST IN THE PROGRAM.

BY SETH JONES

Matthew Gaudet, superintendent at the Polo Club of Boca Raton in Florida, is expecting a phone call any day now. It'll be good news, he hopes — that he has been approved to add the designation of Certified Golf Course Superintendent to his title.

"In this day and age, with the economy and golf shrinking, we have to do everything possible to prove to our employers that they have a qualified person in this position," Gaudet says. "Someone who has gone to that length to try to set themselves apart from everyone else."

In recent years, the number of superintendents striving to achieve CGCS status

has plummeted. A few years ago GCSAA added a portfolio and additional CEUs to achieve certified status. The process became longer and more expensive.

That changed recently. GCSAA no longer requires a superintendent to be a Class A member for a year, and they also dropped the five additional educational points that were added. Now, as soon as a superintendent becomes a Class A member, they may enroll in the certification program.

"It was time to make a change," says Penny Mitchell, GCSAA's senior manager of certification. "This allows these younger guys who are anxious about pursuing higher goals to do so earlier in their careers."

According to Mitchell, many of GCSAA's 1,500 certified members are retiring. With the longer wait to become cer-

tified, the number of certified members was dropping. "We anticipated that there would be a five-year time period with less members applying," she says.

Rafael Barajas, CGCS at Hacienda Golf Club in La Habra Heights, Calif., chaired the committee that decided to make the changes. He says members were surveyed, and the results showed these two moves would be welcomed.

"There's been a lot of excitement, especially with the younger superintendents," Barajas says. "There is a lot of attrition in the industry right now. Guys are leaving the industry because of the economy. The CGCS program was not in trouble, but we did need to strengthen it."

Be the best

The addition of four letters on a business card might seem small to the outsider, but

according to GCSAA, adding the letters CGCS is indeed a big deal. According to association statistics, on average a CGCS makes \$19,000 more a year than his Class A counterpart.

But Barajas says it's about more than money.

"Pride. Personal satisfaction. Be the best you can be. There are so many reasons," Barajas says of seeking certification. "To me personally, satisfaction is what it comes down to. You can do it for money, or to please other people. I think the best reason to do it is to see how far you can go in your profession."

Regardless of the new requirements, Barajas wants to remind GCSAA members that they can start working towards certification right now, whatever their current classification.

"There's a misperception that you have to be a Class A member. A lot of people don't realize you can get the pro-

cess started as soon as you become a GCSAA member," he says.

Barajas says the objective of the recent changes — they went into effect in January of this year — was to make the process as smooth as possible. He encourages any members with questions to pick up the phone and call him, or any of the GCSAA board members, directly.

Gaudet (now officially a CGCS as of press time) had been working on his certification for the last two years, so the changes didn't affect him. But he thinks dropping the requirement of being a Class A superintendent for a year was a good move.

"That's the least important of all the requirements," he says. "If you're going to go through all the legwork of the portfolio, you've put in your time."

Since the change was announced,

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RAFAEL BARAJAS, CGCS

Mitchell's phone has been ringing a lot more frequently at GCSAA HQ.

"It's been great. A lot of individuals are working on their portfolio now," Mitchell says. "This stirred a lot of interest in the program. That makes my job a lot busier, which is good." ■

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