



“CGCS certainly is a prestigious designation and one that takes considerable effort to achieve.”

MATT NEFF, *assistant superintendent,
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We're all certifiable

One of the career goals many assistant superintendents have is to eventually become a certified golf course superintendent (CGCS). Many feel certification will increase their marketability and professional image in what has become a highly competitive industry, while others may choose to pursue certification more for the personal benefit of refining and expanding their skill set. Whatever their motivation, embarking on the certification process requires a considerable commitment of both time and effort.

To briefly explain the current requirements, the certification program is composed of four components: self-assessment, portfolio, examination and attesting to the applicant's facility. To apply for the certification program, the applicant must have three or more years of experience as a superintendent, as well as three or more GCSAA points.

These are the same things required to be a Class A member of the GCSAA. The CGCS applicant also will need to have completed the self-assessment tool on the GCSAA website and have a portfolio assembled and ready for review.

Once accepted into the program, the applicant will have one year to complete the final two phases — the examination and attesting components — and make additions or improvements to his or her portfolio as recommended by the two GCSAA-appointed CGCS reviewers.

The examination is a closed-book, three-part multiple choice exam that tests the full range of the superintendent's knowledge and skills. The attesting portion of the program is an evaluation of the agronomic and operational aspects of the applicant's facility by two certified superintendents appointed by the applicant's local chapter.

If that sounds like a lot, it's because it is. I have writer's cramp, and that was just an overview. See the full details of what's required on the GCSAA website.

CGCS certainly is a prestigious designation and one that takes considerable effort to achieve. The good news is those who have set this as a goal for themselves can start working on the first two components while still assistants.

The self-assessment tool is basically a five-part survey that gauges an individual's competencies in agronomy, business, communication, environmental management and leadership. The applicant is asked to answer a series

of yes/no questions about whether or not they feel they have mastered a given skill.

As Penny Mitchell, GCSAA's senior manager of certification, points out, the results of the self-assessment will help identify the skills necessary to advance in the industry and identify the competencies that will be tested on the certification exam. Perhaps more importantly, the results can be used to help design a continuing education plan that will address areas for improvement.

The portfolio component of the certification program consists of work examples, skill statements and case studies. Mitchell says becoming familiar with the contents of the portfolio as an assistant will be helpful when the time comes to complete it. By doing so, a potential applicant can see the types of work examples that will be required and begin to formulate practices that will satisfy those competencies.

While those who choose to pursue certification will have at least three years to begin working on the self-assessment and portfolio once they become superintendents, the benefit of starting sooner is apparent. Even if an individual has no intentions of becoming a CGCS, having a tool for developing a plan for improvement through continuing education and work experience clearly has tremendous value.

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