

Insight and Viewpoint ~The 2000 Chapter Delegates Meeting

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Throughout the weekend of September 8-10, I had the privilege to represent the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents' Association members at the 8th Annual GCSAA Chapter Delegates Meeting in Lawrence and Kansas City, Kansas. Delegates from 98 chapters were represented and joined by GCSAA Directors, Officers, 2001 Candidates, Committee Members and Staff Members. From early Friday morning to mid-day on Sunday we met and discussed over a dozen important topics and programs, including the Professional Development Initiative.

I was very impressed by the strong leadership of both the GCSAA Directors and Officers, and the GCSAA Staff. The meeting was well organized, the hospitality they showed to the delegates was excellent, and their great dedication to the profession and the membership was very obvious. The delegates questions, concerns and comments were welcomed throughout the meeting.

The association headquarters is located in Lawrence, Kansas, about an hour west of Kansas City, and houses 120 staff members. The first day of the meeting was held here and we were given a short tour of the offices following our lunch break. Like many business offices, the GCSAA office is organized into different departments (12 to be exact). We were able to stop at each, meet staff members and ask questions about what they do. The staff was friendly and seemed excited to have all of us golf course superintendents in the building. A very recent addition to the interior is a front entry historical display with mowers, photographs, magazines and more. On the walls throughout the building were displayed photos and drawings pertaining to golf and turf management. It provided a nice identity to what the building is all about -- golf and golf course management. Outside, some improvements were also made to the landscape, which despite the drought in that area, looked very nice. Plans are underway to have a life-size statue of "Old Tom Morris" erected next year at the entrance to the building.

Important Issues Regarding The Professional Development Initiative

Members of the MGCSA and GCSAA have said and continue to say that golf course superintendents want more appreciation and recognition, compensation, retention and job opportunities. The Membership Standards Resource Group (MSRG) was formed by the GCSAA to look at how to achieve these goals. From their work to help members achieve these goals, the Professional Development Initiative (PDI) was born. After introducing the first draft of the initiative two years ago, the MSRG and the leaders of the GCSAA have asked for input from the members. Particularly over the past year, they've done an outstanding job of communicating what PDI was to the membership, and seeking feedback from the membership on how to make it better. They have listened, and the new PDI proposal meets our needs very well. I ask that you read the new proposal carefully so that you can make an informed decision.

The foundation of this project continues to be education, both formal and through continuing education. The classification standards for members are built from this educational foundation and create a new opportunity for members to document what they're doing on the job and in the classroom and use that as a tool to communicate their value to employers. It's no secret that formal education and continuing education are highly valued by employers. This is a positive step to the future, and as the PDI mission statement says, "To improve the knowledge, skills and abilities of the professional superintendent that contribute toward improved playing conditions and the enjoyment of the game of golf."

What are the significant changes to PDI following membership input? The policy change that allows continuing education credit for local educational events that are equal to GCSAA offerings. An alternative path that allows all superintendents to reach Class A regardless of formal educational level achieved. The conversion of the HR Web from mandatory for Class A to a resource tool with service points awarded for its use. The requirement that all Class A members have a pesticide license or pass the equivalent GCSAA administered test.

Will this benefit superintendents or just GCSAA's bottom line? Individual superintendents will always benefit from continuing education. The continuing education requirements are linked to participation in your local chapter, your community and your golf course.

Why is a pesticide license or equivalent testing required? It is critical to the image of the profession that each superintendent and the GCSAA can be in a position to demonstrate that our Class A members are trained in the safe use of pesticides. Our image as environmental stewards is a public expectation.

Is the proposal too weak to attain the goals set forth? The changes made have resulted in a program that is attainable, accessible, and affordable and reflects the desires of the membership. Membership input has strengthened the final proposal.

Will there be a dues increase associated with the proposal? No dues increase is associated with the proposal.

What impact will this have on our local chapter? Chapters can expect to see more attendance at local chapter meetings, more interest in local educational offerings and more willingness to serve on boards and committees.

Each GCSAA member was recently mailed the final proposal of the PDI. It's important that you review this information. If you have not received your copy of PDI, you can request one from GCSAA member services at 1-800-472-7878. Or, you can access the PDI proposal on the GCSAA website at www.gcsaa.org. Also, you may call me with any questions or comments you have about PDI at 651-777-5186.

Association Financial Update and Fundraising: Three companies actually exist under the GCSAA name. They are GCSAA, a 501(c)(6) tax exempt professional society, GCSAA Communications, a for profit taxable subsidiary, and the GCSAA Foundation, which is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt charitable organization. The GCSAA and GCSAA Communications combined financial results ending June 30, 2000 were Total Revenue--\$19,539,000, Net Income--\$204,000. The GCSAA Foundation raises funds through member dues, the Golden and Platinum Tee Club, along with individual and corporate donors. These funds are then applied to research, grants, scholarships, advanced education and historical preservation. The foundation provided block grants as follows in fiscal year 2000-01, Education--\$200,000, Research--\$328,000, Scholarships--\$115,000, and Historical Preservation--\$368,000. "Investing in the Beauty of Golf" was created in February 1998 as an endowment to fund applied research and educational initiatives. The original campaign goal was \$3.5 million, revised to \$5 million in August, 1999, and the current status of funds raised is \$4.5 million.

National Public Relations: GCSAA's public relations goal is "to showcase the extraordinary virtues of the golf course superintendent and the impact you have on golfer's performance and employer's profitability." Tools being used are image posters, press releases, website, print advertising, video public service announcements, professional golf tour media agreements, tourna

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ment fact sheets, *NewsWeekly*, and *Golf Course Management* magazine.

Conference and Show: Over 23,000 attendees were at the 2000 Conference and Show in New Orleans. 750 exhibitors displayed their goods over 275,000 square feet of trade show floor. Over 8,000 people participated in the conference educational offerings. This year's educational seminars have grown to an all-time high of 120 seminars, of which 19 are new. GCSAA is offering for the first time, a "super saver" travel/accommodations package for the 2001 conference to encourage additional attendance.

Research Programs: The goal of the GCSAA research programs is to provide usable information for its members. One focus has been on applied projects which test cultural techniques and management strategies, and product testing. Results are generated quickly as opposed to long-range research projects that may have a basic science orientation. Another focus is on-site testing on golf courses. There are three GCSAA Research Funding Programs that utilize those approaches, the National Research Program, Chapter Cooperative Research Program and the Industry Partners Research Program. The National Research Program is designed to address issues of broad, national scope and currently include the *Golf Course Water Quality Study*, *On-Site Putting Green Trials*, and *On-Site Fairway Overseeding Trials*. In addition, the National Research Program is designed to address locally relevant problems and partners local chapters, universities and GCSAA. There are currently 21 of these studies being conducted across America. The Industry Partners Research Program is designed to conduct

side-by-side comparisons of products marketed to the golf course industry. This program is co-funded by the USGA and is in its inaugural year. The first category of products to be tested are wetting agents.

GCSAA Education: The mission of GCSAA education is to be "the main contributor to the professionalism and competency of golf course management." To enhance the quality and consistency of its educational seminars, GCSAA has formed a Faculty Resource Group and Faculty Newsletter, and has established a formal faculty development process that begins in October, 2000. In addition, the GCSAA staff and faculty are busy developing alternative educational delivery mechanisms such as webcasting, online learning experience, action learning, paper-based self-study programs and video conferences. These learning opportunities are being designed to be interactive, accessible, learner-centered, competency based, global in scope, and culturally responsive.

GCSAA Environmental Initiative: The mission of GCSAA is "to ensure the environmental integrity of golf and golf courses by supporting the continuing development of sound environmental principles in its members and enhancing their image as environmental stewards." The areas of focus are the GCSAA educational seminars, Audubon International, Center for Resource Management and partnerships with allied associations, environmental groups, government agencies and industry.

GCSAA Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C.: Plans are underway for the First Annual GCSAA Legislative Conference in Washington D.C. in September 2001. Representatives of GCSAA and affiliated chapters will meet in Washington to address pertinent issues to the industry. We will be hearing more about the details in the upcoming months.

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