



Proposed Dues Increase to Support Member Driven Research

By Dave Kazmierczak CGCS

To The Point

At the September 2012 monthly meeting, the MGCSA's Board of Directors voted unanimously to submit to MGCSA members the proposal of a dues increase to directly fund research at the University of Minnesota TROE Center. The proposal will be voted upon at the annual meeting in January.

The plan involves an annual giving of \$20,000 from the MGCSA directly to the University of Minnesota turf program, specifically for directed research- meaning research proposals put forth by the membership and approved by the MGCSA board of directors. The research projects generally will be of the one to two-year variety and have direct impact for members of the MGCSA and their golf courses.

The \$20,000 will initially be gifted from the existing MGCSA Research Fund, and re-paid by the dues increases. The recommendation is to increase dues by seven percent year one, 14 percent year two and 21 percent year three, equating to roughly \$10 per year for the next three years. A five dollar fee would also be attached to the first and each ensuing year to "pay back" the initial monies borrowed from our existing Research Fund. After three years the total dues increase per person will be \$35 and will create a self-sustaining, member driven research purse. Future funding will be 24 percent of annual dues to keep up with inflation..

The idea was brought to the board by Roger Stewart, CGCS, Superintendent at TPC Twin Cities, who is also serving as Research Committee

Chair. The Research Committee, Erin McManus, E. Paul Eckholm CGCS, Dr. Brian Horgan, Sam Bauer, Mike Manthey, Brandon Schindele, Adam Murphy, Chris Tritibaugh, Jeff Johnson and Jamie Bezanson met several weeks prior to the BOD meeting, to discuss ideas and finalize the proposal which was sent to the Board.

The concept's origins came from Stewart and Jack MacKenzie, CGCS, and Executive Director of the MGCSA. Stewart said when the new research committee first met they sat down to talk about what was going on at the TROE center, and what the MGCSA was getting out of their existing contributions. The picture became clear very quickly.

"I was concerned because of a lack of action," Stewart said. "The money we gave just kind of kept the lights on. That first meeting I said... here's what I think, and Jack had a plan for the funding, because.....we don't have any way to raise money."

While the team of Dr. Brian Horgan, Dr. Erik Watkins and Sam Bauer have had solid research conducted at the University and many papers

published, a majority of studies have not been specific to golf course work. This concept gives direct funding for work done for golf course purposes. The three turf researchers were first introduced to the idea in an August meeting with Stewart, MacKenzie and Erin McManus, Superintendent Medinah Golf Club.

"I think at first Brian and the rest were very surprised, but then



were instantly enthusiastic and said yes, we can definitely do that," Stewart said.

Stewart went on to say that what this plan really does is help set a constant flow of funding so the researchers know they have financial backing and can set up a game

plan for operations. Research is funded by grants from associations like the MGCSA and private industry. There is stiff competition to secure that funding and conduct research, and much like a bidding process, the landing of funding can be very fickle. This provides stability and would help ensure that the TROE Center continues to be viewed as a valuable asset to the University.

While Stewart admitted that nobody likes an increase in dues,

this increase is a direct benefit to the membership, and really the only way to get out the of TROE Center the potential that it has.

“At some point in time you just have to go forward and see what happens,” Stewart said.

Your Return on Investment

A dues increase totaling \$35 dollars over the next three years is a significant bump in Association membership fees. The Board appreciates the concerns it will create however also realizes that the MGCSA isn't utilizing a destination they had helped to build with direct funding and in kind support in 2002. After reviewing alternative funding sources the BOD recognized that the only viable solution was to increase the dues to a level that would sustain the goal of member driven research.

The Research Committee has already begun developing a plan of action to be implemented should the Membership accept the proposal. Working with the University of Minnesota a three-phase approach has been reviewed to provide a return on investment to the membership.

Phase One: The Creation of a Research Library. In actuality our Executive Director has already begun the first phase of the project, the gathering of relevant reports, studies

and articles pertaining to topics the RC feels are important to the membership. Once accumulated the material will be readily available on-line at mgcsa.org in the form of article links for ease of sharing. Information such as worm related studies, wetting solution reviews and weather anomaly impacts upon turf. The RC feels that a library of research material will save the membership the time it would take for them to locate, review and replicate information for their club owners, General Managers or player's use.

“By doing the legwork of finding and accumulating research reports for the MGCSA membership, their time is freed up to continue doing what they do best, manage their golf course. When critical information is required the Library will provide links to University Studies and professional articles at the member's finger tips,” MacKenzie said at the first RC meeting.

This library of material, which takes significant time to gather and collate, will be a big benefit to the MGCSA membership.

Phase Two Regional reports generated three times each year by the University of Minnesota Staff. Remember last summer when the weather turned ugly? Your turf may have been struggling and players may have been complaining about conditions and, although you had the answers,

it took a report from Dr. Horgan to substantiate what you were saying all along...we are growing a cool season turf in a warm season environment.

The RC and University Staff have agreed that proactive reports would give golf courses through the state the material needed to support cultural practices, explain weather anomalies and improve dialogue between all parties involved. Because we have five distinct regions, five reports will be crafted by Brian, Sam and their staffs to anticipate and report on current concerns when courses open in the spring, during the mid summer months and right before winterizing. All of these reports will be available on line with notification of posting through *The Stimpmeter*.

These regional reports, generated by our partners at the University of Minnesota will support your turf management and lend credibility to seasonal changes in your practices, another great return on your investment.

Phase Three Member Driven Research. While it is nice to have the resources a fine University has to offer and an even better destination for research, the value is limited if the

studies are long term and not driven by specific golf course issues. Your additional fees will go directly to fund research as directed by the membership of the MGCSA.

The RC has already begun a short list of topics they feel need to be researched for direct and immediate

benefit to the MGCSA.

Soon this list will be sent to each of you for further review to create two specific topics to be studied in the initial research projects to begin in 2013 with results published as they are generated and **NOT** several years down the road. As research is completed new research will begin.

Studies such as Divot Mixes; Rates and Recovery, Combining Wetting Solutions and Blending Growth Regulators will be available as they are tabulated and can be applied to Minnesota golf course management. These reports are not intended for University peer review but rather are working documents for the membership's immediate use.

\$20,000 annually will allow staff to be available for conducting the studies both at the TROE Center and in golf course environments across the state, not just in the metropolitan area.

“At some point in time you just have to go forward and see what happens,”

**Roger Stewart, CGCS,
TPC Twin Cities**

The Future Is Yours To Decide

For many years the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendent's Association was ahead of their time with investing in member driven research. From top dressing studies, analysis of winter covers and the eventual creation of the TROE Center at the University of Minnesota, the MGCSA has proven to be leaders in regional research applicable to Minnesota golf courses.

Since the beginning of the recession however, the research program has taken a back seat to streamlining the business management of the Association. The Board of Directors and Research Committee are recommending getting back into the game by developing a

funding vehicle and format for the establishment of a solid research program for years to come. The MGCSA has access to some of the finest turf scientists in the country, a facility for the application of member driven studies and the forward thinking to implement and sustain a financial system for this critical program indefinitely.

There is a sound plan in place and now it is up to the membership to choose the direction for the research committee to pursue. The dues increase necessary to drive this research initiative will be reviewed and voted upon at the annual meeting in January. If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact a member of the Board or Research Committee.



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