

Supporting APPA Members, Promoting APPA Programs:

A PROFILE OF PRESIDENT ED RICE

by Ruth E. Thaler-Carter

He may have been a brash know-it-all in his youth, and “maybe I still am,” but APPA’s 2004-05 President Edward D. (Ed) Rice, Ph.D., is humble about his new role in the association. “My goal for the job is to make my boss look good, because then we all look good,” he says. As APPA’s new volunteer leader, he sees his “boss” as the membership and his “job” as continuing to make APPA “the greatest professional association.” “My goal is to help every member in APPA understand how great their association is, and more importantly, what it can do for them,” says Rice.

Career Highlights

Rice comes into the APPA presidency with a strong professional career and equally strong record of association involvement.

Rice earned an associate degree in engineering and technology from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and a B.S. degree in engineering technology from the same institution; an M.S. in adult, occupational, and continuing education at Kansas State University; and a Ph.D. in the same discipline at KSU as well. Over the years, his commitment to professional development led him to the College Business Management program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha; the APPA Institute for Facilities Management; the Executive Develop-

ment Institute, University of Notre Dame; and APPA’s Leadership Academy.

Rice has developed a commitment to lifetime learning that fits well with his APPA involvement and the association’s mission (“to support education excellence...”) and vision (“Global Partner in Learning”) statements. “I’ve been a non-traditional student all my life,” he says. “I’ve learned that it is important to reevaluate yourself regularly, and constantly start all over again as a student. You have to go into new experiences with high expectations and enthusiasm, and then you’ll get a great payback. Adult learning has really stimulated me and changed how I see what I should do on campus. Even little things matter—like defective light bulbs—as well as trash piling up or someone in our division accidentally turning off power and causing a member of the academic community to lose research. I see our responsibility for such things as illustration that the facilities division is really here to help—to provide as much service as possible to students, faculty, and campus visitors.”

Rice’s career has taken him to several campuses. He was construction manager at the University of Nebraska at Omaha from 1971-78, when the university experienced a significant increase in capital construction. From 1978-80, he was associate director of facilities at Montana State University, where his responsibilities included construction, planning, grounds, custodial, and telecommunications. He then moved up to director of facilities, serving in that position from 1980-87. Montana State had about 10,000 students and was about half the size of Rice’s current institution, Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas.

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Brooks H. Baker III passes the gavel to the 2004-05 APPA President, Edward D. Rice.

Rice moved to Kansas State in 1987, serving as director of facilities management until 1990 and, since then, as associate vice president (AVP) for administration and finance. In that role, he is responsible for the university's division of facilities, with a budget of \$22 million, plus capital construction of about \$20 million a year over the past three years.

The division serves the main campus, the College of Veterinary Medicine campus, and the College of Technology and Aviation campus in Salina, with more than 22,000 students and 6.5-million square feet of buildings. "The division of facilities comprises five areas under the management of five directors reporting to the AVP—Administration and Finance, Maintenance and Utilities, Services (custodial and grounds), Architecture, and Resources (safety, training, employee relations, and customer relations)," he says. His division has 450 full-time and about 100 part-time and temporary employees.

While his volunteer service is weighted heavily toward his professional interests—he's past president of the Central and Rocky Mountain regional associations of APPA, and past member of the APPA Professional Affairs Committee—Rice also has cultural interests outside the job. He is a member of the Beach Museum of Art Advisory Board in Manhattan, Kansas, and he and his wife Janet belong to the First United Methodist Church, where he currently serves on the planning committee.

As for the association, Rice recalls, "My experience with APPA started in 1973, when my boss back then, Don Peterson, returned from his first APPA conference, very excited. I knew enough to know that if Don was impressed, it was the real thing." He attended his first APPA educational program the following spring, a workshop in Santa Barbara, California, that "had a profound effect on me," he says. "To this day, I can recall the willingness of people to discuss issues and help young pups like myself, and the value of hearing future APPA leaders such as Val Peterson, Pete van der Have, Don Mackel, and Jack Hug talk about their experiences."

That led to attending "many" APPA educational programs over the years and becoming involved in two regional executive boards, serving as president of two regions, joining the APPA Board of Directors, and now ascending to the association presidency.

Don Peterson may have drawn Rice into APPA, but he credits his mentor, Mike Reuck (retired head of facilities at William Jewell University, Liberty, Missouri), for his current level of involvement in APPA. "Mike probably really pushed me most toward becoming President of APPA," says Rice. "As a fly fisherman, I can say he tried a dry fly called APPA and really hooked me good!"

Life Outside the Office

In addition to a full plate of professional and association responsibilities, Rice has an absorbing home life as well. He and his wife Janet are regular attendees at K-State home football games, men's and women's basketball games, and—"when we can squeeze it in"—women's volleyball games. They have three sons and a daughter—Dan, Mike, Jim and Kimberly—





and five grandchildren. In fact, becoming a grandfather has been “the greatest experience in my life,” says Rice, while being a parent has been a lifelong learning experience of its own.

Challenging Times

To Rice, the challenges of the educational facilities management profession are never really new—“they constantly recycle in some fashion.” Nowadays, “it’s energy—that has become a huge issue again; a problem becoming even bigger because we’re tied into limited resources for oil and other energy sources,” he says. “K-State has just signed a \$20-million contract for an energy conservation program with Chevron Texaco.”

While many APPA-member campuses are considering, or struggling with the trend toward outsourcing and contracting-out work (Rice says to “assess that carefully” before trying it), that is not a major issue on his campus. “We’re several hours from any major city, so outsourcing usually isn’t an option for us.” He does share colleagues’ concerns about finding qualified employees, but says that also is a different kind of issue for a campus far from major metropolitan areas. “People wanting higher salaries tend to go to the metropolitan areas,” he says.

Constant use of campus facilities creates challenges for many members of the facilities-management profession, says

Rice. Rarely is a campus “off,” “closed,” or “down” these days. In response, Rice started a night shift at KSU specifically for maintenance, “so we can get into classrooms” during the rare hours they aren’t in use.

For APPA, today’s challenges are, to Rice, somewhat ironic, because he sees them as based in the organization’s success. He feels that while APPA has been involved in producing and providing topnotch resources for members, “APPA hasn’t promoted itself as well as we should to all stakeholders—not only current members but potential ones, our peers and administrators in higher ed, and potential business partners as well,” he says. Rather than launch new programs or services, he would like to see APPA increase its efforts to market “what we’re already doing” and promote what past-APPA Board member Vickie Younger calls the WIIFM—“What’s In It For Me.” “That hits home and makes it more graphic,” he says.

Rice also believes firmly in working collaboratively and through partnerships, not to mention learning from others. “My philosophy is that you can’t do anything by yourself,” he says. “We have to constantly look for cooperation, input, advice”—another good fit with APPA’s vision of partnering and inclusion. In fact, Rice’s commitment to shared learning is so strong that he’ll cheerfully say, “I like to borrow and use good ideas.”

As APPA’s new President, Rice plans to “try to step back and promote that which is already in place, especially the Center for Facilities Research (CFaR) and improving code development in HVAC, fire safety, and security,” he says. He’s concerned about “proposed fire-code changes calling for us to check sprinkler systems weekly—that seems a bit much and is a huge expense in terms of staff, vehicles, equipment, supplies, even scheduling. It’s hard enough to handle scheduling around classroom use *now!*”

CFaR collects information and encourages APPA members to study the learning environment, appropriate management strategies, and their impact on education. Rice has contributed to its research resources through, among other activities, providing a version of his doctoral dissertation on



Aerial view of Kansas State University

workplace violence as a CFaR publication (*Facilities Manager*, March/April 2003). His Ph.D. focus on workplace violence is a good fit with the APPA vision statement, which calls for a partnership with education in planning and decision making to chart the future of members' campuses.

In his CFaR paper, Rice notes that "college and university administrators must understand that a poor work environment can contribute to violence. Work environmental factors to consider include safety and general working conditions, inept or uncaring management, inadequate reward for work, ineffective training and education programs, and inadequate communication." Rice sees all of these as areas in which APPA can help its members, not only to head off workplace violence but to make their campuses more efficient, pleasant, productive, and useful overall.

Rice also intends to continue Past APPA President Phil Cox's diversity initiative, and to emphasize the Strategic As-



President Ed Rice addresses APPA members at the banquet in Washington, D.C.

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essment Model (SAM) benchmarking process because "we need a better picture of what facilities provide to the campus community," he says. "Our resources are mainly our people, and we need to promote their contributions."

Rice also is "very excited" about "a super program" APPA recently started, the Supervisor's Toolkit, which focuses on the



front-line supervisors "who often receive no training," he says. "They get promoted because they're great craftspeople and have no idea of what to do in a supervisory role or how to work with people. I see a great potential in this program—we have a lot of people who need this training. It's been designed strictly for their needs and should be a huge service to our employees."

Rice also has a strong interest in literature and research about the "Core of Discovery," which looks at how individuals might leave their footprints in history. "I'd like to share in being able to say we achieved our mission and did it well," he says of his hopes for his APPA tenure.

Look for Ed Rice to bring prominence to APPA's stellar current offerings in his term as President. "I have worked in facilities operations at three universities and been responsible for facilities at two of those," he says. "All of this was made possible by my exposure to APPA and its education programs. APPA has provided the vehicle for me to achieve the highest position possible in higher education facilities, as well as in the association. APPA provides great credibility in our profession, and wonderful training in leadership skills that apply to the workplace. It is vitally important that our membership realize the potential that can be achieved from participating in APPA's educational programs, and the knowledge and energy we have when we work together." 🏛️