

Executive Summary

Member Feedback Reveals APPA's Strengths and Direction

by E. Lander Medlin

During the past year we have engaged you in several member opinion surveys and focus groups to gather information about your perspectives on the facilities profession and the association's services. Your responses have greatly enhanced our understanding of the facilities profession, our comprehension of your needs and expectations as an educational facilities professional, and have provided valuable feedback for the direction and focus of the association. Your responses are guiding the development and provision of APPA's programs, products, and services in order to tailor them to meet your specific needs.

To provide a profile, most survey respondents and focus group participants were male between the ages of 45 and 54; are directors or assistant directors of institutional organizations; have been in their position between 5 and 12 years or more; are well-educated with at least one-third possessing a master's degree or higher; and prefer to receive information via e-mail. Also of note, a great number of you hold dual higher education association memberships in NACUBO and SCUP. And three-quarters of the respondents told us that collaboration with other institutional or association peers was critical to their success and an essential APPA service in creating needed peer-to-peer networking opportunities.

This is of particular importance given the upcoming joint conference in July 2006 in Hawaii. Given the importance placed on networking,

this joint conference will provide an even greater benefit than we might have originally expected. Therefore, don't miss this unique opportunity to collaborate with colleagues across these three professions in an event that will focus on the campus of the future. For more information and details about this joint conference or to submit a presentation proposal, please visit our joint website at <http://www.campusofthefuture.org>.

As a result of your feedback, APPA will continue to increase its education/training offerings, improve its research/information resources, and provide more recognition/networking programs and opportunities in the coming years. Here are some survey highlights and actions APPA is taking in response to your feedback.

First, your positive level of satisfaction with several of our offerings was compelling. Those most noteworthy were:

- *Assisting members with their professional challenges.* APPA received very high marks in assisting members with their professional challenges, keeping them informed, providing a forum for exchange of ideas, communicating with peers, and enhancing the credibility of educational facilities professionals.
- *Strength of educational programming.* APPA's professional development and continuing education opportunities are numerous. However, the Institute for Facilities Management received the highest approval ranking. Yet, equally good marks were received for the Leadership Academy and the Educational Facilities Leadership Forum (formerly known as the annual meeting). The benefit of these programs was

considered two-fold—an increase in knowledge and information about the profession and an increase in connectivity or network with peers across the industry.

- *Overall quality of customer service.* The ability of the APPA staff and volunteer leaders to ensure high-quality customer service is significant given the small size of the operational organization. We are pleased that our focus on member service is noticed and appreciated.
- *Offering a broad scope or tools and resources.* This is good to know since APPA's staff and volunteer base expends a great deal of their time focused on the delivery of practical and applicable tools for its members. Our staffing guidelines trilogy (trades maintenance, custodial, and grounds management) and performance indicators/benchmarking books, along with the timely information provided in *Facilities Manager*, continue to be viewed as exemplary.
- *Opportunity to network with peers and other professionals.* This category received the highest ranking. APPA was considered "probably the best" in its efforts to network or connect peers with other institutional or association peers. Much credit needs to be given to our six regions and myriad chapters for their efforts in this category of achievement.

Receiving high marks in the areas of professional development, customer service, and availability of tools and resources is essential since these three areas are considered critical strengths for an association. Our strength in these areas affords us the opportunity to concentrate on the improvement of other key areas. Since the survey results were tabulated, a

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few new services are now available and well worth mentioning:

- *Supervisor's Toolkit: Nuts and Bolts of Facilities Supervision.* A week-long educational program focused on training front-line employees in key supervisory skills is now available both internationally through the APPA office and via local delivery by institutional and/or regional providers/trainers. Don't hesitate to call the APPA office or visit the APPA website (<http://www.appa.org>) for details on how this program can be delivered at your time and place of choice.
- *More useful and timely information.* APPA provides a short, informative bi-weekly e-newsletter called *Inside APPA* that will keep you updated on both industry and APPA news. Unfortunately, your "spam" blocking service may be keeping you from gaining access to this valuable member benefit. If you are not receiving this e-mail newsletter, contact your spam blocking provider or the APPA office to assist you in ensuring you receive this information every two weeks. In addition, please take note that APPA has established a column focused on regulatory and compliance issues in *Facilities Manager* called Code Talkers. Make sure you stay up-to-date with the advice and guidance of your colleagues by reading each issue of this new column. Also, my column in the March/April 2005 issue highlighted the top ten critical industry issues you mentioned throughout these surveys and focus groups. We will continue to track more information related to these issues on the website. Finally, CFaR is now in place with four projects recently completed and seven pending, with two projects formally sponsored by APPA (see the article on page 34 of this issue). Consider engaging in a research project of your own; by sharing your knowledge and expertise, you and your organization can gain the recognition you deserve for this excellent work.

- *Enhancing the credibility of facilities professionals.* The single most important goal in APPA's strategic plan is to increase the credibility of the facilities profession with senior institutional officers. Our 2006 joint conference with NACUBO and SCUP is but one way we can improve our collaborative efforts. Others include strengthening the strategic alliance agreements we have with several other associations/organizations (e.g., Professional Grounds Management Society [PGMS]; Association of College & University Housing Officers-International [ACUHO-I]; Council of Higher Education Management Associations [CHEMA, including NACUBO, SCUP, and NAEB]; Washington Higher Education Secretariat [WHES]; International District Energy Association [IDEA]; International Sanitary & Supply Association [ISSA]; American Society of Healthcare Engineers [ASHE]; and RS MEANS). Visit our website (<http://www.appa.org>) for more details on these relationships and what they may offer you in return member benefits. Finally, we have increased our media outreach efforts substantially over the past couple of years with reporter quotes in articles in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Greentree Gazette*, *Inside Higher Education*, and other trade press magazines and publications. Please don't hesitate to let us know what else we can do to improve in this important area.

As we look to the future, we know we must strengthen our research capability through programs like CFaR to keep our members up-to-date on changing technologies and conditions and to provide them with the latest information to make knowledgeable decisions for their organizations and institutions. We also know that our member demographics are changing and the impact of generational differences on the profession and the association must be better understood. In this regard, incoming

president Jack Colby has launched a task force to study the importance of credentialing and certification from the perspective of future members. We will keep you informed as the picture of our involvement in this area further develops.

We appreciate your willingness to engage in these important feedback loops. This type of feedback is invaluable in helping us set the focus and future direction of the association and ensures that we are continuing the to meet the needs and expectations of our members now and well into the future. 🏢

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