

Membership Matters

New Credential in Educational Facilities Management

by Jack K. Colby and Philip Cox

The APPA debate on the merits of professional certification goes back to the 1980's. Every six to eight years, there was a lively exchange of opinions on whether professional certification needed to be a part of APPA's services to its members and why Physical Plant managers even needed to be certified at all?

At the time, most of us were already experienced facility managers, working in the ideal work environment at a higher education institution. Why risk the embarrassment of failing an

exam when we were already very confident in our skills and abilities as leaders of our organizations. In short, if you put in your time, worked your way up the chain, and didn't cause waves—you could be a physical plant director. *Certification?* What is the point?

Why Certification?

Fast forward to 2005. The world of higher education is changing at an amazing speed. We are faced with rapid rises in the cost of education and the pressure to do more with less

status, because they are not willing to wait and depend on attrition to provide promotional opportunities.

The Gen Xer's have learned fast and need a way to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Credibility is king and they want a portable means of demonstrating to potential employers that they are ready to take on the job. They also demand a professional association that understands this and meets their need to move forward and stay at the top of their game in the educational facilities field.

During this time, APPA's leadership identified several key indicators that forced us to step back and take a close look at these changes in our profession. Surveys of our membership told us that we must change the direction of APPA if we were to be successful in meeting the professional needs of all groups—from the young facilities professional and the manager at mid-career, to the senior facilities officer.

To be the association of choice, APPA needed to look forward instead of backwards and prepare our membership at all levels for the future challenges on our campuses and in our association. Thus, the 7 Key Strategies were born. Strategy 5 says we must, *"Engage young facilities professionals"* and Strategy 7 says to, *"Establish credible and valued credentialing programs for individuals and institutions."* These strategies were the genesis for the APPA professional certification programs. The time for credentialing and certification of the APPA membership is NOW.

In July 2005, the APPA Board approved the creation of a Task Force charged to take a comprehensive look at the need for and justification to establish a credentialing and/or certification program. The Certification Task Force began its work by learning



is unrelenting. Our old facilities are no longer suitable for teaching with high-tech methods and deferred maintenance is growing. We begin to recognize "the graying of APPA." Baby Boomers are beginning to retire and the Gen-Xer's are starting to move into the management and leadership positions.

These young professionals come from varied backgrounds and have a totally different view of the workplace. They are technologically savvy and fearless in using modern information tools. They also seek upward mobility and don't mind changing jobs to advance in

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all the basics of the credentialing hierarchy and the rudiments of creating a successful program. We looked at best practices of other associations, industry benchmarks, a full range of alternatives, and a list of potential partnerships. All options were evaluated against a set of criteria established to ensure that the program would meet APPA's obligation to its membership and provide synergies with APPA's other programs. The Task Force recommended the establishment of the credentialing program, the creation of a separate governing entity to administer the credentialing program, and the authorization of funding for the program. Once approved by the APPA board, bylaws were written; names were selected; articles of incorporation were filed; a marketing plan and operating procedures were created; and a certification consultant was selected to guide us through the process of creating the exams that will be the cornerstone of our program.

Following the establishment of the Certification Board, a volunteer group of subject matter experts (SME's) was called together to work with the Board and our certification consultants to initiate a psychometrics evaluation. First, the SME's completed a job analysis to determine the tasks performed by educational

facilities professionals on which examination questions would be based. Then, the identified tasks were verified through a focused survey of APPA members. Finally, working under the guidance of the psychometrics experts, the SME's wrote examination questions to test applicants' skills and knowledge.

APPA is now offering the first of two credentials in educational facilities management: the Educational Facilities Professional (EFP). This initial level of certification is intended to serve those facilities professionals who may be fairly recent entrants into our profession. The qualifications for the EFP designation are based on a combination of applicable experience in the education arena and successful completion of an assessment examination based on APPA's body of knowledge, contained in the *Manual for Facilities Management* and delivered by the APPA Institute for Facilities Management. The examinations will be offered in connection with the Institute, which is scheduled twice a year.

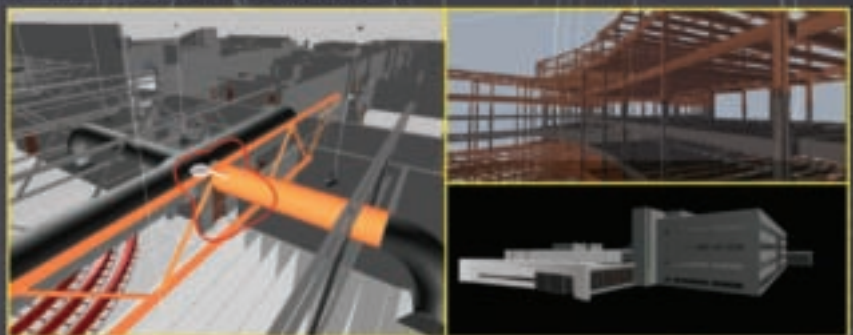
A preparatory course will be offered at the Institute on September 14 in Phoenix, Arizona and exams will be offered September 14 and 15. The exam will be offered in 2008 in con-

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junction with each Institute and during the annual conference.

The EFP designation will serve to recognize newer educational facilities professionals for their knowledge and abilities to manage complex campus facilities. It is a designation that remains their own and should open many doors for those who chose to be mobile in their career paths.

Beginning in 2008, APPA will also offer a second, more advanced certification—Certified Educational Facilities Professional (CEFP). This certification will recognize seasoned facilities professionals for their vast knowledge of facilities management in our unique educational environment and their many years of practical application of that knowledge. Qualifications for the CEFP will be based on a combination of knowledge and successful demonstration that this knowledge has been shared and applied at the applicant's institution. Examinations for the CEFP, like the EFP, are expected to be offered three times each year, beginning in 2008 in conjunction with the fall session of the Institute. Look for details on how to apply for the CEFP early next year. 🏠

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