



Professional Certification: Increase Your Personal ROI

By Jack K. Colby

Take a moment out of your busy work day to think about the amazing trends taking place in the educational facilities profession. As if technology, energy, and the economy were not creating enough speed-of-light changes, we now can add sustainability, carbon footprints, and accountability to the list.

How can today's facilities professional ever keep up? Clearly, facilities management in the educational setting requires a unique and expanding set of skills, knowledge, and experience to be successful. Educational facilities professionals need a way to be recognized for these traits, and the leaders of our institutions need a way to identify qualified professionals to lead their facilities organizations.

Our membership has specifically expressed that professional credentials and certification were high priorities for Gen-Xers. Thus, two of APPA's 7 Key Strategies call for our leadership to (1) establish "credible and valued credentialing programs for individuals and institutions" and (2) "engage young facilities professionals" by offering targeted educational and professional development opportunities.

APPA established the Educational Facilities Professional (EFP) credentialing program in 2007, and now we continue in our mission to promote high-level leadership in educational facilities with the new Certified Educational Facilities Professional (CEFP) designation. The Certification Board and a group of very dedicated subject matter experts (SMEs)

are finalizing detailed criteria for the full CEFP certification. There will be a competency component on APPA's body of knowledge, contained in APPA's *Facilities Management* manual, as well as the applicant's ability to demonstrate their application of that knowledge and high-level judgment in the field.

Complete certification details—which will include a Study Guide—will be available in September, and the first CEFP exam will be administered in conjunction with the January 2009 Institute/Toolkit in Tampa, Florida.



PERSONAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

As Baby Boomers retire, Gen-Xers and Millennials seek to move up in the organization. There is now a much wider diversity of people entering our profession, which makes it challenging to determine actual skill levels of various professionals. Young professionals are more mobile and continuously look for flexibility as they build transferable

skills in their career planning. Professional certification is needed now more than ever to respond to this changing environment.

Young professionals can maximize their personal return on investment (ROI) by obtaining certifications that enhance upward mobility through promotion or job moves. Employers can increase their ROI by adopting an industry standard as criteria for critical facilities leadership positions. This increases the value of a standard professional certification, as professionals can use it to be marketable and demonstrate their experience level, and employers can use it to recruit high-level professionals.

BUILDING ON THE SUCCESS OF THE EFP

The EFP credential demonstrates that you "get it"—you have familiarity with standards and best practices; the ability to perform research-backed stewardship; and the facts, ideas, and principles that contribute to creative and sound decisions. The credential is earned through a comprehensive examination testing knowledge in four core areas key to the profession:

- General Administration
- Operations and Maintenance
- Energy and Utilities
- Planning, Design, and Construction

The first preparatory class for the EFP credential was offered in July 2007, following the APPA 2007 conference in Baltimore, Maryland. The first exam was administered in September 2007 after the Institute/Toolkit in Phoenix, Arizona. Classes and exams continue in conjunction with all of APPA's professional development programs.

CEFP certification takes your competency to the next level. It is the advanced standard for experienced educational facilities professionals recognizing mid to senior level professionals. This designation will represent superior

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proficiency in the core competencies and professional strength in educational facilities management.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A CEFP CERTIFICATION

CEFP candidates will need to establish their eligibility by meeting educational and experience criteria.

- At least 8 years of related experience, of which a minimum of 4 years must be in an educational setting.
- Accomplishments such as advanced degrees, licensure, Institute or Leadership Academy graduation, and EFP credential, will be used to award equivalent years of experience towards eligibility.
- References from campus/related colleagues to establish good standing in the profession.

The forthcoming CEFP Study Guide will help applicants prepare for the exam by outlining the exam format, core competencies, structure of the body of knowledge, and application of knowledge in the educational facilities work setting. The CEFP exam will provide a comprehensive evaluation of the applicant's grasp of educational facilities management through not only a knowledge component but also the application of knowledge and the judgment associated with experience in the profession. Multiple-choice questions will test the applicant's knowledge and experience will be validated through questions based on campus case studies.

Facilities professionals who have decided to enhance their careers with a CEFP can do the following to prepare:

- Check your experience level at the time you will apply against the requirement of 8 years in a related field of which a minimum of 4 years must be in an educational setting.
- Study the body of knowledge contained in APPA's *Facilities Management* manual.

A CEFP CERTIFICATION TAKES YOUR COMPETENCY TO THE NEXT LEVEL. IT IS THE ADVANCED STANDARD FOR THE EXPERIENCED EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES PROFESSIONALS...

- Complete your development through the Institute, Leadership Academy, and EFP designation and/or licensure, etc.
- Utilize the Study Guide (in development) to familiarize yourself with the exam format.
- Broaden your knowledge of facilities issues across a wide range of institution types and sizes.
- Monitor the APPA website as the "go to" resource for news, information, and updates on certification.

WHAT THE CEFP WILL DO FOR YOU AND YOUR INSTITUTION

Candidates who meet eligibility

requirements and successfully pass the exam will be conferred the designation of CEFP, which can be used after their name in all business endeavors. Recognition of this accomplishment will come at the international, regional, and campus levels through formal letters to your senior facilities officer and direct supervisor. A press release will allow proper recognition of your accomplishment through your campus news service.

Professionals gaining the CEFP credential will be expected to keep current with the industry through education and professional development. The renewal of the CEFP designation will be operated on a three-year cycle, with the requirement to earn various CEUs and PDHs. The CEFP designation will establish your unique qualifications in your chosen field and will become the industry standard for quality, skill, innovation, and expertise in educational facilities leadership positions.

Be sure to maximize your ROI by investing in yourself through the APPA's certification and credentialing program. EFP and CEFP designations will not only position you at the decision-making table, but will give you a compelling voice as institutions plan for the campus of the future. ☎

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For more information about APPA's certification and credentialing programs, visit www.certification.appa.org.

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