



# "Members Respond..."

By E. Lander Medlin

**T**his past fall 2010, APPA contracted with Stratton Research, a third-party publishing and marketing firm, to survey all members requesting feedback to assess and evaluate the value and appropriateness of services provided by International APPA, its regions, and state/local chapters. This survey was designed to help clarify services provided by International APPA as compared with regions and chapters to ensure that International APPA is providing members with a cohesive and integrated array of services while avoiding duplication and competition.

We achieved a 19 percent response rate calculated at the 95 percent confidence level with a margin error of +/- 3.31 percent. Demographic distributions by institutional Carnegie classification were consistent with current institutional memberships covering the four-year doctoral or masters degree granting institutions, research universities, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, and K-12/preparatory academies (in that order). The typical respondent was: Director/AVP (59%), Assistant/Associate Director/Manager (38%), and Supervisor (4%), with time in position at a median of 9 years, and a median age of 53 (typical mix).

## APPA'S EFFECTIVENESS

In terms of overall effectiveness against organizational goals, International APPA is considered "most effective" in transforming an individual facilities professional into higher performing managers and leaders boasting 84 percent, followed by elevating the recognition and value of

educational facilities and their direct impact on the recruitment and retention of students, faculty, and staff at 70 percent, and helping to transform member institutions into more inviting and supportive learning environments at 69 percent. APPA regions are considered "most effective" in helping directors and mid-level managers improve their technical and managerial skills at 67 percent. APPA chapters are considered "most effective" in helping supervisors and frontline employees improve their knowledge of facilities management and identify state/local issues at 51 percent. This assessment of effectiveness speaks volumes for the contribution these APPA organizations are making toward individual members' growth and development, networking needs, institutional value, and the profession's credibility and influence. This is further reinforced by why members join and what they expect from each entity.

Networking, education, and information rank high for all three entities. However, the difference in degree and focus for each entity provides greater clarity for differentiating roles and responsibilities

**Members join International APPA** primarily to receive information to keep informed regarding the facilities profession and to gain information on the association's programming/services, *then* to attend professional development programming targeted at the senior level; networking follows. However, **members join the regions** primarily to network with peers, *then* to attend educational events that provide a regional focus at

a more affordable cost. **Members join chapters** to network with peers and gain training at affordable rates, yet the focus is more "hand-on" information for supervisors. With respect to members' *expectations* of services/benefits, verbatim comments targeted these areas:

- APPA International should provide professional development/senior-level programming, relevant/current resources, leadership, and insight on "big picture" issues and trends, benchmarking and best practices, website resources, networking on an international scale, and innovative operational solutions.
- Regions should provide networking and educational opportunities expressly focused on the regional aspects of issues, best practices, codes and standards, and information on what local groups/suppliers are doing with opportunities to share problems/solutions.
- Chapters should provide networking, training opportunities at affordable rates, more hands-on information applicable at the local level, and technical/supervisory training.

With stiff competition for membership in facilities organizations, members overwhelmingly said that APPA International and the regions are their first-choice organizations—good news given increasing institutional financial pressures.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made to aid in clarifying the distinct offerings and to further enhance member value:

- **Define the role and member offerings for each organization and develop a program to better communicate the brand.** APPA International is best suited for information/publications/research dissemination and education on strategic, senior-level programming, whereas regions and

chapters can provide strong education/training and extensive networking/idea sharing opportunities with a regional/local focus and angle. This will help solidify the “We are all APPA” brand, further capitalize on the strengths that each organization offers, and ultimately enhance member value.

- **Develop partnership arrangements with regions and chapters to deliver quality and relevant educational offerings developed by International APPA at the regional/chapter level.** Members are looking for more engagement, networking, and affordable educational offerings in their own backyard – a trend that will likely continue to grow with expanding financial pressures. International APPA should consider strategies to partner more with the regions and chapters in offering targeted education and training opportunities.
- **Explore an integrated, combined membership.** An overwhelming num-

ber of respondents are interested in the idea of a “single,” integrated membership billing. This step could help strengthen the relationship amongst all three entities and lead to a more integrated approach to programming and offerings overall.


- **Consider refinements to International APPA and chapter educational offerings.** Explore ways to refine and further increase the value of some International APPA educational offerings that focus on, appeal to, and engage both ends of the spectrum – senior-level professionals *and* young facilities professionals. Regions should also assist chapters in providing more targeted, quality training programs. Consider holding targeted focus groups to further assess programming and identify ways to tailor content for broader delivery.

APPA International, the regions, and chapters will use this information to shape a more integrated array of member offerings, each suited to members’ needs

at various levels and stages of professional growth and development. All of the data and extensive verbatim comments reflect the high value members place on their involvement in International APPA, its regions, and chapters. Furthermore, the survey responses are guiding APPA leaders as they plan for the future. International APPA’s newly developed strategic plan has taken into account the responses to and recommendations from this member survey and an APPA/Regional Relationship Task Force by targeting 5 Leading Strategies which will be buttressed by 5 Foundational Elements. More details on the new strategic plan and its corresponding outcomes and objectives will be provided in future issues.

Thank you again for taking the time and effort to respond to our most recent call for member feedback. ☺

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