



Certification – the Path to Facilities Management Professionalism

By Peter J. Strazdas

Do you consider yourself a professional? Are you looked at by faculty, staff, and students as a professional? Or, is your career path in the educational facilities management discipline considered to be among those stereotyped in the 1997 Academy Award winning movie, *Good Will Hunting*? In that movie, there was a scene where a professor at a top Ivy League university walks into a boiler room, which is meant to depict the Buildings and Grounds Department office. There was a rude exchange between the professor and facility supervisor, involving a custodian who was on parole. If you didn't see the movie, here is a link to a short video clip: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xUuDF58FLKA>.

I don't know about you, but I was bothered about this old stereotypical view of our profession.

THE PATH TO RECOGNITION

We know that facilities management may not have a typical educational career path like engineering or medicine (which have specific curriculums and degrees.) And, how many of us received a bachelor's degree in FM and then entered facilities management? Unfortunately, even though facility managers have elevated themselves and their organizations well above the stereotypical scene in *Good Will Hunting*, we still lack the distinction of having a highly recognized FM degree. But, thanks to the visionary



leadership and the bold move by APPA a few years ago, we now have an internationally recognized professional credential and certification program. Yes, with a lot of hard work and study, you can earn the distinction of being a Certified Educational Facilities Professional (CEFP).

The APPA Credential & Certification program is dedicated to strengthening and sustaining the profession by increasing professional competency, and supporting the educational mission through



establishing and validating standards for professional practice. The well thought out program is a two-tier credentialing and certification program. The Educational Facilities Professional (EFP) is a knowledge-based certificate program, while the Certified Educational Facilities Professional (CEFP) is a full professional certification program. It has oversight by an independent board of directors and meets the test of being a highly recognized certification program. It recognizes competency levels, assures our educational institutions of the quality level of our staff, drives continuous professional development, and establishes a standard for professional performance in our discipline.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Our profession now has an opportunity that was not available in the past. It is incumbent on every educational institution and every chief facilities officer to seize the moment and channel their staff through this certificate and certification program. As leaders, they must invest in staff development and value employee competency. And as we see the seasoned staff retire in large numbers, we can

offer our young professionals greater value in their chosen career of FM. I would urge chief facilities officers to change their FM job descriptions and include EFP/CEFP credentials as preferred (or even required) criteria for employment. We have an obligation for succession planning in our respective organizations, and we owe it to our profession to make sure the next generation is better prepared. The wisdom of a lot of people and APPA has opened the door and set the path we must take.

A CHALLENGE FOR THE APPA REGIONS AND CHAPTERS

We know that some regions offer the prep course and EFP/CEFP testing locally for their members. Some may offer a scholarship for the prep course or test.

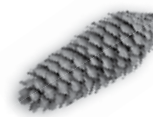


However, the Michigan APPA Chapter Board of Directors made a bold move this year. They saw the importance of moving the APPA credentialing along for their members, and offered up to 25 full scholarships to take the prep course and test. The MiAPPA Board has even committed to supporting this initiative every year. Additionally, some Michigan universities are committed to having all of their professional staff earn EFP/CEFP credentials. On November 12, 26 people took the prep course. In 2013, MAPPA and MiAPPA will have a joint

conference, and we intend to have 50 people take the prep course and test. We would like to challenge other APPA regions and chapters to match the number of people obtaining professional certification.

The APPA staff and leadership are providing an incredible opportunity to raise the bar for individuals and our profession, where we can be viewed as a highly recognized professional in a profession equal to the best in society. ☎

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