

The APPA Journey—A Personal Connection

By Timothy P. Dobson, EFP



Throughout my career in higher education, my APPA membership has played an invaluable role in ensuring that I had the tools, skills, and connections I needed to successfully perform as a leader in educational facilities.

I began my higher education career in April 2009 as executive director of operations for New Mexico State University (NMSU). Facilities management and operations is my passion, and I came to NMSU with 22 years of experience in the private sector. During my first week of work, Glen Haubold, my boss, introduced me to APPA and the many opportunities it offers to become involved and to take advantage of the benefits available to members. At the same time, he asked me to take the lead on the NMSU Facilities Performance Indicators (FPI) submission. I look forward to FPI every year and enjoy seeing the progress that we have made as an organization by comparing NMSU with other institutions.

Rocky Mountain APPA (RMA) was looking for a new membership chair in 2016. I discussed the position with Glen, and he said it was a good opportunity and that NMSU would support me. Before submitting my name for consideration, I called Dave Turnquist, RMA president, and Lisa Potter, RMA membership chair and president-elect, to see what

the job entailed and get a sense of the organization's direction. The discussions convinced me that it was time to get involved, and I submitted my application. A short time later, I was welcomed as the new membership chair. After attending my first RMA board meeting and APPA membership committee meeting, I knew that I had made a good decision, as both organizations share the common goal of advancing the organization. Professionally and personally, it is very satisfying to work with unified teams.

SHARING MY APPA JOURNEY

Membership has been part of my APPA journey since 2011. I became the New Mexico representative on the RMA membership committee. When I volunteered for this position, I thought it would be a good avenue to become involved in the organization while analyzing what RMA had to offer. The position appealed to me because it required me to contact other institutions to discuss the benefits of joining the organization. As I tried to recruit new members, I struggled to connect with potential members and asked Glen if he had any tips for marketing the benefits of APPA membership. He suggested making a personal connection by telling them of my APPA journey. This was sage advice.

My journey through APPA engagement and participation really highlights why APPA membership has mattered to me in my career. I have attended the Supervisor's Toolkit, graduated from APPA U, obtained my Educational Facilities Professional (EFP) credential, presented at a CAPP (Central Region of APPA) conference, and was an active participant in NMSU's successful application for the APPA Award for Excellence. But my journey won't stop there. The next step in my journey is to become a member of RMA's 14ers Club and obtain a Certified Educational Facilities Professional (CEFP) credential. Personally and professionally, I realize the value of being an active participant in APPA and RMA. This is one of the key points I pass on to potential members during our phone calls.

Becoming active in the organization develops busi-

ness relationships that you can call upon for help. All APPA members are willing to share experiences and discuss similar challenges they have faced. The APPAinfo Discussion List provides many opportunities for participation, and taking a minute to respond to a question ultimately leads to new friendships while helping you to grow professionally and personally.

THREE QUESTIONS TOWARD PARTICIPATION

Participation is a process and always begins with a question. The first one is, “What is APPA?” As members we can all provide an answer and list the numerous benefits APPA provides for professional development. Questions are the stepping stones to building the organization. The APPAinfo Discussion List serves as a forum to ask a facilities question to a diverse audience. It also gives you an opportunity to share an experience with other facilities professionals. You may not be able to answer a question, but you can forward it to someone on your team who can. This is a great tool for our APPA Young Professionals. Looking back, a tool like this would have been beneficial when I began my career in the private sector.

The next question is, “How do I advance my facilities career?” APPA offers many professional development opportunities, including APPA U, the Leadership Academy, or the Supervisor’s Toolkit. There is a high probability that your boss has participated in some of these classes, and they will likely support you on your journey. Another way to advance your career is to find a seasoned facilities professional to be a mentor. This is very helpful and becomes a foundation for you to mentor other facilities professionals in the future.

My favorite question, and the one I hear frequently is, “What can I do to help?” Committee chairs are always looking for new ideas and assistance to enhance the organization.

Committees are small with a lot of work to be done. Business relationships and most importantly, friendships, begin when you collaborate with other facilities professionals. Friends are always willing to jump in and help. This is a key component

to advancing our organization. I encourage everyone to become more involved with your state, local, or regional chapters: Share ideas and volunteer to help. If we all take this step, APPA will continue to be a premier organization. ☎

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