

Making the Most of Your Membership and Professional Development

By Timothy P. Dobson, CEFP



Programs that give back to the APPA membership have been the central focus of the Membership + Community Engagement Committee in our recent meetings. We have dedicated quite a bit of time to reviewing the programs that add value to our members, and the APPA professional development offerings were at the top of our list. We recognize that the professional development of our employees is and should be a high priority for all of our member institutions. Our challenge as facilities professionals is to balance professional development expenditures with other institutional financial priorities.

APPA has many professional development offerings that can help mold members into seasoned facility management professionals. Facilities professionals can attend a wide variety of training opportunities including:

- The APPA Institute for Facilities Management
- The Leadership Academy
- Supervisor's Toolkit

APPA also has a credentialing program called the Certified Educational Facilities Professional (CEFP), and is able to pair new members with seasoned professionals for mentoring. Each of the APPA programs can work as a stand-alone, or you can group them together to develop a professional development plan. The APPA Institute and CEFP credentialing program complement each other.

In the Institute, you obtain the fundamentals based on the sessions given in each of the four tracks: General Administration, Operations & Maintenance, Energy & Utilities, and Planning Design & Construction. Instructors refer back to the APPA Body of Knowledge, which is the guidebook for the 13-week online CEFP examination cohort groups.

All regional chapters offer scholarships to the Institute and discount coupons for the CEFP credentialing program. APPA is committed to helping members obtain the CEFP credential. If you are unable to pass

the exam, you are allowed to sign up to participate in another cohort session and retake the test for free, provided you do so within 30 days of the fail date. You can even take the test more than once—more information is available on the credentialing website at <https://www.appa.org/credentialing-examination-faqs>.

My background was in federal government facilities management, and while I already knew something about facilities, attending the Institute definitely helped me become proficient in managing higher education facilities. The CEFP credential is the “icing on the cake.” This program is taught by APPA members who share their knowledge and experience with other facility management professionals. I have benefited from these programs and recommend that anyone with aspirations of advancing in education facilities work these courses into their professional development plans. The CEFP credential adds credibility to my decisions and demonstrates my commitment to higher education facility management.

The Leadership Academy is designed for APPA members who are committed to improving their leadership skills. The program is divided into four, three-day tracks that focus on (1) individual effectiveness, (2) interpersonal effectiveness, (3) managerial effectiveness, and (4) organizational effectiveness. Committing to improving your leadership skills is the first step to success in the Academy.

Actively participating in the group exercises and discussions will help you grow as a leader. As they do for the Institute, many regions offer scholarship opportunities for the Academy. For institutions interested in taking larger numbers of their leadership team through the program together, APPA has developed the Academy on Campus program to provide a local training opportunity. Hosting an Academy on Campus lowers the registration cost and eliminates the travel expenses for each participant. The Academy can be held only for your team members, which allows for a team-building opportunity, or it can be cohosted with another nearby school, which can provide an opportunity to network

with other institutions in your area. Cohosting is away to split the expenses and give your personnel exposure to other institutions. Currently, I am investigating this option in New Mexico. Our institutions are located within 70 miles to 400 miles of each other. Collaborating with other institutions to host a track and split the number of attendees offers a great professional development opportunity for both institutions.

Professional development also includes developing our technical skills and the technical skills of our team members. But factory training comes with a premium price tag and limits the number of personnel an institution can send. One way to bring professional development to your campus is host a Facilities Drive-In Workshop. These are local events conducted by an APPA Business Partner that furnish an opportunity to engage your state chapter or APPA region. Our business partners are integral members of the APPA team; they will step up and customize a training course that meets your needs.

Finally, professional development can be delivered in the form of mentoring. What better way to improve your skills than by talking with a seasoned facilities professional? We all face similar challenges, and there

are many members who are willing to share their experience. I have had some great learning experiences working for Glen Haubold, past CAPPa president, and interacting with David Turnquist, past RMA president, during my short career in higher education facilities management. These gentlemen have made a profound impact on my career and helped guide my APPA journey. Their influence was also instrumental in my decision to sign up as an RMA Fourteener and to become a mentor.

Active participation in APPA's international, regional, and state levels will help our organization grow. We are fortunate to belong to an organization that wants to give back to the membership. The professional development opportunities are reasonably priced and designed to help participants succeed. I encourage everyone to take full advantage of these opportunities. ☺

Tim Dobson is executive director of operations at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, NM, and the PCAPPa rep to the Membership + Community Engagement Committee. He can be reached at tdobson@nmsu.edu.

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