

Clear Beginnings; Maintaining Our Future (20/20)

By Mark Duclos



Many of us have gotten to the point in our lives where we reminisce about days gone by and lessons we have learned along the way—and those we wish we had learned sooner. We have all heard the adage, “I wish I knew then what I know now.” This one applies to all of us!

As an APPA member working in higher education, I recently found a blind spot in my own approach to supporting our membership as well as our staff, students, and community in their educational pursuits. It’s a discovery that I wish I had made long ago—that discovery is the important resources that K-12 members and their organizations can provide for all of us, regardless of our institution’s classification. It is also an area I am going to explore further this coming year.

You may ask what prompted this epiphany. It came about when I learned that the Southeastern Region APPA (SRAPPA) 2020 annual conference will be hosted by Berkeley Preparatory School in Tampa, Florida. This is the first time that a K-12 institution has hosted a SRAPPA conference, and it may very well be the first time a K-12 has hosted

any regional conferences. About 10 percent of APPA membership comprises K-12 institutions, so I decided it was time for me to learn more about them—the first being our SRAPPA host, Berkeley Preparatory School.

Founded in 1960, Berkeley Preparatory School is a pre-K through grade 12 coeducational, independent, Episcopal day school. Mike Steger is Berkeley’s facilities management director and a driving force in the school’s progress and the lead in their conference-hosting initiative. In my brief contact with Mike, I have learned that his goals and the goals of his school are very closely aligned with the goals of every one of our APPA members. I was reading through these goals when I realized that for many years, I had missed utilizing valuable resources right in my own backyard from K-12 colleagues like Mike. Take a look at a synopsis of a few of the objectives of this exemplary K-12 member institution:

- Is COLLEGIAL. Berkeley’s faculty take part in a professional growth process involving peer observation across the school, as well as faculty-led support and mentoring of new colleagues. Their community of professionals are invested in their own and each other’s success.
- Is DIVERSE. Berkeley’s faculty identify as white, black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, Middle Eastern, and multiracial. They are committed to supporting a culturally diverse faculty and student body in an inclusive community.
- Is FORWARD THINKING. Berkeley’s staff enjoy a one-to-one environment and cloud-based collaboration to share with each other and the students.
- Is NATIONALLY PROMINENT. Members present annually at regional and national educational conferences.
- Is SUPPORTIVE OF THEIR MISSION. One hundred percent of the faculty and staff support the Berkeley Fund, the school’s annual giving program.

- Is WIDELY PUBLISHED. Berkeley faculty and staff are published in textbooks, professional journals, books, and articles on academic scholarship.
- Is RECOGNIZED FOR EXCELLENCE in education. Berkeley teachers are grant and scholarship recipients, serve in leadership positions for regional and national organizations, and work with colleges and universities to strengthen teacher certification and training.
- Is COMMITTED to campus life beyond the classroom. Berkeley teachers coach teams, sponsor clubs, chaperone activities, and revel in campus life.

We all have similarly oriented K-12 institutions close to our communities, and are certainly connected to them through similar objectives, goals, and interactions with APPA.

A QUICK Q&A

As part of our conversation, I asked Mike some questions that I hoped would help me better understand and promote the needs of our K-12 members, and also shine a spotlight on this important segment of our membership.

From a K-12 perspective, how does being a member of APPA help with your job?

Mike: I would offer that many if not most K-12 campuses operate much like a college or university campus does. Our organizational structures are much the same, and our goals are absolutely the same: to support the institution and its students in all their educational endeavors. The support portion of that statement has vast and varied meanings, and because of that, belonging to APPA/SRAPP/FLAPPA [Florida Chapter of APPA] helps provide me and my team with the resources we need to best support our organization. We recognize that we are not an island and that we need outside resources to help us be most effective in our work supporting our schools.

What are some of the challenges that K-12 facility leaders have that higher education leaders may not have?

Mike: Again, I think many of the challenges we face in K-12 are similar to those in higher education. But if pressed for some differences, I would suspect that because many K-12s are smaller than their higher education peers, we then face [more] budget and staffing challenges, while being asked to present the best

possible facilities we can. K-12s are quite competitive with one another in their local markets, so we can ill afford to have our facilities less than stellar. Although higher education faces similar issues, simply scaled upward, the pool of prospective students for K-12s comes from a more finite area. That said, all the more reason to invest in our people through the networking and educational offerings of APPA/SRAPP/FLAPPA.

Is there a strong network among the K-12 APPA members where you can exchange information?

Mike: There is a network, but unfortunately I wouldn't say it is strong. SRAPP continues to help build the network among K-12s, and I believe that Berkeley hosting the 2020 conference may help show other K-12s out there that participating in SRAPP is beneficial to our organizations just as it is to a college or university.

Tell me a little bit about your work with Berkeley and why it will make a good host for SRAPP 2020.

Mike: I joined Berkeley back in mid-2013 to manage the facilities and construction of what turned out to be a significant time of growth for the campus. One of the strategic initiatives for the campus was to help achieve "national prominence." There are many ways that can be achieved, and certainly one of them is to host national and regional conferences. Therefore, the opportunity to host SRAPP 2020 fit right into this strategic initiative. Given my years volunteering with FLAPPA, I have helped put on a number of state conferences and figure this will be much the same, only with more people.

Berkeley Preparatory School is excited to be hosting the 2020 SRAPP conference. Our theme, "Clear Beginnings; Maintaining Our Future (20/20)," is a bit of a play on words for clear vision or focus (20/20) and emphasizes that formal education begins at the K-12 level.

I am hopeful my higher education APPA colleagues will continue to explore their collegial relationships with all our individual members and call on them to share and participate in providing solutions for all student-focused communities. I plan on making this one of my clear goals for 2020! ☺

Mark Duclos is associate vice president, facilities management at Georgia College & State University in Milledgeville, GA. He can be reached at mark.duclos@gcsu.edu.