

# A Community College Perspective

By Mike Posey

**H**aving been an active member of APPA for over 17 years, I am often asked about APPA by educational administrators and our staff, who want to know why our institution is so heavily involved in this professional group.

## AN INTRODUCTION TO APPA

Like many of my contemporaries, I came to work in higher education from another industry. In my case it was from electronic manufacturing, and I had never heard of APPA. Several months after I started my employment at Pima Community College (PCC) in Tucson, Arizona, my supervisor asked me if I would like to go to the upcoming APPA training in

Fort Worth, Texas. The class started the next week, and one of my coworkers could not attend due to medical reasons. I immediately said yes, and was off to the Lone Star State.

My week-long training was some of the best professional training I have ever received. I found it particularly encouraging that the training staff was composed almost entirely of other facilities management professionals from other APPA member schools who were top-notch in their business. Not only was the training superb, but there were also opportunities to interact with other facilities leaders and managers representing a wide gamut of higher educational institutions from across the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

I also found it interesting to learn from my contemporaries that we at PCC were not alone with difficulties relating to operating large higher educational systems and providing superior facilities for our students, staff, and the public. I was astounded to discover that some of the most prestigious colleges and universities were also experiencing the same problems, such as aging infrastructure, deferred maintenance backlogs, decreased funding from state governments and other sources, decreased student enrollment, higher costs to provide personnel with competitive salaries and benefits, and changing student perceptions of the value of higher education.

## USING APPA TO SUPPLEMENT RESOURCES

At PCC we try to use our APPA membership as an asset to supplement our resources. If you need managerial training for your staff, especially for up-and-coming managers, then you should know that APPA is the international leader in this area. Virtually all of our managers and leaders at mid-level and above have attended APPA training, and they also participate in the Rocky Mountain Association (RMA) regional APPA organization. APPA also provides assistance to institutions to help them do their work more effectively and intelligently. If you need to post a question about an operational subject,



APPA RESOURCES

you can post it with APPA and receive advice and feedback from peer institutions who have experience in the area you need help with. At PCC we are currently conducting an in-house review of our staff levels for all of our dispersed campuses. APPA has been an invaluable go-to resource in this effort and has given us the proper guidance and contacts to help us expedite it.

APPA is also great at recognizing the accomplishments of its member schools. PCC was privileged to be a recipient of the prestigious APPA Award for Excellence in 2012. This singular award was warmly received by our staff and the leadership of the college. The staff were especially proud to be recognized for their hard work throughout the years, as they contributed so much to the growth of PCC. It should also be mentioned that APPA publishes *Facilities Manager*, a professional bi-monthly journal, which I have found to be of tremendous value to myself and my staff. Many of the articles are contributions from our members and reflect the latest trends and best practices for those in the facilities industry. APPA also holds an annual conference that gives members the opportunity to participate in various forums and trainings by peers who make presentations on a wide variety of relevant subjects.

#### APPA—A TRULY PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION

In conclusion, I believe that most people in the educational facilities management field consider themselves professionals. Of course, many people use the term “professional” when discussing their work. One definition of a profession is “a vocation founded upon specialized educational training, the purpose of which is to supply disinterested, objective counsel and service to others.” Among many hallmarks of a true profession are that it becomes a full-time occupation, that a training school is established, and that a national or international association is set up for members of the profession. In terms of an international association, I think you will agree that APPA sets the standard for us to follow. I firmly believe that membership

in APPA is essential to the promotion of facilities management as a profession. I wholeheartedly recommend that you join APPA as soon as possible to reap the benefits of membership. 💰

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