

Creating a New Norm to Meet Changing Times

A Profile of President Chuck Scott

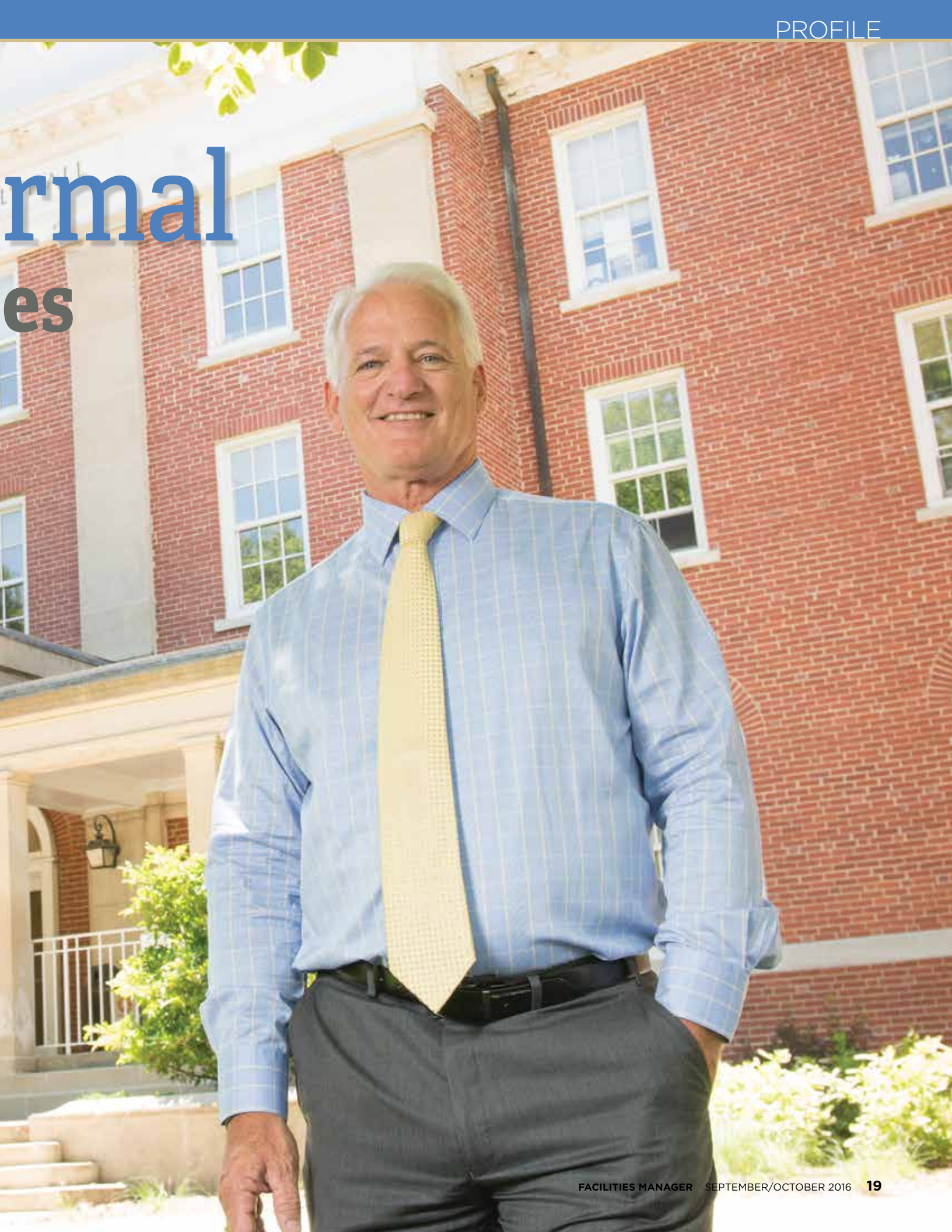
By Anita Blumenthal

When incoming APPA President Chuck Scott was working to become an Eagle Scout in the late 1960s, he formulated a personal mission statement, although he admits he didn't realize that's what it was until decades later, when he was in the APPA Leadership Academy. That statement was, "Always leave a campsite cleaner than you found it." He firmly believes "that statement led me into what I've become. It led me to my work ethic and moral standards. It led me to be a loyal family member, an active community servant, and now, leader of an international facilities management organization."

Although Scott's path to facilities management was not obvious to him, the seeds were sown early. He grew up in rural Illinois, spent a lot of time outdoors with his three brothers, and developed a great appreciation for the environment. He wasn't really aiming for college, but he was attracted to the horticultural program at the local community college and continued on to Southern Illinois University to earn a bachelor's degree in plant and soil science. After eight years in the landscaping business, in 1985 he joined Illinois State University (ISU) in Normal, Illinois as director of grounds maintenance and recycling, and has been at ISU ever since, holding positions as director of campus services, executive director of facilities management, and currently, executive director of facilities management, parking, and transportation.

Photos by Lyndsie Schlink

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Scott still remembers a high point of his years directing grounds maintenance: He was invited to join the committee to officially establish the campus as an arboretum. It was formally registered as the Fell Arboretum in 1995, named in honor of university cofounder Jesse Fell, who planted the first tree on the campus in 1867 when the institution was 10 years old. The oldest public university in Illinois, ISU was founded as a “normal school,” or teacher training college. The lawyer who drew up the papers to secure its funding was Fell’s friend, Abraham Lincoln.

Today, Fell Arboretum stretches over more than 400 acres of the campus and contains approximately 2,000 trees and other plants, all native to Illinois. In 2008, ISU was recognized as a Tree Campus USA school by the National Arbor Day Foundation and continues to hold the designation today.

UNDERSTANDING AND VALUING DIVERSITY

In his next post as director of campus services, Scott found a new challenge. “In 1994, I was in my late 30s and had always worked with small groups. As director of campus services—covering the campus’s 1,100 acres and more than 200 buildings—I was suddenly responsible for about 270 people with diverse backgrounds,” he explains. “In particular,” Scott says, “the leaders of the building services groups were mainly African American. I quickly realized we came from very different places. What



happened next led me to an ‘ah ha’ moment. We agreed that we would all bring copies of our high school yearbooks to the next leadership meeting. The outcome—in addition to a lot of jokes, mainly about hair—was a change in my own moral fiber. I began to understand the value that diverse perspectives bring to the outcomes of nearly every decision we make. There is no right or wrong way a person comes to a decision; it’s based a lot on personal experiences.”

After that experience, Scott explains, “I developed regular labor-management meetings with all sides sitting around the table to resolve differences before they were set in writing in the form of grievances. We created trusting relationships so that people could feel free and comfortable enough to call each other on issues without fear of retaliation.”

Today, Scott oversees all human resources functions related to his position, which involve over 400 employees represented by eight separately negotiated union contracts. “Unions bring a different set of rules we have to abide by,” he says. “If you understand them and they understand our parameters, contracts, and needs, we can work together to make ISU a better environment for all. We are all here to provide a better student experience.”



ISU is in the midst of demolishing the four residence towers of the south campus complex. Scott explains, “We provided the administration with the information it needed to make the decision: information on the condition of the facilities, estimates on the cost to bring the facilities up to code, and what we would have at the end if we did that.” The administration decided to demolish the residence towers and build a new residence hall complex elsewhere, leaving an open city block for future use.

USING APPA ON CAMPUS

Early in his career, Scott began using APPA guidelines for custodial and grounds functions, and he benefited from the solid data the guidelines supplied. “I used the data in an argument that we either had to increase custodial staff or change our delivery model of services. The custodial department did not have enough money for more staff,” he says, “so I marketed the idea to the administration by saying, ‘We are going to change some of our cleaning methods—and here’s why.’ It worked. The same thing happened with grounds,” he says. “We used the APPA guidelines to develop a system where we cover more acreage per worker but we hold certain parts of campus to a higher standard, and the ‘back 40’ can look a bit more fuzzy.”

As executive director, Scott used APPA’s Operational Guidelines data to persuade the administration to hire a firm to conduct a facilities condition assessment. “It was in 2003,” he says, “and for the first time, I put the term ‘deferred maintenance’ into the minds of the board of trustees. While the assessment was expensive, it provided the board with information they had not had before, so that now they could understand our needs.”

Repeatedly, Scott has found that the guidelines “provide data and credibility for what I am asking for from the administration—somewhat equivalent of a third-party opinion.”

Scott also uses APPA resources with his own staff, bringing APPA professional development tools to the ISU campus and encouraging his staff to begin their own APPA journeys. Over the years, he says, he has sent over a dozen of his staff to the Institute for Facilities Management or the Leadership Academy. In fact, Kristie Kowall, his assistant director for administrative

services, succeeded him as president of APPA’s Midwestern region (MAPP) and is currently chair of regional representatives on the APPA Board of Directors.

“I’ve brought the Supervisor’s Toolkit to campus twice and have hosted Drive-In Workshops,” Scott says. The Toolkit yielded multiple benefits. “Often, departments are working across multiple shifts and varying days off at different zones on campus,” he explains. “The Supervisor’s Toolkit program involved 40 supervisory staff and lasted four full days; it was a face-to-face opportunity to build relationships. Also, it gave frontline supervisors a first look at what is it like to be a supervisor—how to lead versus manage.”

Scott’s management style—both on campus and at APPA—is participatory. “I give people opportunities to make their own decisions, to do things as they wish,” he says. “But if they start to go over a cliff, I intervene and explain why.”

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS WITH APPA

Scott’s own APPA journey began in 1991, when his supervisor invited him to attend his first APPA conference. Scott’s initial reaction was very positive. “I liked the APPA focus on professional development,” he says. Within the next few years, he completed APPA’s professional development and leadership programs and then became involved at the regional level in MAPP, first volunteering to be the Illinois representative on the membership committee and then chairing the committee. He served as regional president before joining the APPA Board.

Once on the APPA Board, Scott served on the Regional Relationship Task Force. The first time he ran for Vice President

THE SCOTT FAMILY JOINS THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Scott recounts this story: "During the spring of 1986, I was told of an event that was going to occur on campus. I was told to place extra trash containers throughout the athletics and residence hall areas. Given the large number of containers required, I decided it would be in my interest as superintendent of grounds to check them throughout the weekend. Once on campus with 10,000-15,000 Special Olympics athletes and families, I quickly learned what joy we were bringing them by hosting their summer games on our campus.

"The following year, I took vacation days to volunteer in any way that I was needed. This quickly grew from being a volunteer at the softball throw, to a key volunteer in the summer games planning process, to a running long-jump venue director, to a board member, and ultimately to serve as the chairman of the board of directors for Special Olympics Illinois. During the course of the past 30 years, I served on several committees, my wife became a venue director herself, and our children became annual volunteers and were present at all of the events. This group of very special people had a passion for what they were doing, exhibited the true meaning of sportsmanship, and truly appreciated the time and energy we put forth. Thus, it just became a part of the Scott family culture to give back."



Scott leads the ISU facilities leadership team.

for Professional Development, he lost. But six months later, the incumbent had to resign. Scott was asked to fill the spot for the rest of the term, and he did. Then he ran again and won. In that role, he says, "I was particularly inspired by Glenn Smith, who said that deferred professional development is more critical to address than deferred maintenance. If professionals who address deferred maintenance did not have leadership skills and know the latest technology, the deferred maintenance issue would not be resolved."

As VP for Professional Development, Scott helped create the new APPA Board position of chair of regional representatives, and he arranged for a task force of members to conduct a third-party evaluation of the Institute for Facilities Management. "Their recommendations are currently being implemented," he says.

Scott also started developing "Navigating the Facilities Portfolio," a graduate program for APPA U. "Jim Jackson of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and I worked through two beta graduate programs," he says. "Now we are out of the beta stage, and the graduate program was available for the first time in September 2016."

THEME FOR THE YEAR: CREATING A NEW NORMAL FOR APPA

Scott is setting the tone of his tenure with the theme "Creating a New Normal." Says Scott, "We really need to conduct our work in a different manner than before to align ourselves with our universities' missions and the shifting sands of higher education and higher education finance." His plan for the year is to build on the work of his predecessors (set out in

the strategic plan), engage members, and develop action items under three pillars.

The first pillar is to redefine the association—for example, with an association management system so APPA can provide more and better data to members. “I want to put APPA tools and resources online so that members can use them anytime and anyplace that’s convenient for them,” Scott says. The second pillar is to remake the organization. “I want the Thought Leaders Series to focus on customer service,” he says, “and on how facilities associations can break down the silos that have existed within the organization (rather, I call them ‘cylinders of excellence’) to merge them with the common good for a better student experience.” The final pillar is to reinvent the individual; two ways to do this are through credentialing and through enhancing opportunities for individuals to access professional development offerings.

FAMILY MAN AND VOLUNTEER COACH

Scott and Vicky, his wife of 41 years, have two grown children. Their daughter Erin lives locally, and Erin’s six-year-old daughter, Lexi, is one of the joys of Scott’s life. His son Brian and his daughter-in-law Ali live in neighboring Indiana. Part of Scott’s long record of community volunteering tracks his children’s growing up: Cub Scout leader, baseball coach, soccer coach, and wrestling coach. He coached up to middle school age—“a very formidable age,” he admits. “I tried to impart what it is to be on a team and support one another. This was a great age to help shape the lives of these kids. I liked giving them the opportunity to learn.” (See sidebar for the Scott family’s special relationship with the Special Olympics.)

BRINGING HIS SKILLS TO THE COMMUNITY—CREATING A NEW NORMAL, ILLINOIS

Eventually, Scott moved from coaching to serving the broader community. He prepared for civic leadership in a number of ways. In 1994, after six years taking one course per semester, he earned his master’s in political science from ISU, with an emphasis in public administration. He also completed a year-long leadership course sponsored by the county Chamber of Commerce. He began serving on town committees and task forces focusing on “visioning” for the future—addressing physical assets, economic development, and business and how all the pieces fit toward a master plan for the town (the New Normal).

In 2007, Scott was elected to the first of his two terms as at-large Town Council member representing the 54,000 residents of Normal, serving until 2015. That was good timing. With his strengths in facilities, budgeting, and understanding public finance, Scott was well positioned to contribute when Normal received a Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant of \$22 million in 2010 to build a multimodal transport facility, which spurred other redevelopment including a new town hall and a public works facility—all LEED certified. He points out that Normal “became the first commu-

nity in the nation to codify LEED requirements for town-funded facilities larger than 9,000 square feet.”

Scott is proud of his town and also of his university of over 20,000 students. ISU appears on *U.S. News and World Report’s* list of Best National Universities and is one of *Kiplinger’s* Top 100 Best Values in Public Colleges. It has an enviable graduation rate within the top 10 percent in the country and an 81 percent retention rate.

“This is a great campus,” Scott says, “a friendly, welcoming community. ISU President Dietz is very supportive of my participation in APPA. He sees this as something good for me and also good for ISU. The university understands there is a really strong alignment between the quality and condition of facilities and the ability to attract the best students, faculty, and staff.”

APPA’S CULTURE OF SHARING

At the threshold of his year as President, Scott looks back with gratitude to such colleagues as Mary Vosevich, “who helped me understand the concept of the APPA journey and how each experience would lead to the next,” to Polly Pinney, who encouraged him to run for President, and to David Gray, “who exhibited what it was like to be presidential.” He also has a great deal of respect for Randolph Hare in leading APPA in developing a new strategic plan and for APPA staff in helping to implement it.

Looking forward, Scott is excited about APPA’s engaged membership and the focus on campuses. “One thing special about APPA,” he says, “is that we’re willing to share anything. There’s no competition (except to attract students), and there’s a willingness to help that I have not found in other associations. We’re willing to share best practices and tell about failures. After all, we all have the same kinds of facilities issues.” ☎

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