

GCSAA Chapter Delegates focus on the future

A total of 98 GCSAA Chapter Delegates plus the association's Chapter Relations Committee met at GCSAA headquarters in Lawrence, Kan. and the Kansas City Airport Marriott Hotel, Oct. 12-13-14 to hear an update on the association's programming and its future direction. "I applaud the delegates for their focus and contributions to the success of the association and the profession," GCSAA President Ricky Heine, CGCS said. "The delegates are the link to the chapters and the sounding board that provides the leadership and staff direction. This meeting was successful because the delegates came prepared to discuss issues that they and their chapters identified as important."

CEO Succession Plan

Primary was a presentation by Heine regarding the identification and selection of a successor to GCSAA chief executive officer Steve Mona. Heine indicated the process will involve the services of an executive search firm with the ultimate selection by the GCSAA Board of Directors. Heine welcomed input by GCSAA members and emphasized that the board would not be constrained by a timeline given Mona will remain with GCSAA for up to six months since announcing his departure to the World Golf Foundation in late September.

"This will be a professional search," Heine said. "GCSAA is a respected organization and its members are highly-regarded. I believe we will have no shortage of qualified candidates to lead our association. Certainly, Steve deserves much credit for positioning us as a leading golf organization. We believe his appointment not only speaks well of him, but of the association as well."

Mona updated the delegates on a variety of programs and services the association offers to serve its members. He indicated the GCSAA staff has as its focus "Members Matter Most." That mantra is supported with three global initiatives: increasing membership, marketing its members, and attracting additional resources to enhance member programs and services. Mona also left delegates with three key points regarding the future of GCSAA and its members. He said "image is important" as it relates to members representing their profession and facility in a positive manner. He opined that "inclusion is preferable over exclusion" as the association grows its membership base and works with others to advance itself and the game. Lastly, he encouraged members to promote the fact that being a golf course superintendent is a profession, not an occupation.

Reviewing Outreach Activities

Delegates heard a presentation outlining GCSAA's largest investment ever in outreach to avid golfers and employers that communicates the value of GCSAA and its members. Of note was the long term commitment by the board to the program. That is buoyed by a recent NGF survey that revealed significant progress is being made in positively affecting the attitudes and perceptions avid golfers and employers have towards GCSAA and golf course superintendents. For example, avid golfers indicate the golf course superintendent more than any other golf facility employee is responsible for their enjoyment. Employers weighed in as well, with 85 percent noting GCSAA is a leading golf organization (trailing the USGA by tenths of a percent) and 99 percent indicating the golf course superintendent is key to the economic vitality of a golf facility. It was reported that GCSAA chapters are seeing the value of leveraging GCSAA's outreach through adopting the GCSAA's logo. As of the meeting, 24 chapters have adopted the new logo.

Chapter Effectiveness Examined

GCSAA Past President Tim O'Neill, CGCS led a presentation that examined the charge of the Chapter Relations Committee. Namely, what should be the relationship between the association and chapters? It is the goal of the board to take a long-term, comprehensive look at how the two entities work together, and to determine how to improve effectiveness in serving shared members' needs. O'Neill and committee members have been given long term appointments to develop recommendations and present to delegates in the future.

Establishing a Dues Strategy

As requested at past delegates meetings, an index-based membership dues structure was unveiled. It is the prevailing opinion that smaller, but more frequent increases are easier for members and the association in the budgeting and planning process. Larger dues increases result in membership losses for GCSAA and members have a more difficult time justifying increases for employers. For example, had the process been used in the past, Class A and SM dues would be at \$285 annually compared to the current \$300 level. The GCSAA board of directors is supporting a dues increase based on the Consumer Price Index, which will result in an increase of \$20 for Classes A and SM, and \$10 for Class C. GCSAA members will vote on the increase at the 2008 annual meeting with a simple majority required to pass.

Committee Process

Delegates were reminded the deadline for members to sign up online for committee service is November 5. The GCSAA board of directors selects the committees, focusing on achieving diversity on many different parameters including facility type, membership class, interests, career length, expertise, etc. The board will be discussing at its Fall 2007 meeting issues such as: no more than three years of service on any one committee, and no more than five consecutive years of service without a hiatus. The goal will be to provide some means to keep clear and continuous lines of communication open with those who want to serve, but were not selected, or those who are serving a hiatus. Such a process will keep members involved and allow the participation of members new to the committee system.

Measuring Performance

Heine briefed the delegates on the use of indicators by the association. Indicators (performance targets) are used to determine resource allocation for programs and services and measure the association's performance. In 2008, indicators lettering A through O are grouped according to their focus: Market Share, Participation Rates, Revenue, and Engagement.

Indicators follow an annual cycle of these steps: a.) indicators established; b.) resources are applied to association efforts; c.) results are measured; d.) indicators are reviewed and/or evaluated. Every indicator is tied to a GCSAA vision statement and results are published each year in the GCSAA annual report and posted on GCSAA.org.

Stats Don't Lie

Delegates heard an extensive presentation on how GCSAA leaders and staff benefit from the feedback members provide via survey instruments. The amount of data GCSAA has at its disposal is greater than at any previous time in the association's history. This provides a measure of performance and helps to provide a road map for the future. Among the surveys that were discussed:

1. Member Needs Assessment

Feedback indicates that by and large GCSAA needs to better communicate the availability of programs and services and the successes that have been achieved on behalf of its members. Members see GCSAA as being valuable in providing a variety of programs and services that chapters cannot. The Net Promoter Score was introduced as another means to measure association performance. GCSAA has a net promoter score of 25, compared to the average of 17 for associations. The Net Promoter Score is based on the formula of those who promote the association (rate GCSAA a 9 or 10 on a 1-10 scale) minus the detractors (rate GCSAA 1 through 6). Those rating a 7 or 8 are considered neutral. The Net Promoter Score is “generally” higher among those membership groups who are more engaged: committee members, delegates, etc.

2. Compensation and Benefit Report

Salaries and benefits have been going up since 1993. The average salary of GCSAA member superintendents in 1993 was \$44,500, while it was \$73,766 in 2006. Certified members average higher salaries than non-certifieds; Class A members average higher salaries than Class SM. The GCSAA Compensation and Benefit Report is a tool for members to use to their advantage in negotiation for salaries and benefits. Member superintendents who responded to the survey have access to a complimentary subscription to the full 2007 Compensation, Benefits and Operations Report. Those who did not respond to the survey may purchase a copy -- \$100 for members; \$400 for non-members. Visit www.gcsaa.org for more information.

3. Golf Course Environmental Profile Project

The first three phases of the Golf Course Environmental Profile Project have been completed with the next phase coming out in January 2008. Information will be vital to addressing various constituents including legislators/regulators, media, environmental community, allied associations, etc. Information will be vital to developing programs and services that advance environmental stewardship at the golf facility. Information will first be published in a scientific journal in late 2007. Additional communication will be widespread.

4. Economic Impact Studies

Several economic impact studies are being conducted to measure the role of golf and its economic impact on a state by state basis. The reports also include environmental data that GCSAA is providing (if available) to support the effort. The studies are being conducted under the auspices of Golf 20/20. GCSAA is helping to fund these studies and will alert chapters as to how they can be engaged in these studies.