

**GCSAA Town Hall Meeting
GCSAA Board of Directors and The Carolinas GCSA
Friday, January 9, 2009, 9 – 11 a.m. Room Mainsail C
Lakeside Conference Center at Premier Resorts at Barefoot Resort**

The Economy

Question:

In today's economy, what steps has GCSAA taken to streamline its operation so that members can continue to receive much needed services?

GCSAA is staying competitive in this challenging economy

- The economy over the past 18 months has presented us with challenges but we have responded to ensure that GCSAA members continue to receive value and service.
- GCSAA is in a strong position financially. We own our building, we have no debt and we have a reserve to fund key initiatives in tough economic times. That is a credit to solid financial management over the long-term.
- Two significant resource realignments have occurred in the past 18 months, resulting in a prioritization of organizational resources and efforts.
- The staff size has been reduced 11 percent.
- Cost-saving measures have been instituted that save money but do not compromise the quality of member events and resources.

GCSAA is helping members in this challenging economy

- Providing career counseling and support for members in transition.
- GCSAA offers free resume critiquing to members.
- GCSAA also offers access to a professional resume rewriting service
- We also offer career counseling and a host of resources, such as "Managing Unemployment," to help members get back on their feet.
- Members have up to 6 months to be reclassified to inactive status, which is a \$30 renewal, and they can be there for up to 18 months
- As an Inactive member, they retain all member benefits (including access to ERS Job Postings), plus they can get a free full-pack registration for conference
- Can have a free Compensation and Benefits report by request

Question:

How much do we spend on BOD travel and meetings?

- The Board's travel budget has averaged \$413,000 over that last four years (2005-2008).
- The budget for 2009 is \$360,000, which represents a \$53,000 reduction or 13% compared to the prior four years.
- Total GCSAA budget for 2009 is \$20,650,000, which represents a \$1,110,000 decrease (-5.1%) versus 2008.
- The Board's travel budget represents 1.74% of the total 2009 GCSAA budget.

Golf Industry Show

The 2009 GCSAA Education Conference & Golf Industry Show

- We are three and a half weeks away from New Orleans and we're tracking behind our projections. The economy seems to be the largest factor in this.
- We believe those who are attending are going to have a great experience and the value of the event will be high for attendees.
- The last time we were in New Orleans we set attendance records.

- We made a conscious decision to go back and support New Orleans after Katrina
- Contingency plans are being developed to manage any financial shortfall. The fact that the C&S is held five weeks into the new budget year provides time to react and manage the budget accordingly.

Question:

If GCSAA budgets \$1 million less revenue when hosting the show in New Orleans, why are we going there, and are we scheduled to go back?

- The budgeted amount this year is as much a function of the economy as location.
- Past data suggests that New Orleans has been an attractive destination for our members and exhibitors, albeit at less revenue than Orlando.
- We also felt it was important to honor the commitment made to return to New Orleans in wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Question:

How are conference and show sites selected?

- Availability of convention centers during the Jan/Feb peak time for conferences in the sunbelt (our event requires a minimum of 650,000 - 700,000 gross square feet).
- Availability of hotel room blocks in conjunction with the convention centers in the sunbelt.
- Availability of meeting rooms in the convention centers and hotels located close to the convention centers due to the significant amount of education programming provided by all the partners.
- Financial model that provides the funding needed for programs and services throughout the year.
- Feedback from attendees and exhibitors.
- It has been our philosophy to provide an east-central-west rotation of Conference and Show to provide the opportunity for members in all parts of the country access to our resources. Data shows that location plays a role in attendance.
- As part of the standard business practice of GCSAA and our GIS partners, we continually evaluate the location of the conferences and trade show using the criteria just mentioned.

The 2010 GCSAA Education Conference & Golf Industry Show in San Diego

Exciting new schedule for 2010 in San Diego, designed to enhance the conference and show experience and value to members and exhibitors.

- This new format decision was made based upon attendee and exhibitor survey feedback. The new schedule of events represents a maturing of the event based upon our success. We're always evaluating our event for opportunities to enhance the experience for attendees and exhibitors.
- The GCSAA Education Conference will be held Monday, Feb. 8; Tuesday, Feb. 9; and Friday, Feb. 12.
- The new schedule and format for the 2010 event will allow attendees to focus almost exclusively on the trade show on Wednesday and Thursday.
- There will be virtually no sessions or seminars that compete with activity on the trade show floor. The new schedule will also allow GCSAA attendees to return to their facilities and their families in time for the weekend.
- The new schedule will eliminate many of the hard choices that have to be made between education, trade show and networking and allow you to do what's most important when it's most important – knowing that you didn't miss an opportunity.
- With the non-competing event format during the trade show, attendees will have the opportunity to participate in even more education. The exact schedule has not been developed, but we see fewer conflicts than in the past.
- For exhibitors, the adjusted schedule means focused trade show only time for attendees for two solid days with virtually no competing events, and the feedback from exhibitors has been overwhelmingly positive.

PDI and Membership

The Professional Development Initiative is doing what it was designed to do

- PDI has been successful.
 - 75 % of members voted in the new standards.
 - Base salaries for Class A members continue to track ahead of other superintendent classifications (CGCS is part of Class A)
 - Retention rate for Class A superintendents has steadily increased since the implementation of PDI.
 - Course conditioning has been slated as the #1 reason golfers choose to play a facility.
 - Employer groups continue to recognize the added value of having a Class A superintendent who possesses strong business, communication and leadership skills in addition to excellent agronomic skills.
- GCSAA kept its promise.
 - In the past two years, GCSAA has spent \$1.3 million each year promoting the profession and the value of employing a GCSAA Class A superintendent. This has been done through the following means:
 - New GCSAA commercials on The Golf Channel
 - Employer-directed advertising – GCSAA ads appearing in employer magazines.
 - Non-paid editorial coverage – additional media coverage through placement of interviews, value-adds, and other features.
 - LPGA opportunities – heavily leverage opportunities presented through the LPGA agronomist agreement, including news coverage, PSA production and other value-added tie-ins.
 - Developed a Class A Tool Kit to assist Class A members in the promotion of their status.
 - A direct result has been the increase in new Class A members who are requesting that a letter be sent to their employers outlining their achievement of Class A status.

Question:

Please discuss membership issues over the last decade – increases/decreases in memberships and any issues that are a concern to the GCSAA.

- GCSAA's membership has tracked in accordance with golf in general over the past 10 years.
- GCSAA continued to experience steady, incremental growth in the late 90s and right after the turn of the century. However, as new course construction slowed in conjunction with the number of golfers flattening out and the downturn in our economy after 9/11, so has GCSAA's membership reflected this.
- However, after experiencing several years of declining membership between 2002 and 2006, GCSAA's membership has remained constant over the past two years.
- There is no doubt that 2009 will be a challenging year for membership recruitment and retention. However, we choose to look at this as an opportunity to continue to provide our membership with resources that will help them through this economic downturn.

Question:

With membership dues and travel budgets being scrutinized more in this economy, has GCSAA discussed dropping the dual membership requirements, particularly for SM members?

- This question has been brought up numerous times. Since the final cycle of PDI is now complete, the GCSAA Board of Directors will be reviewing dual membership and other aspects of PDI in 2009.

Question:

Why are board meeting minutes not published?

- Actual board meeting minutes, that contain detailed discussions and voting by individual board members, are not published due to legal reasons.
- Actual minutes are not published to avoid legal issues such as business decisions on vendors, industry relationships (actual comments could be very damaging to industry partner if revealed to that partner),

strategic decisions that competitors would seize upon to use against entity (for example competing publications decision to offer competitive pricing on print ads), alliance with certain industry partners to the exclusion of others.

- It is important that the board can deliberate and make decisions in a confidential environment.
- Full outcomes of each board meeting are sent out no later than three weeks after the board meeting and provide information on all actions taken by the board.

Question:

What steps are being implemented to strengthen other chapters?

- The GCSAA Chapter Relations Committee identified paid leadership, strategic planning and shared resources as keys to chapter effectiveness.
- To facilitate greater chapter effectiveness the following initiatives are in play:
 - Have increased Field Staff to three.
 - Chapter outreach efforts include board members and staff speaking at chapter meetings and conducting strategic planning meetings with chapters.
 - Providing leadership training for chapters through the Chapter Executive and Chapter Leadership Symposiums.
 - Increased personal contact with chapter executives and presidents.
 - Enhancement of Chapter resources on the Website.
 - Chapter participation at GCSAA Board meetings.

GCSAA Outreach Efforts

Question:

What is GCSAA's plan for improving the way the public perceives golf course superintendents?

- In 1994 GCSAA began communicating with employers and avid golfers—key audiences that directly influence how GCSAA members are positioned.
- From 1998-2001, significant resources were dedicated to public perception and opinion research and the implementation of a first-ever national campaign to lay the groundwork for outreach based on the outcome of the vote on membership standards.
- A recession after the events of September 11, 2001 forced GCSAA to scale back outreach, focusing on the Golf Channel and extensive media relations efforts. The investment was steadily increased until members standards became a reality in July 2006 when GCSAA implemented its current campaign focused on an increased presence on the Golf Channel, editorial content and advertising in employer-focused publications, joint allied association public outreach activities, media relations, placement of GCSAA content on web sites, participation in trade shows and conferences, etc.
- From 2006 to the present represents the largest investment in outreach targeted to employers and avid golfers. The 2009 plan and budget is likely the last year of the campaign. We'll begin planning for a new campaign in the fall. Among the tactics most recently added include a chapter logo grant program and a chapter media/public relations outreach grant program.
- GCSAA measures its performance in this area in several ways. Salary is one means. Another is presence in the media. The number of articles printed in the media featuring "golf course superintendent" increased from 1,750 in 1995 to 4,800 in 2008. Another tool is an NGF survey of employers and avid golfers. The avid golfer survey has been conducted in 1996, 2002, 2006 and the top line results for 2008 are just in. The employer survey was conducted in 2006 and 2008. Trend data shows that outreach efforts are having and impact.

National Golf Foundation "Golfer/Employer Perceptions & Attitudes" survey findings 2008 vs. 2006 vs. 2002 vs. 1996:

- In 2006, 64 percent of golfers identified golf course superintendent as key to their enjoyment of the game (top selection). In 2008, that number increased to 68 percent (compared golf pro at 57 percent).
- In 2006, 72 percent of golfers identified the superintendent as key to the economic vitality of the facility (top selection), in 2008 that number increased to 77 percent (compared to golf pro at 61 percent)
- In 2006, 99 percent of employers identified the golf course superintendent as key to the economic success of the golf course (top selection). In 2008, that number was 97 percent (compared to 81 percent for the golf pro).
- 2006, 40 percent of avid golfers consider GCSAA to be a leading golf organization. That number increased to 44 percent in 2008. During that same time, the USGA, PGA of America, PGA Tour and LPGA all suffered declines in the percentage of those golfers who were asked to identify leading organizations.
- 91 percent of employers believe the scope of duties and responsibilities of the golf course superintendent have increased over the past 10 years, with 72 percent rating it at least a moderate increase and 36 percent significantly increased.

Question:

How much does GCSAA spend on advertising and outreach, and how does the new logo tie into this?

- GCSAA outreach strategy is based on the concept of audience – purpose – message. Who are we trying to reach? Why are we trying to reach them? What is the message we are trying to communicate?
- In our strategic planning, we determine the audiences and their priority and then allocate resources to reach those audiences.
- Last year, GCSAA allocated approximately \$1.1 million dollars in direct outreach to reach employers and influential golfers. However, this effort also reached other key targets including lawmakers and regulators, GCSAA members, golf industry representatives and those who have been defined as “influential” based on income.
- That investment includes advertising in employer publications, The Golf Channel (television and online), ESPN, and chapter outreach grants. It does not include the multitude of other outreach efforts to reach key audiences such as C&S, government relations, allied golf association sponsored activities, media/public relations, etc.
- We believe and live the mantra that everything GCSAA does has an implication on our brand. Our desire is to reinforce the brand in a consistent manner and one way we do this is through our logo.
- Fifty-two (52) chapters have adopted the new logo voluntarily. Logo uniformity will NOT be a requirement of the next affiliation agreement. Grant money is available to chapters to cover the cost of transitioning to the new logo if they choose to do so.

Advocacy efforts

Question:

What is the GCSAA doing to address the worker shortage in our industry?

- Labor and immigration is one of GCSAA's priority issues. It is an issue of both seasonal employees, and year-round permanent employees.
- GCSAA directly lobbies Congress on issues of immigration reform and seasonal worker programs.
- GCSAA staff assists members with labor and immigration information and solutions, especially in providing guidance to appropriate programs and contacts, including how to hire H-2B labor.
- To date most efforts have been focused on the H-2B guest-worker program which is the most widely used program by golf courses to find legal, seasonal labor.
 - GCSAA has been pushing for comprehensive immigration reform to facilitate a sustainable workforce while ensuring national security.

- GCSAA is active in a coalition of U.S. seasonal and small businesses to modify the 15 year old H-2B visa law so that “returning workers” are not counted against the annual visa cap.
- More attention is now being paid to developing resources to identify year-round employees and other crew positions such as equipment technicians. Recruitment and retention are areas that are now being focused on in the professional development area.
- GCSAA provides education on labor and immigration topics including:
 - How to Hire and How to Fire
 - Employee Recruitment and Selection: How to Hire the Right People
 - Managing a Spanish-speaking Crew
 - Immigrant Workers
 - Immigration and the Golf Course Superintendent

Question:

Please touch on what advocacy and lobbying efforts are being funded by the GCSAA, successes and failures.

Priority Issues

- Americans with Disabilities Act, fertilizers laws and regulations, labor and immigration, land use, pesticide laws and regulations, and water issues.

Labor and immigration Issues

- GCSAA Government Relations Committee members have gone to Washington, DC for the past three years to meet with federal lawmakers to press for comprehensive immigration reform and protection of the H-2B program.
- GCSAA is active in a coalition of U.S. seasonal and small businesses to modify the 15 year old H-2B visa law so that “returning workers” are not counted against the annual visa cap.
- GCSAA actively lobbies Congress on workforce and immigration issues.

Product registration

- GCSAA vigorously defends product use and availability on behalf of the golf industry.
- Submits comments, data and input on golf course products and their uses.
- Works with members and industry partners to protect and preserve golf course uses.
- Provides EPA with valid scientific data regarding golf course practices and environmental impacts.
- MSMA, PCNB and methyl bromide are three products that GCSAA has done extensive work on in the past few years.

National Golf Day—April 2008

- First time all golf major associations went to Washington, DC to deliver the message of golf’s positive economic, environmental and charitable impact, and to fight the perception that golf is an elitist game.
- Event was in response to Congressional action following Hurricane Katrina that exempted golf from accessing certain federal disaster relief funds. Golf was lumped with liquor stores, casinos, and tattoo and massage parlors as non-essential businesses.
- Clear that golf needs to change that perception and quantify the industry's economic standing.
- Helped fund a comprehensive economic impact study, the *2005 Golf Economy Report*.
- GCSAA leaders, staff and committee members shared information from the Golf Course Environmental Profile project and the national economic report with federal lawmakers during their Hill visits.
- Plans are in the works to celebrate National Golf Day in 2009.
- It is exciting that President-Elect Obama is such an avid golfer. This may offer opportunities to break down stereotypes that still exist about golf.

State economic impact studies

- Used the national study as a template to conduct state studies. Efforts coordinated through Golf 20/20.
- Benefits from this effort include an improved ability to secure public support for increased golf tourism promotion, as well as positively impacting legislation that can benefit golf facilities.

2008 Federal Disaster Relief

- In 2008 federal disaster relief legislation was introduced as part of a broader tax package.
- The Senate bill that excluded golf courses from tax breaks and other incentives, while the House bill allowed golf courses access to funds.
- Efforts to change the bill to allow golf course access to funds would almost certainly have been successful had the measure not been tied to the economic bailout legislation which allowed no amendments.
- While the effort was not successful, the golf industry was effective in their communication and outreach to Congress.
- The new Congress offers new opportunity to build relationships.
- The 2009 National Golf Day messages will focus on reiterating golf's importance.

Federal lobbying

- In addition to our staff lobbyist, GCSAA retains a law firm in Washington, DC to work with staff to perform federal level legislative and regulatory work.
- They help advance GCSAA's legislative/regulatory agenda at the federal level.
- They are instrumental in helping GCSAA respond to federal legislative and regulatory actions.
- They play a lead role in organizing National Golf Day.

Question:

What is GCSAA's message to higher education institutions providing golf course management programs?

- We collaborate with higher education institutions to best prepare turf students for the complex realities of the job of a golf course superintendent.
- GCSAA is the source of the most relevant and comprehensive superintendent body of knowledge in the industry.
- We have garnered the expertise of members, university faculty, subject matter experts and golf course owners to create, update and validate over 1,000 "competency" statements that comprise the body of knowledge, which is the foundation for GCSAA's continuing education and certification program. We share this information with turf institutions and influence their respective turf curriculums.
- While turf institutions produce graduates with solid knowledge in agronomy, many lack business, communication and leadership skills essential success in the golf business. These skills are not emphasized by some institutions as a critical component to a student's success in this field.
- GCSAA has worked with turf faculty at several institutions to incorporate the Professional Development Resource (PDR) tool into their classroom curriculum so students can begin to assess their knowledge and discover their 'gaps.'
- Environmental stewardship must be emphasized in turf curriculum.

Question:

What is GCSAA's message to turf management graduates today?

- Be patient. There is much to learn between graduation and a successful performance as a superintendent. Don't expect to land a superintendent job right out of college—view your career as a journey.
- Set yourself apart by bringing success to your golf facility. Frame your communication around successful results to the business, more than your personal success.
- Participate in your local chapter. Meeting peers at meetings and education events gives you a list of colleagues to call on and to share your developing skills.
- Find a mentor to show you the ropes and continue your education in the experience area.

- Ask questions, show a willing-to-learn attitude and innovative approach, as you become skilled at “managing up” in developing a good relationship with your employer(s).
- Keep up on developing research and technology, be ready for the challenges that come your way at the golf facility, not only agronomic, but in the people area as well.
- Build on business-communication-leadership (BCL) competencies to set yourself apart from the field as you apply for jobs, leading to your job objective.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

- In terms of the environment, there is so much more scrutiny now than there was even two years ago. What might have passed as "green" then may not anymore. This holds true for virtually every industry.
- This heightened scrutiny provides opportunity for GCSAA, its members and the golf industry. It also sounds the alarm that certain behaviors and practices might need to be changed.
- Because of this, it is vitally important that GCSAA conduct its environmental program and replicate it. It is vitally important that golf facilities re-evaluate their environmental performances and see how they might improve -- if necessary.
- The golf industry does not help itself because of the lack of consistency in comments. For example, some people contend there is overwatering. Some contend there is too much chemical use. Some contend there are health issues. As long as those in the industry are not in relative agreement, then naysayers will have ample fodder.

Question:

What ever happened with the Golf Digest article?

- It is difficult to say if the Golf Digest article had a positive or negative impact. According to its editors, the response has been mixed.
- GCSAA was contacted in advance regarding a comprehensive article being written about the environment and we were proactive in providing dozens of expert contacts and research/data to the editors and writers.
- We were asked to provide direct comments in response to an assertion and some of our response was printed.
- We contacted Golf Digest and noted some concerns about the piece. The editors said that much feedback was received and a follow up article would be written. We asked to meet with the editors at the PGA Championship to discuss how it would cover the issue in the future. Because GCSAA, the EIFG and superintendents were credited with success (or in some cases noted powerless), we did not want to write a letter to the editor. We saw no need to go "tit for tat." We wanted them to have a greater understanding of the subject as they reported on it in the future.
- Our request for a meeting did not get answered, although they did seek our feedback on a story about golf course chemical exposure (based on UMass survey). That piece was positive.
- We resubmitted information for the December article. It was not used. Upon receipt of the December article we noted some concerns. It was a very narrow piece, focusing on organic golf course management. We are crafting a response and requesting a meeting at the PGA Merchandise Show. We do need to be sensitive in our response because much of the comments in question are from members.