

President's Message

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Have you hugged your academic today?

OKAY, that headline is definitely a little overboard, but maybe it got your attention? You will find an overarching theme of “collaboration” in this month’s issue of *SportsTurf*. One of many basic definitions of collaboration is **the action of working with someone to produce or create something**. That pretty much defines the scope of sports turf management on a daily basis as we are all about partnerships whether it is working within our management teams, interacting with our supervisors or our athletes, or and organizing and coordinating parents, boosters, etc., as we try to deliver safe, aesthetically pleasing playing surfaces.

I had the privilege of speaking to the Keystone Athletic Field Managers Organization in February at their annual conference, and I have nothing but great things to say about the group, its membership, and its activities. I had the chance to spend a little time with Don Fowler, one of the founding fathers of KAFMO, and congratulate him on what KAFMO has become over the past 18 years. Don told me that one of his emphasis points to make KAFMO a success was the involvement and utilization of the knowledge and skills of the faculty and staff of Penn State University. What Don also told me was that as important as having the academics on board, a successful organization and its activities involve everyone, and whoever joins an organization must feel comfortable. I can think of no better model of that than STMA and its chapters.

I have to chuckle sometimes when my Virginia STMA chapter colleagues are hosting field day tours of sports facilities, and I am asked to comment on a particular hands-on practice in the daily management of a sports field. I used to try to bluff my way through an answer, but I finally figured out that some of my best collaboration takes place when I get out of the way.

As an academic, I do hope that you realize the wealth of information available to you in the people and resources from your local or regional 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities that have turf programs. STMA’s membership from this group truly understands the importance and the value of sharing information. Part of what really makes our organization supremely different from others is the role that academics play in this association that goes beyond simply one of traditional academic support (i.e. making presentations). STMA has heavy academic participation in almost all of its committees and the regular interaction and exchange of ideas and information between academics and practitioners gives our membership perspectives from all angles.

I encourage you to develop a relationship with academics working in your area (either geographical or subject-based) and collaborate with them as much as you can on ideas, research, educational programming etc. Trust me—we enjoy hearing from you and the learning goes both ways. I hope that you will meet and greet your local academics and truly embrace the STMA slogan of “Experts on the field. Partners in the game.”