



# JACK COLBY

## *Continues Stellar Legacy of **APPA** Fellows*

BY RUTH E. THALER-CARTER

You could call him one of APPA's Energizer bunnies, but 2011 APPA Fellow **Jack K. Colby**, assistant vice chancellor for facilities operations at North Carolina State University, has a history of nonstop service to his profession and to APPA that makes that ever-active, never-stop rabbit look like a piker

Like previous APPA Fellows, Colby could easily rest on his laurels of service to the association and profession, but instead continues to give generously of his skill and intellect to both. Asked why, he said, "I feel as if I have invested a great deal in APPA. The opportunity to serve the profession has been a labor of love. I have gotten much more than I've ever given, and I wanted to be considered with a group of people I respect a great deal. They represent the people now leading our industry and are in a position to influence people and help others."

## DEMANDING CRITERIA

Being named an APPA Fellow reflects meeting a set of significant, stringent criteria that ensure that this designation remains APPA's most prestigious individual honor for a member of the association. The individual must:

- Be an active member of APPA for 10 years;
- Graduate from APPA's Institute for Facilities Management;
- Complete APPA's Leadership Academy;
- Complete an approved research project under APPA's Center for Facilities Research;
- Formally apply for the Fellow designation, including at least two letters of recommendation;
- Be reviewed and approved by APPA's Professional Affairs Committee; and
- Receive endorsement by the APPA Board of Directors.

## A FORWARD-LOOKING RESEARCH PROJECT

Colby's research project for his APPA Fellow designation involved the development and implementation of the annual APPA Thought Leaders Series. In 2005 APPA embarked on a new strategic planning effort—the 7 Key Strategies—to revitalize the association and provide more focus on future facilities managers. The 7 Key Strategies emphasized using technology to make information readily available to the membership; developing young facilities professionals through education and professional credentialing; and—most importantly—reforming educational programs to prepare members for the challenges that they would face as the education community responded to driving forces.

In lieu of a typical research project, Colby chose to submit the Thought Leaders Series monographs.

"I felt strongly that there was a need to understand the driving factors changing higher education and translate them into issues that facilities managers will see at their campuses to help prepare them to cope," said Colby. "We also felt that we needed a tool to ensure that facilities managers have a seat at the leadership table.

"The TLS was originally conceived of as a five-year series," Colby said. "Each year, we dove more deeply into the current topic and added new aspects—federal issues, the collapsing economy, any scandals—to keep the material current."

Colby's research project is a little unusual in that it has been presented as a series of publications, rather than one document. "Each year, we have done a stand-alone monograph that is distributed to campuses and our sister organizations and associations," he said. That first monograph has evolved into a highly successful series that is now published in APPA's *Facilities Manager* magazine and posted on the APPA website. In addition, the TLS monographs serve as a component of CFaR, and provide the source material that supports educational programs and shapes the content of APPA's annual conference, as well as the Senior Facilities Officers (SFO) Summit. A Thought Leaders session is presented at each annual conference to highlight the content of the Thought Leaders symposium just completed.

At the end of the first five years, the TLS leadership took a "capstone" look at what had been achieved and what might be coming in the next five to ten years, and decided to keep the process going. The 2012 symposium is already being planned. Next spring, Colby said, the TLS leadership will pick a new set of topics, which could include a business model for higher education, effectiveness and productivity in supporting the institutional mission, or new innovations in technology.

The TLS is "a mechanism to convey education to our members, provide educational opportunities, and shape the national conference. It helps keep us focused on learning for the future and continually looking forward offers," Colby said. "I hope the Thought Leaders Series continues to be a vibrant part of what APPA offers."

All of this is thanks to Colby's dedication and leadership, and clearly sufficient grounds for his APPA Fellow designation—but only part of his immeasurable contributions to APPA and the facilities management profession.

## A STELLAR RECORD OF ASSOCIATION SERVICE

In his 34 years as an APPA member, Colby has held several key leadership positions in APPA, the most notable being that of President in 2005–06. He also served in two other major elected officer roles: as Vice President for Professional Affairs and chair of the Awards & Recognition Committee; and APPA Secretary-Treasurer and chair of the Membership Committee, which is unprecedented. He graduated from the Institute for Facilities Management in 1996 and the Leadership Academy in 2006.

In addition to his work with Thought Leaders and his many elected APPA offices, Colby currently serves as chair of the Certification Board, which directs, develops, and oversees APPA's credentialing and certification programs. As a result, the Educational Facilities Professional (EFP) and Certified Educational Facilities Professional (CEFP) designations are gaining in visibility and credibility within educational facilities.

## CAMPUS CONTRIBUTIONS

In presenting the APPA Fellow award to Colby at the 2011 APPA annual conference, APPA Executive Vice President Lander Medlin reminded colleagues that, in addition to his extensive history of APPA service, "Jack has a day job! At NC State, he has created a highly effective and responsive facilities organization [that won] APPA's Award for Excellence in 2007; built three central plants; established credibility campus-wide;





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and invests heavily in his people and their development. One of his staff members said, 'Jack is patient and supportive, always asking a lot of questions ... It's all about *you* and what *you* need!'"

### GLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS

To read colleagues' perspectives on Jack Colby is to see an APPA member and facilities management professional who has truly given above and beyond to APPA, the education community in general, and higher education facilities management in particular, and to understand why naming him an APPA Fellow was both an excellent and an easy decision.

"Jack, while serving as president, helped to shape the vision and goals that guide APPA today," said Gary L. Reynolds, P.E., associate director for facilities at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and an APPA Past President and APPA Fellow himself, in recommending Colby for this prestigious honor. Reynolds praised Colby's leadership throughout his many years of service at the state, chapter, and regional levels and on the APPA Executive Committee as "exemplary, with an unselfish commitment to the high standards that have helped make APPA the world-class organization it is today."

In Reynolds's opinion, Colby's leadership may be best seen in his "hard work on and commitment to APPA's new credentialing program," which Colby conceived and championed. In essence, said Reynolds, "it is appropriate that Jack be recognized with APPA's highest individual honor of APPA Fellow, as he truly embodies the excellence of APPA and its vision."

Phil Cox, APPA Past President and member emeritus, echoed

these sentiments in his recommendation, saying, "I cannot think of anyone more appropriate for the title APPA Fellow. He had the vision and determination to pursue one of our organization's most important strategic initiatives—adapting our services to match the needs of our younger generation. From this pursuit was born the certification process. Not only is Jack Colby a highly effective leader with clear vision, he is a tenacious, well-organized task master capable of getting great things done."

In presenting Colby with this important honor at the 2011 APPA annual meeting, APPA's Medlin quoted a long-time colleague, who said that "Jack's entire demeanor exudes professionalism. He dresses the part; he looks the part; and he acts the part—never off-purpose." Added Medlin, "Frankly, his commitment and dedication to the association and the educational facilities profession it serves is unmatched."

### SHARING THE HONOR

Those who know Jack Colby will not be surprised to know that he intends to continue in service to APPA in general and the Thought Leaders Series in particular. He is also eager to see other APPA members strive toward the APPA Fellow designation. "I encourage anybody leaning toward this to go ahead and take the step," he said. "Do a research project that is stimulating to your interests and to our profession." The rewards of bringing an APPA career to this level are worth every effort invested in the process: "Being recognized as an APPA Fellow is the best part of being involved in the organization," Colby said. ☛

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### PAST APPA FELLOW RECIPIENTS

The APPA Fellows program began in 2004. Previous recipients of APPA's highest individual honor are (some years saw no award) are:

#### 2010

Maggie Kinnaman  
Mohammad Qayoumi

#### 2009

Alan S. Bigger

#### 2006

Christopher K. Ahoy  
Donald J. Guckert  
Gary L. Reynolds

#### 2005

Edward D. Rice

#### 2004

Douglas K. Christensen  
William A. Daigneau  
Jack Hug