

Green Section Interns

Where are they now?

BY PAT GROSS



Mike Souza was part of the original class of USGA Green Section interns in 1998. He now showcases his grass growing talents at Richmond Country Club, in Richmond, California, where he has been the superintendent since 2003.

The USGA Green Section student internship program started in 1998 to provide college-level turf management students an opportunity to travel with members of the Green Section staff and participate in Turf Advisory Service visits. The goal of the internship program has been to provide students a broader view of the golf industry so they can learn about golf course management through the perspective of the Green Section agronomists. Since that time, a total of 18 students in the Southwest Region

and more than 170 students throughout the country have participated in the program. Many have moved on to careers in golf course management.

One of the first students in the Southwest Region to participate in the program was Mike Souza from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. During the summer of 1998, he took time away from his internship doing course construction at Arrowcreek Country Club in Reno, Nevada, for his one-week USGA internship. The internship included Turf Advisory Service visits to

private, public, and resort courses in a variety of climates, ranging from the desert of Las Vegas to the coast of southern California.

Looking back on the experience 12 years later, Mike says the internship opened his eyes to different opportunities within the golf course maintenance industry. "Up to that point, I had only worked at one golf course. During the internship, I got to see all kinds of golf operations, from busy public courses to very private country clubs. They all had their unique challenges, and I could directly relate what I was learning in school to what was happening in the real world." Mike was able to participate in meetings and discussions throughout the week of visits. "Mostly, I just wanted to listen. I enjoyed seeing the interaction between the USGA, superintendents, course owners, golfers, and green committee members. Every situation was different. During each of the visits, I could tell that the opinion of the USGA agronomist was respected."

After graduating from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo in 1999, Mike became the assistant superintendent at The Course at Wente Vineyards (Livermore, Calif.). Mike moved on to become the superintendent at Richmond Country Club (Richmond, Calif.) in 2003, where he continues to showcase his grass-growing talents. He volunteers his time and energy as secretary/treasurer of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of Northern California, and he assisted with USGA championship preparations for the U.S. Amateur at the Olympic Club (2007) and the U.S. Open at Pebble Beach (2010). Once a dedicated student at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Mike is now a dedicated and successful golf course superintendent.

PAT GROSS (pgross@usga.org) is director of the Green Section's Southwest Region.