

AICP President's Message

By Graham Billingsley, AICP

January 1st was a milestone for the planning profession. On that day, AICP officially began its Certification Maintenance (CM) program, which requires members to engage in professional development in order to maintain their certification. This program was much needed, but at the same time it was a risk, but a risk worth taking. The continued health of AICP is dependent on a meaningful credential. CM is one of the steps we are taking to build on the heritage of certification.

AICP members have demonstrated a commitment to high standards of professional practice. By staying up-to-date with the latest planning tools and techniques, AICP members advance the quality and integrity of the planning profession. By formalizing that professional development in our Certification Maintenance program, we enhance the credibility of the planning profession. At the time of the approval last April, the AICP Commission made a commitment to listen and make changes as they were needed. In hindsight we are comfortable this was the best way to do this, create the program and amend as needed. Without actual experience, all the efforts would have still led to an incomplete result. Through member feedback, with two rounds of formal feedback from AICP members, and significant input from academic members, the Commission made many changes to the proposed program in response. We continue to listen and intend to act on what we hear. Yes, this process is frustrating to some, but it is similar to writing a new zoning code. Rare is the code that needs no amendments.

In creating the CM program, the AICP Commission discussed at great length how to pay for the program. We agreed that the cost of administering CM should not come from a member dues increase, or from an increase in member fees. We believed unanimously that the program should be paid for by the education providers including APA and its components, and that it must relate directly to the total costs for implementing the program.

We are committed to working with education providers to make the CM program a success. For those that become a registered CM provider, AICP's 17,000 professional city, rural, suburban, and regional planners will look to their training programs to fulfill the CM requirement. The CM program is a great way for providers to reach a huge audience of professional planners interested in training

programs—and a way for us to ensure that AICP members can find top-quality training programs.

So far, nearly 200 providers have registered more than 3500 activities. Since the AICP Commission approved the Certification Maintenance program last April, staff and Commission members have contacted and met with more than 700 training providers from around the country to encourage them to register as CM providers and submit their activities for CM credit. We want to ensure that available training opportunities cover a variety of topics but also are delivered in a variety of formats from online training to seminars and workshops.

As other professions have discovered, some potential providers may either not know about the program or choose not to participate, so members have been asked to help us recruit more CM providers by e-mailing staff at CMproviderinvite@planning.org about training providers, or downloading a fact sheet from our website to pass along to favorite training providers.

Also, we are reaching out to officials and professionals who hire and work with planners to encourage them to hire AICP-certified planners and support the professional development of their planning staff. This marketing of the credential is important to the continued success of AICP planners. The formal commitment to continuing education that Certification Maintenance represents is a central part of the message we're sharing with those colleagues. We're showing the people planners work with every day—and the people who might hire a planner tomorrow—that the four letters after a planner's name signify expertise, credibility, and dedication to ethical practice.

Planners now join the ranks of professionals that have continuing education requirements—attorneys, architects, accountants, and others. Certification Maintenance is now demonstrating our credibility to the public officials, citizens, and colleagues who rely on us—and advancing the quality and integrity of the planning profession.

The Certification Maintenance program links certified planners to training opportunities that will keep them up-to-date with the latest trends, technologies, and best practices. When providers register, we'll let AICP members know about their CM-approved activities in our online directory of CM providers and in our online calendar of events.

The benefits of becoming a CM provider include expanded listings on APA's online calendar of events, inclusion in the online directory of

registered CM providers, use of the CM logo in marketing and promotional materials, feedback from attendees offered through our automated rating mechanism, and partnership opportunities with APA Chapters and Divisions.

Every provider must pay an annual nonrefundable \$95 registration fee. We want to keep the entry fee as low as possible. Additional fees are assessed based on the number of credits for which each activity is eligible. The annual registration fee includes two CM credits. Additional fees are required for each activity submitted for CM credit beyond the two included credits. The \$50 per additional credit fee covers activity review, marketing, outreach, and database costs. The Commission will be receiving reports from staff on alternative fee schedules that may better suit certain types of training. Our hope is that we can develop a flexible fee schedule that will encourage non-APA providers to offer their training as part of the CM program.

Education providers should visit our website to learn more about calculating CM costs for your activity: www.planning.org/cm. They should also continue to have a dialog with staff and the Commission about issues as they come up. We're here, and we are listening.