

# President's Editorial

## Education, the Society and the Safety Professional

A. A. Klass in his article "What is a Profession" states: "There has continued to be a basic and fundamental relationship between the universities and professional bodies. On the few occasions in history when the traditional ties between a profession and university preparation has waned, the profession has fallen to a very low level."

"A university education is rapidly becoming essential for entering the safety profession. The realities of modern life also tell us that we must continue our education as part of a personal program of life-long-learning if we are to keep pace with advancing technology. Knowledge in the physical and behavioral sciences is progressing geometrically: it is growing faster each year. If you haven't made an effort to keep abreast of the changing technology by pursuing a planned program of continuing education during the past three to five years, you are probably obsolete in many technical areas, in comparison with those who have.

The number of universities offering degree programs and continuing education in safety and health is growing rapidly.

Stimulated by NIOSH and OSHA funds, new associate, baccalaureate, graduate programs have been and are being developed. This growth will probably continue as educators everywhere respond to the need for trained safety and health professionals in industry and government.

Our Society's concern for the quality of degree programs has resulted in the establishment of an accreditation program. Traditionally professional societies accredit degree curricula within their field of specialization. Certain criteria are established and accrediting teams evaluate the various programs on request.

After three years of operation the Society can apply to the U.S. Office of Education for recognition as the official accrediting body for degree programs in our field. This activity is of major importance to our profession, since the subjects contained in safety and health curriculum determines the knowledge and skill capabilities of the present and future graduates of these programs. Thus they define the nature and scope of practice in the field and provide direction for the development of future safety professionals. "As the twig is bent, so grows the tree." Our influence on the quality and content of these programs will have a major impact on the future of our profession as graduates assume various positions of national safety leadership.

Here are some educational trends to think about:

1. The professional safety field is multidisciplinary. We must concern ourselves with education programs which encompass all disciplines.
2. Many of the subjects in degree curricula are foreign to safety professionals who are five or more years out of school. Their competencies need to be upgraded.
3. Formal academic preparation is becoming more important as a prerequisite for entry into the professional safety and health field.
4. New tools found in statistics, measurement, evaluation research, and management sciences are becoming more vital to successful work performance.

5. Career-oriented continuing education is no longer a luxury, but has become a vital necessity if we are to keep pace with technical progress.

There has been a significant increase in the educational requirements of the safety professional. The trend is toward more technical preparation — for persons hired to fill newly created safety positions, for promotions to higher levels, and for the selection of safety professionals to assume greater responsibilities within an organization. The challenge to individuals already working in the field to expand the scope of their knowledge seems apparent.

What about the future? As the combination of attractive salaries and demand for increased professional competence is recognized, there will probably appear a growth in the demand for expanded educational programs at all levels. This includes the community college associate degree for technicians and inspectors; the college and university bachelor's degree for safety professionals; and the university advanced degree at the master's level for program planners, managers, and policymakers. A few researchers and university instructors at the Ph.D. level will also be required. Probably the most immediate demand is for technical short courses in multiple safety-related disciplines to provide upgraded training for practicing professionals and others with little or no formal training in safety, but who are assigned safety responsibilities.

The safety professional of the future will draw upon his specialized knowledge and skills in the physical and social sciences and apply them to measurement, analysis, control, specification, prediction, and evaluation of the safety aspects of systems operations. He must have fundamental training in mathematics, physics, chemistry, and engineering. The treatment of the human being requires knowledge of behavior, motivation, persuasion, communications, and of the psychological and physiological capabilities and limitations of people. Training in the social sciences is necessary to predict and describe the variations in performance of men and women, equipment, and processes, as well as related environmental factors.

Since he works closely with management, the safety professional must be familiar with management principles and organization theory and practice. He must possess the experience, skills, and knowledge necessary to analyze and evaluate systems used by management for the control of costs, human and material losses, and production quantity and quality.

Because he deals with people, the safety professional must have special skills to convey his ideas, conclusions and recommendations by verbal, written and visual communication.

Many dramatic changes are taking place in the safety field which will have considerable impact on the future education of the safety professional. The Society must play a strong leadership role in supporting member education and in sponsoring and fostering the development of quality programs by colleges and universities in order to meet the current and future education needs of our profession.

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