THE FIVE CS TO ENGAGE STUDENT FMS
Trina Lujano and Elizabeth Moinet are two of the students who received scholarships from the International Facility Management Association Foundation and attended IFMA’s World Workplace 2018 conference in Charlotte. They attended along with 20 other FM scholars who competed for coveted IFMA Foundation awards that year. Many IFMA chapters and contributors made their trips and scholarships possible because of their generous contributions and time spent on judging the competition.

Lujano and Moinet were part of the first group of students from the IFMA Foundation Global Workforce Initiative (GWI). This partnership with the California Community College Foundation brings a facility management education program to community colleges in that state. They both were part of the first GWI program at Chaffey College in San Bernardino.

After spending a week with 22 Student Scholarship winners at IFMA’s World Workplace in Charlotte, a lot of insights and “aha” moments about the future of facility management were gained.

Students, incumbent workers, veterans, the underemployed and unemployed appear to be drawn to the field of FM. Why?
The IFMA Foundation’s GWI has gained insights and learned how to better market and communicate the benefits of joining the profession.

In the past, most FMs accidentally fell into this profession, but that is not always the case now. For Kevin Squadroni, IFMA Philadelphia Chapter 2018 Scholarship Recipient, the choice came down to career path options. “A B.S. in Facilities Management was the obvious best choice. It is a professional degree that offers the ability to explore a huge variety of career paths. It also allows, in my opinion, a more intimate understanding and ability to affect ... the integration of people and place, the optimization of systems and the development of space.”

It’s important to note that facility management accredited degree programs have been around for more than 25 years. There are thousands of FMs practicing today with university degrees in facility management and 27 programs worldwide providing education through the IFMA Foundation FM accredited degree programs as seen in the FM Academic Registry at fmacademicregistry.org.

**CONNECT STUDENTS WITH SEASONED FM PROFESSIONALS**

Students are eager and enthusiastic about connecting with experienced FMs. When Lujano began exploring a career change, she looked no further than the FM program at Chaffey College. Captivated by the pathway and industry opportunities, Lujano quickly immersed herself in coursework and campus engagement, connecting with IFMA members and becoming the first president of the Chaffey College IFMA Student chapter. She received the Dallas/Fort Worth Chapter scholarship in 2018. “Bringing the insight from industry into the colleges is a difference-maker and is sparking interest in careers students never thought were possible,” said Lujano.

Ferris State student Tyler Lukomski received the 2018 IFMA Suncoast Chapter Scholarship and said connecting with real-world FMs and facilities has been vital. “Since joining IFMA last year, the experience has been amazing. We have toured several facilities local to us. This has helped me learn more than just what a classroom can teach you,” he said.

It’s not about whether people are attracted to FM, it’s about how existing facility managers connect and engage with future FMs to make them feel welcome and encourage their involvement.

**COMMUNICATE WITH STUDENTS**

By enhancing the student experience with direct communication, we are teaching students more about FM than they receive in their classrooms. At the same time, communication and mentoring helps spread the optimism of these young leaders.

If we want to grow our profession, it’s all about how we engage new members and provide an impactful experience. “We asked the students, if you could take the cash scholarship or the World Workplace trip and attendance, which would you prefer?
All the students said they prefer to have the World Workplace experience. It is invaluable to them," said Samson Lee, IFMA Foundation Trustee and Past Chair IFMA Hong Kong Chapter. The World Workplace experience was so impressive to the students that several volunteered to help enhance the student experience in Phoenix in 2019. Scholarship recipient Elizabeth Moinet said, "I've had an amazing experience at World Workplace, and I want to be available to help next year. I want to share my knowledge and experience with new scholarship recipients and help guide them." As a result, the IFMA Foundation is forming a team of students and FM professionals to make students feel welcome, provide mentorship and help navigate through the many educational sessions and events at the conference.

COMPETITION BUILDS BONDS

One event that catapulted the student experience was the launch of an IFMA Foundation student competition called "Ignite FM! The Student Challenge." The student scholarship recipients were given three hours to solve a complex FM challenge. Teams presented their solutions at World Workplace with the goal of winning a US$2,000 prize. The audience was standing room only as seasoned FMs cheered on the students. The support of existing FMs helps ignite the future of the field.

“The Ignite FM! competition was a tremendous experience for the students who participated, letting them interact with FM professionals and with each other. Just as important, the recognition of the winning team at the awards lunch served as an inspiration to all of the attendees at World Workplace, reminding us of our responsibility to nurture the next generation of facility professionals,” said Michael Schley, organizer of the event and IFMA Foundation Past Chair.

Engaging students in a team competition fueled what will probably be lifetime friendships and the beginning of their IFMA global network. Students were thankful for the experience and the chance to work with other future FMs from different schools around the U.S., Asia and Europe. They learned how to compromise with globally diverse colleagues and make collective decisions. “As an industry veteran, it’s always exciting to help young people and career changers break into our profession,” said Tony Pucci, ABM Senior Vice President of Enterprise Solutions and competition judge.

Since 2011, The Hong Kong Chapter has visited 10 to 12 college campuses every September to encourage participation in FM student competitions. Students are asked to prepare a presentation within one or more of IFMA’s eleven core competencies and submit by March. In April, the students present in front of judges for the opportunity to win cash prizes. The student or team showing the highest level of presentation skills also receives a certificate of merit.

“We invite all students to our annual “Integrate” conference and the prize is given on stage,” said Jenny Leung, IFMA Hong Kong Chapter Past President and IFMA Asia Pacific Chapter Past Chair. “Every student receives a one-year membership and we invite them to participate in the IFMA Foundation scholarship program. If a student from Hong Kong receives an IFMA scholarship, we provide coaching and mentorship before and during World Workplace to ensure they are fully involved in the experience.”

C o l l a b o r a t e w i t h o t h e r n o n - p r o f i t s

Dr. Roscoe Hightower at Florida A&M University (FAMU) began attracting grade school students to FM through the game of tennis and a video sports game. “The FM students’ company at FAMU, collaborating with a local non-profit organization, teaches FM practices to a grade school tennis and nutrition program for under-privileged children and obtain credit for this,” said Hightower.

The students also use Madden Football to explain FM. There is a component to this popular e-sports game that requires users to build a football stadium and create a facility budget. “FAMU has its own K-12 school district within the campus. The primary, middle and high school district is part of the university making it advantageous to introduce grade school students to facility management,” he said.

Tony Soriano, IFMA Orange County Chapter Past President and Surfrider Foundation Past Chairman, uses beach cleanups to teach grade school and high school students about FM. The marketing slogan is “Save the Planet, Become an FM.”

The Surfrider Foundation is an international organization and students are transported to Orange County beaches to help clean the environment and learn about sustainability.

“Landfill, recycling, composting and carbon emissions have a huge impact on our oceans and explaining FM’s impact gives students a more holistic picture of how buildings and human behavior affects our environment,” Soriano said.

In another collaboration, the IFMA San Fernando Valley, Orange County and San Diego chapters participated in Manufacturing Day, an annual event where high school students are transported to Orange County universities to learn about sustainability.

“In one day, over 1,000 students interacted with FMs from various industries, including health care, utilities, manufacturing, universities and the public sector. They were genuinely interested in learning about our field. We used a Google Jam Board along with a Kahoots game with prizes to draw them to FM. The annual salary potential, along with sustainability, were two key incentives to a career in FM,” said Irene Thomas Johnson, IFMA Foundation Trustee, GWI Chair and IFMA San Fernando Valley Chapter Past Chair.
CONTRIBUTE TO ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THE IFMA FOUNDATION

Sodexo, an IFMA Foundation GWI Advisor, conducted a women in FM session at World Workplace where a panel of women leaders talked about the challenges and opportunities in their careers. It was in interactive session and an opportunity for students and the IFMA community to engage first-hand with industry leaders and colleagues.

Sodexo Senior Director of Talent Acquisitions Scott Sherman said, “The FM industry has substantial growth projected over the next few years which creates a need for new talent already. When you add to that the FM labor supply and demand data from IFMA research, the industry will add 500,000 new jobs globally over the next 5 years, yet we are only graduating 800 professionals a year from IFMA accredited universities, we see a critical need to accelerate FM talent pool development.”

An FM does not have to be a GWI Advisor to contribute to the IFMA Foundation. There are committees and events to help with, including spreading GWI concepts to all the chapters, councils and communities within IFMA. Pick one or more of the 5 C’s and join in the communication and connection efforts. Remember, the more scholarship donations, the better. That means more student experiences we can support.

WHAT’S NEXT?

At the World Workplace Charlotte “after party” following the last day of sessions, a group of students was so excited about their week at the conference they thanked IFMA Chair Graham Tier and Past Chair Bill O’Neill for the experience. Several students asked if IFMA would allow their classmates to attend World Workplace next year for free providing they volunteer.

“This was such a wonderful experience, I only wish my friends at Temple University studying FM could also participate,” said student attendee Xiu Hong Ng.

Reaching out to students as a mentor, or helping to provide scholarships through the IFMA Foundation, is one of the best ways to ensure students and new FMs entering the field have the resources and support needed to succeed in facility management. 

Nancy Johnson Sanquist is an IFMA Fellow and AIA Associate. She is VP of Global Strategic Marketing at Planon in Boston.

Diane Levine, MCR, is the Executive Director of the IFMA Foundation. She is a former IFMA Board member, and also an award-winning co-editor and author of the “Work on the Move” book series. Diane is one of the pioneers of the foundation’s Global Workforce Initiative.

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