

DECA Introduced to Apartment Industry

More than 60 years ago, DECA formed with the goal of improving education and opportunities for students interested in careers in marketing, management and entrepreneurship. A partnership with the NAA Education Institute introduces students and advisors to career paths offered by the multifamily housing industry.

BY MARK EVANS

As part of its effort to build awareness among high school and college students about apartment industry careers, the NAA Education Institute (NAAEI) is partnering with DECA to introduce its staff advisors and student members to the many different career pathways offered by the industry.

The partnership began a few years ago, and NAAEI serves on DECA's National Advisory Board along with some of the nation's leading corporations. DECA prepares emerging leaders and entrepreneurs for careers in marketing, finance, hospitality and management in high schools and colleges around the globe. It includes 185,000 high school student members in 5,000 schools, as well as 15,000 college student members representing more than 200 colleges and universities.

Jack Rose, Executive Director of the Florida Association of Collegiate DECA, says the association's business partnerships, such as the one with NAAEI, are critical not only in connecting students with potential careers but also in leveraging those industry relationships to provide students with real-world experiences that build on what they learn in the classroom.

"We work very closely with business and industry," says Rose, who also is an associate professor in the College of Business at Johnson & Wales University in Miami. "Education today is a partnership."

Rose knows firsthand the effect DECA can have on students and in preparing them for future careers. He started with the association 50 years ago, saying it helped ready him for a long, successful career in merchandising, retail marketing and management. In fact, he was honored in 2003 with the DECA Lifetime Achievement Award.

DECA always looks for opportunities to inform students about different career opportunities, he says. In particular, the apartment industry provides great management career pathways for college students. It's a perfect fit for students in Florida, he says, which is seeing tremendous growth among its commercial and residential property industries.

Rose was among several DECA representatives NAAEI invited to attend the 2013 NAA Education Conference & Exposition in San Diego to learn more about the industry.

"I left extremely motivated and excited," Rose says. "I shared my experience at the conference with our dean and also plan to soon speak with our hospitality program about what I learned."

Diverse Opportunities

Like Rose and many DECA students and faculty, John Fistolera's experience with the apartment industry was limited until NAAEI partnered with DECA. Fistolera serves as DECA's Assistant Executive Director for corporate and external affairs.

At one point, he lived in an apartment in Arlington, Va. He dealt with the front office, sales and maintenance staffs but says he never stopped to consider what an apartment career path might look like or the types of jobs offered by the industry.

"In our discussions with NAAEI, I was surprised at how large the apartment industry is, as well as the diverse career opportunities it offers," he says. "What the industry is trying to accomplish with education and awareness also is well-aligned with our own mission of preparing students for careers."

DECA has chapters in both high schools and colleges around the world. Its goal is to help develop the next generation of leadership for companies so that those students are well-prepared to succeed when they enter the job market. The DECA model consists of classroom learning, competitions to demonstrate skills and real-world activities and community projects.

Fistolera says DECA leverages its business partnerships throughout every stage of that model, such as asking partner representatives to serve as classroom speakers, provide internships or job shadow opportunities to students and judge DECA competitions.

"DECA offers apartment industry employers access to a talent



Jack Rose, Executive Director of the Florida Association of Collegiate DECA and Associate Professor in the College of Business at Johnson & Wales University, Miami.

Learn More NAAEI affiliates can find contact information for DECA chapters in their areas at www.naahq.org/learn/apartment-careers/deca/deca-state-advisors. Trouble making contact with your local DECA chapter? Contact Sarah Levine, NAAEI Director of Apartment Career Outreach, at sarahlevine@naahq.org.



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*Executive Director, Florida Association of Collegiate DECA
Associate Professor, College of Business, Johnson & Wales University, Miami*

pool of people who are trained in areas such as marketing or management and who fit the profile of the type of people the apartment industry wants to hire,” he says. “It also gives them a way to support schools and education in the communities in which they operate.”

Most DECA students probably have apartment properties in their communities, he says, but they won’t know what it’s like to work at one and what career pathways they offer.

“Industry participation is critical to building an understanding with faculty, parents and administrators in order to encourage students to enter career pathways with specific employers,” he says.

Making a Difference

Marian Morris teaches marketing and business classes at King’s High School in Seattle. She also is a high school DECA advisor and was a recipient of one of the five scholarships offered by NAAEI for DECA leaders to attend NAA’s June Education Conference & Exposition.

“I was blown away and surprised by the conference,” she says. “I had no idea about the breadth of career opportunities available.”

She says she was excited to see the enthusiasm shared by everyone she met who is working in the industry, as well as the diverse industry career options and upward mobility often seen by people working in the industry.

Those are qualities her students are looking for in their future careers, she says. They want career advancement, the freedom to be creative and innovative in their jobs, to be a voice in the office and not just an employee number and to feel like they are making a difference in the lives of others.

“When I can contribute to a high quality of life for someone, I feel good about myself because I have made a difference in that person’s life,” she says.

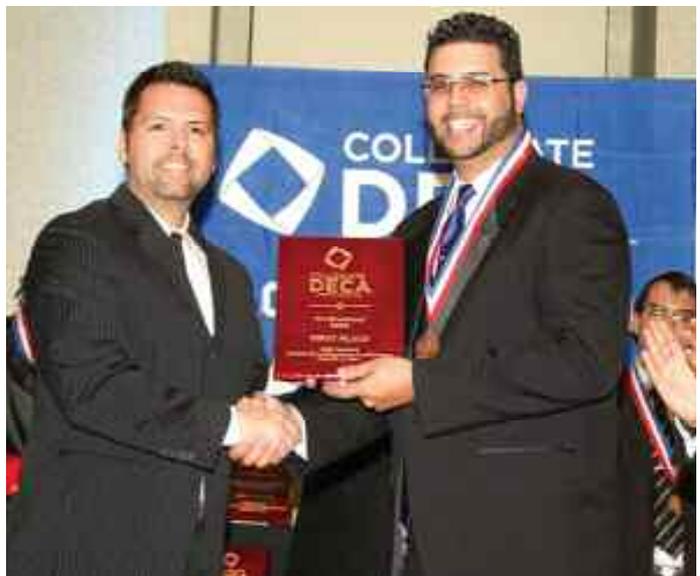
Morris says the key messages from her conference experience she is taking back to her students include the fact that the apartment industry offers a wide range of career opportunities in management, real estate, interior design and housing development—to name just a few. She also will tell them that it is one of the fastest-growing industries in the country with plenty of great job opportunities in which someone can start at the ground level and quickly advance. The industry also offers the chance to truly make a difference in people’s lives.

Getting Involved

Morris says she is always looking for class speakers and internship and job shadow opportunities for her students.



DECA and Collegiate DECA are truly a family affair. Professor Rose celebrated his 50th year of involvement with DECA and Collegiate DECA and took the opportunity to present “Certificate of Achievement” awards to his grandchildren, Bryce Morgan Rose and Maxwell Garrett Rose. State President, Lemar Scott, congratulated these future DECA members.



Once in DECA and Collegiate DECA, always in DECA and Collegiate DECA—2001-2002 State President and 2002-2003 International President, Wilson D. Enriquez, presents Paul Mojica, Broward College South, with the First Place plaque for Professional Sales. Enriquez, President of Ideal Lending Solutions, Inc., says he will never forget his Collegiate DECA roots and is now giving back by being a Corporate Sponsor for the conference.

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—John Fistolera
Assistant Executive Director
DECA

In fact, her school requires students to complete a 36-hour job shadow before graduation. She also is open to partnering with someone in her local apartment industry on a project for her students, such as having them develop and present a business or marketing plan for an apartment community. An industry representative could then listen to the class presentations and choose the best.



Students from Johnson & Wales University’s North Miami campus anxiously await the announcement of winners at the 48th Annual Collegiate DECA State Career Development Conference. Students from throughout Florida competed in 27 different events before business and industry professionals.

“My job at the high school level is to expose my students to what’s out there,” she says. “You definitely want to catch them when they are young because when they are that age they have a lot of stick-to-itiveness.”

Rose says he also would like to see the apartment industry offer even more internships for college students because those types of opportunities give students the chance to expand their skills and see the industry firsthand.

He suggests companies initially connect with two or three chapters in their area and then establish strong working relationships with those chapters before reaching out to others.

Companies will find that DECA students possess solid oral and written communication skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills and the ability to work well as a member of a team, Rose says.

Fistolera says that through the national partnership with NAAEI, all NAA affiliates have access to DECA chapters, and those DECA chapter leaders and teachers want to connect with businesses in their communities.

He suggests apartment companies contact their local DECA chapter advisor, offer their expertise/specialty area and ask how they can support the chapter. Each chapter is slightly different and reflects what the educator is teaching and the interests of their students, so making those connections at the local DECA chapter level—between teachers and property managers—is key, he says.

He encourages apartment industry companies to search for ways to share their apartment industry expertise with students and give them an idea of what a career in the industry would look like.

Tomorrow’s Leaders

The goal of the DECA/NAAEI partnership is to allow the apartment industry to tap into local DECA high school and college chapters for potential employees and even residents. Ultimately, he says, the partnership can help build an industry pipeline of skilled talent filled with people who are well prepared to enter, succeed and quickly advance in the industry.

Morris says DECA students like hers are tomorrow’s leaders.

“I have some kids I know will become CEOs of companies,” she says. “Several of them have already started their own companies. These students are thinking and changing the world. They will be the ones who come up with the next iPhone, and they might as well do it for the apartment industry as opposed to some other industry.”

Mark Evans is Staff Writer for public relations firm Catalyst.

Don’t Miss 2013 Webinar Wednesdays

NAA’s Education Institute (NAAEI) has partnered with Apartment All Stars and Multifamily Insiders for a 2013 Webinar series. The partnership conducts Webinars twice monthly and provides continuing education credits (CECs) to qualifying participants. Webinars are archived on NAAEI’s Learning Management System.

2013 Upcoming Webinars

Nov. 6 **The Formula for Extraordinary Leasing Success**
Presented by Terri Norvell

Nov. 23 **The Office Personnel’s Guide to Maximizing Your Maintenance Team**
Presented by Lisa Trosien

Visit bit.ly/NAAEIWebinars for the complete schedule.