

Golfing online at WLU

BY RICK DRENNAN

Golf is a lovely walk in the park for the elite in our society.

It's surely not an economic driver.

Both these statements are absolutely untrue, says Grant Fraser, president of the Golf Management Institute of Canada (GMIC) that recently announced a partnership with Wilfrid Laurier University to deliver an online program in golf operations management.

This is the first golf management program of any kind to be delivered in partnership with a Canadian university.

Fraser, a business graduate from Laurier (1987) is thrilled that the program will allow graduates to obtain a Graduate Studies Diploma from GMIC and a Certificate of Completion in Golf Operations from Laurier.

"Laurier's reputation as one of Canada's leading universities will allow us to continue expanding our program in golf operations management around the world."

Fraser says the golf industry gets a bad rep for being elitist and simply a pleasant pastime.

According to an IPSOS/Reid poll conducted for the Royal Canadian Golf Association a few years back, golf, not hockey or soccer, is the largest participation sport in the country.

And The Canadian Golf Economic Impact Study released by the National Allied Golf Associations (NAGA) last year, confirms that the sport has had a huge economic impact on the country.

The study estimates that \$11.3 billion is contributed to Canada's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) each year.

The study also showed that golf in Canada produces:

- 341,794 jobs;
- \$7.6 billion in household income;
- \$1.2 billion in property and other indirect taxes; and
- \$1.9 billion in income taxes; and
- generates an estimated \$29.4 billion in total gross production through direct, indirect and induced spending.

Those numbers make it vital that the training and retraining of employees in the golf industry continues.

That's what drives the new GMIC/Laurier program.

Fraser says most of the online participants are from an older demographic ("early 30s and up") and many currently work in the golf business. Everyone from pros to superintendents to food and beverage managers are trying to increase their base knowledge, or improve their skills in other facets of the industry to help with their aspirations to move up the business ladder.

Although most of the GMIC/Laurier students are from Canada, it's really a worldwide program, and Fraser, who teaches a course in golf "entrepreneurship" says students from Belgium and Singapore were part of his GMIC class last year, while others continue to tap into GMIC's expertise.

Fraser is thrilled that a major university has finally recognized how important and far reaching the golf industry is in this country. He also says adding business skills to a golf professional's resume makes him or her more valuable in an industry changing course almost every year.

"We had a food and beverage manager take the course in finance because he has aspirations to become a general manager," says Fraser.

GMIC has been in the online education business for 10 years, and operates out of Golf House at Glen Abbey, in Oakville.

Fraser thinks the partnership with Laurier will add some "lustre" to the online learning programs. GMIC has some of the top industry experts as teachers.

For more on the program, go to: www.wlu.ca/gmic.