

PINEHURST, N.C. (May 6, 2024) – Recognizing a critical need to expand both the workforce of golf course maintenance professionals and the training needed to advance a more sustainable game, the United States Golf Association, the Pinehurst golf community and industry collaborators have teamed to establish a major golf education hub in the Carolinas.

A combined \$1 million commitment from the USGA and donors will fund the Greenkeeper Apprenticeship Program (GAP) for the next five years, with dedicated instructors and in-class/on-course education at Sandhills Community College in the Pinehurst area. In addition, a new program at Horry-Georgetown Technical College in the Myrtle Beach area, and a hybrid-learning opportunity will be established and funded. The extensive commitment will provide tuition-free learning for all students – no matter where they learn – for one year and paid on-the-job training positions at partner golf courses for up to 200 apprentices.

The expansion of the USGA initiative is made possible by long-term financial commitments from Ewing Outdoor Supply, the Dedman Foundation and Pinehurst Resort & Country Club, the Carolinas Golf Association and several private donors dedicated to golf and workforce development in the Carolinas.

The program, piloted in 2023 and currently in its second year at Sandhills Community College, offers flexible class times around on-course working hours, and pairs each student with an on-course mentor, intended to advance their professional development. As part of their classwork, apprentices learn valuable technical skills, while also gaining insight into why agronomic decisions are made. After successfully completing the course, students will receive college credentials, a progressive wage scale increase and a Journeyworker card through the United States Department of Labor.

“As we look toward the next 25 to 50 years in golf, our Green Section teammates clearly heard the industry’s desire to further develop skill sets of golf course maintenance personnel and the professional training needed to advance a more sustainable sport,” said Mike Whan, CEO of the USGA. “In short order, we’ve seen inspiring success stories from our inaugural GAP class, and couldn’t be more excited with the direction of the program. The overarching impact of all our community programs will be felt not only during U.S. Open week, but for years to come. We’re so thankful to our supporters for their endorsement in leading golf forward together.”

Of the 19 members in the inaugural GAP graduating class, 70 percent earned job promotions, and 18 graduates were assigned increased leadership responsibilities based on successful completion of their classwork. Members from the current cohort and last year’s apprentices will be assisting Pinehurst’s agronomy staff during the preparation and care of Course No. 2 for championship play at the 2024 U.S. Open.

[Click here for Greenkeeper Apprenticeship Program pictures](#)

The \$1 million giveback project is a continuation of the USGA’s four-pronged U.S. Open Community Engagement commitment that also includes investments in diversity and inclusion, championship sustainability and advocacy related to key issues important to golf’s future.

Continuing its commitment to inclusion, the USGA will again immerse 24 college undergraduate and graduate students from communities underrepresented in golf in all facets of the USGA and the U.S. Open through its 10-day Pathways Internship Program. Created in 2022, the educational experience is supported by foundational sponsor Deloitte, among others, and provides interns with exposure to the many career pathways in golf. The interns’ schedule will include professional development, hands-on learning experiences and networking throughout U.S. Open Championship week.

The USGA will also continue to advance its commitment to a more sustainable future through a Reduce, Renew and Reinvest program throughout the U.S. Open.

Concession areas at Pinehurst will feature recyclable aluminum cups and beverage products, and food containers made from recyclable or recycled materials. Fans can also bring in their own personal reusable water bottles and refill them at any of eight water stations throughout championship week. The USGA and Pinehurst have teamed to install permanent power throughout the championship site, which will reduce use of diesel-powered generators not only in 2024, but in

future championships at the historic venue.

The effort builds off the USGA's ongoing commitment to lead by example in promoting sustainability, and to demonstrate progress as part of the UN Sports for Climate Action framework. At the 2023 U.S. Open, the USGA quadrupled its recycling collection on-site, reached a near 100-percent reduction of single-use food and beverage plastics, and diverted 2,491 pounds of food to a nearby food kitchen, reducing its organic waste to nearby landfills.

Utilizing the U.S. Open's international stage, the USGA will also draw attention to investment efforts that are leading golf forward, highlighted by the organization's water resiliency efforts. Prominently on display on Course No. 2 at this year's U.S. Open, Pinehurst Resort and Country Club has shown its commitment to reducing resources by eliminating overseeding, reducing the amount of irrigated turf and utilizing general best management practices.

The USGA's water resilience efforts over a 15-year period are on display at the newly opened Golf House Pinehurst, which features The Glade, an outdoor landscape that will help to elevate awareness of the USGA's ongoing work to help make golf more sustainable, with native plants and pollinator habitats. Golf House Pinehurst also features subsurface drip throughout the irrigated turf, providing further research opportunities for the emerging technique. The grounds also include two turfgrasses developed through USGA research grants, in addition to the restoration of a historic pine grove (The Grove), a living learning lab and a pollinator garden (The Glade).

These efforts will be accompanied by U.S. Open fan experiences that highlight the USGA's continued campaign to unify, showcase, govern and advance the game of golf.

For more information, visit <https://www.usopen.com/>, and to learn more about the Greenkeeper Apprenticeship Program, [click here](#).

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<https://mediacenter.usga.org/US-Open-Community-Programs-2024>