

Pursuit of Excellence

By Ray Sack, President of BOCONEO



The International Code Council (ICC) in its efforts to provide safety, affordable living and a sustainable future to the public provides not only codes and standards for all types of disciplines but various means for measuring your understanding of them. One of their tools is found in the ICC National Certification Exam Bulletin. In this document ICC currently provides forty-five exams for all types of disciplines. One obtains a certification for passing each exam, and by grouping some of these certifications one can obtain a total of sixty-one (61) certifications. The highest certification available through ICC is the Master Code Professional (MCP) which requires a completion of fourteen (14) to eighteen (18) certifications depending on which electives you select to apply towards the MCP.

The Building Officials Conference of Northeast Ohio (B.O.C.O.N.E.O.), a chapter of ICC and of the Ohio

Building Officials Association, is focused on training and developing professionals in the interpretation and enforcement of building and fire codes. The tagline for the BOCONEO Code Institutes is “Where education is at the center of our organization.” David Smith, 2nd Vice-President of BOCONEO, discusses with me in the following conversation how he has benefited from the education provided by ICC, the State of Ohio Board of Building Standards (BBS), the Ohio Building Officials Association (OBOA), BOCONEO and other organizations:

RAY: I realized that when you passed your last ICC exam that you were the only one in the whole world that has obtained all sixty-one (61) ICC certifications. That is a huge accomplishment. That is like someone climbing Mount Everest. How did you do it?

DAVID: Let me first say that I am thankful for the grace and opportunity given to me by the Lord. If you were to look at my resume, you would see that I am a very goal orientated individual. My family would tell you that I am very analytical, systematic and persistent. I will confess that this personal endeavor of obtaining all of ICC certifications has demanded more commitment and more sacrifice of my time than any other professional achievement in my life, including my Masters of Arts Degree. For this reason I have been prodding ICC to become accredited and convert their certifications into a degree program. I believe it would be a win-win situation for everyone.

RAY: In addition to the ICC certifications, I understand that you also have certifications with the State of Ohio Board of Building Standards (BBS), the American Concrete Institute (ACI), the Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM), the Ohio Manufactured Home Commission (OMHC) and two LEED AP certifications with the United States Green Building Council (USGBC). How do you maintain the continual education for all of them?

DAVID: It is definitely a challenge. The certification through ACI was a prerequisite for taking one of ICC special inspector's exams. The Ohio Manufactured Home Commission requires certification to perform inspections on manufactured homes, the Association of State Floodplain Managers has a certification for floodplain management and the two LEED AP certifications enable me to understand better the direction in sustainable living. The ICC Fire Extinguishing Technician certifications are recognized by the National Association of Fire Equipment Distributors (NAFED), but all of these certifications mentioned require continual education or you lose them. Picture for a moment a performer that spins plates on sticks. He spins one, then two, then three and so on, but then they begin to wobble. He then has to run to all of them again to keep them spinning. I feel like at this moment in my life all the plates are spinning, but don't ask me for how much longer. I am hoping that one day soon all the associations will collaborate and reciprocate with the continual education requirements; otherwise, I fear that a few of my plates shall fall off of the sticks. Are you beginning to understand why I would want ICC to convert their certifications into a degree program? A degree is yours to keep and is in many ways more valuable in the world, but a certification can be forfeited for failure to maintain it. Having said this, I still have no regrets for taking all those exams. They have provided me with a broad understanding of the codes and standards that I would not have obtained had I not ventured down this road. It has given me a great appreciation for the vast amount of professionals in the industry and how each has a part to play. Reaching this goal has instilled in me that no one knows it all and that we all need to work together for the benefit of others.

RAY: It is still hard to believe that you obtained all of ICC certifications. So, what are you going to do now that you have achieved this goal?

DAVID: In the beginning Ray you compared my achievement to climbing Mount Everest. One savors the moment for a while, but then we continue to go on serving until the next wave of opportunity comes. Opportunities are translated into goals, and as I mentioned already, I am a very goal oriented individual. I work with numerous governmental agencies, fire officials, zoning inspectors, professionals, contractors and the public. Having a broad understanding of the codes and standards enables me to better assist those going through the planning, developing and inspection processes. ICC hit the nail on the head with their tagline of "People Helping People Build a Safer World."

RAY: Thank you, David. You have definitely been an encouragement to us all in your pursuit of excellence.

DAVID: Thank you, Ray, and might I say, that it is and has been a pleasure serving BOCONEO under your leadership with the BOCONEO Officers.