



# editorial

## Perpetual Student?

By Vicki Arbitrio, President, NCSEA

We all agree that continuing education is worthwhile and in fact a good idea; but each year, those of us who are registered in one or more of the 28 states that require continuing education to renew our licenses, struggle to cram the right classes in before the end of the year. If we are organized, we keep an eye out as the months fly by for classes that really interest us. We enjoy going to classes, catching up with colleagues rarely seen and, often, learning something interesting; yet we feel guilty that we are neglecting clients or projects or family by attending. NCSEA is looking to change that in a couple of ways.

NCSEA has joined with NCEES and SEI to work with the various states to promote the adoption of uniform structural engineering practice legislation, so that our licenses will be more transportable from state to state in the future and, also, so that structural engineering practice will be restricted to those who have the appropriate education and experience to practice it competently. In addition, we are working to standardize the continuing education requirements. Most jurisdictions require 15 hours per year. Some designate a minimum number of technical (as opposed to managerial) hours, and a few require one or two hours of ethics classes. Specific requirements can be found on your state's licensing board website, which can be accessed from the NCEES website – [www.ncees.org](http://www.ncees.org).

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The NCSEA Diamond Review Program was created to facilitate the ability of providers of various types of seminars and educational programs to offer continuing education credits. This should, in turn, make it easier for structural engineers to obtain credit for readily-available continuing education hours. The Diamond Review Program looks at the subject of a continuing education program and its relevance to structural engineering, as well as the number of hours of credit being claimed. A positive determination under the Diamond Review Program will be, in effect, a “Good Housekeeping” seal of approval. State licensing boards will know that the program has been reviewed by a recognized national organization for content and contact hours.

The program is open to a wide range of continuing education providers, including professional associations and NCSEA Member Organizations. It is also open to vendors of construction products and services. Potentially, it will be possible for many engineers to obtain a significant

portion of their continuing education hours by attending the vendor seminars that many of us have in our offices on a regular basis.

To obtain a positive determination under the Diamond Review Program, a program must have sufficient technical merit and be relevant to structural engineering. To make this determination, NCSEA needs a pool of reviewers to assist our Continuing Education Committee. We intend to select from applicants and to make small honoraria available for these reviews. If you would like to participate, more information can be found on the NCSEA web site, [www.ncsea.com](http://www.ncsea.com).

In my opinion, our profession must determine for itself the proper combination of examination, education and experience needed for licensure, as well as the proper caliber of continuing education. Structural engineering is a profession, not a technical avocation; and if the profession is expected to continue to grow in stature through the recognition of those qualified to practice, we need to take responsibility for our continuing education. If you have an opinion about licensing or continuing education, I would like to hear from you: [Vicki@gmsllp.com](mailto:Vicki@gmsllp.com).

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