

# A Learning Laboratory

IRWA unveils the latest course in electric utilities

DEIDRE ALVES, M.ED.

IRWA VICE PRESIDENT, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



IRWA's educational momentum is continuing to run at full speed! In September, we launched another pilot course when we introduced Course 218, Right of Way Acquisition for Electric Transmission Projects. The course was developed by industry practitioners, David Hingtgen and J. Parker, Esq., and the pair teamed up to instruct the two-day pilot session. Sponsored by Consumers Energy, more than 25 attendees registered and received 16 credits of QE/CE.

This unique course was designed to serve as a "learning laboratory," where we could integrate innovative instructional techniques and maximize learner retention. There were numerous group exercises and activities, the most memorable of which was a simulation of a real-life project emergency situation. Students had the opportunity to select their roles, which included everyone from landowner and newscaster to project manager and public affairs. We even had a group of unruly protesters and a local sheriff! Once the exercise began, everyone stepped into their respective roles. Since this was the first team challenge I designed for the Association, I was eager to see the reaction of the students. We were amazed at the results! What a learning experience it was to see all the moving parts. The team challenge simulation provided the students with tremendous insight and an opportunity to use critical thinking skills based on the knowledge gained in the course to solve real project

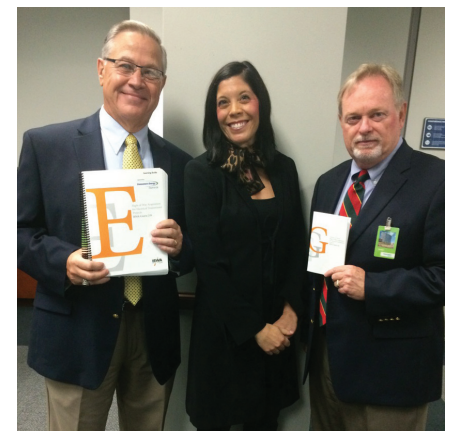
issues. Students learned the importance of communication and coordination with internal and external stakeholders and how to function optimally as a team.

"Consumers Energy was proud to sponsor this class and host the first pilot," said the company's Real Estate Director Mary Anne Marr, SR/WA. "Given the growth and investment in electric transmission facilities globally, we feel this course is of great importance to real estate infrastructure professionals, their employers and the industry. Bringing this course from concept to pilot has been a labor of love for Dave Hingtgen and J. Parker. Both are past chairs of the International Electric Utilities Committee and deserve lots of kudos." Lois Neighbors and Brad Krabel, SR/WA, R/W-NAC were also an integral part of the development team.

Participating in the pilot were representatives from numerous electric companies, including Consumers Energy, Ameren, International Transmission Company, Duke Energy, American Electric Power, Basin Electric Power Cooperative and Vectren Corporation. Michigan State Representative David Maturen, SR/WA was invited to present opening remarks. There was a good cross section of experience in attendance, which ranged from new right of way agents to seasoned veterans and key managers. We wanted to make sure there

was a diverse range of electric industry professionals in attendance so that we could obtain their feedback on the course. So we added a third day devoted entirely to a debriefing, where students provided feedback on the course delivery as well as the content. Many of their valuable suggestions will be incorporated into the next pilot presentation.

Bringing this course to fruition was personally very gratifying, and I am honored to have led the team who brought such a gift to the Association. All of us were pleased that the course was so well received by the attendees, and consider this pilot to be an overwhelming success! 🙌



Deidre with course developers/instructors, Dave Hingtgen and J. Parker, Esq.