



# The Future is Bright

Continuing education as a path to career success

BY JAMES HARDY, R/W-AC, AACI, P.APP

**Let me start by saying, I love the right of way profession. Part of it might be in my blood — my father and uncle are both appraisers — but mostly, it's because the mix of office and fieldwork keeps me engaged each and every day with something new and exciting. Working as an appraiser in Atlantic Canada, I have been able to work on a range of assets, appraising everything from investment properties to fish plants. Each project is unique with its own set of hurdles, which makes the work interesting and challenging. Throughout my career thus far, education, mentorship and practical experience have played large roles in my development as an accredited appraiser.**

## The Importance of Education

For me, completing my undergraduate degree was just the beginning of my educational journey. After graduating from Dalhousie University in 2007 with a bachelor of commerce degree, I continued my career development with a Post-Graduate Certificate in Real Property Valuation (PGCV) from the University of British Columbia, and obtained my AACI designation with the Appraisal Institute of Canada in 2010. I then obtained my R/W-AC through the cross certification process which recognizes the experience and coursework completed to obtain the AACI, with some additional coursework through IRWA along with proven experience in the right of way appraisal field.

My goal has always been to make positive progress in my career and to specialize in right of way and expert services. There is no question in my mind that the best way to accomplish this is through education. Of course, combining the demands of education and a career was a definite challenge that forced me to become as organized as possible, to maintain an agenda, and to adhere to a daily 'to do' list. Time management was critical. But with so many online course options, I was able to complete the bulk of these programs through distance learning, which was very convenient. By combining this experience

with a strong practical element in my office, I worked with senior staff and attended educational workshops to support my early learning. This put the coursework into context and made it even more engaging.

## Looking Ahead

I was brought up to fully commit to my endeavors and not do things in half measures. Problem solving and the pursuit of knowledge continues to fire my desire for continued education and the progression of my career. I am currently working to achieve my SR/WA designation and my MRICS (Member Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors), while continuing my leadership roles in IRWA and the appraisal profession. Getting involved in the leadership structure of professional organizations has been immensely rewarding. I am currently President of the IRWA's Atlantic Canada Chapter, and Vice President of the Nova Scotia Real Estate Appraisers Association. Also, last year I had the distinct honor of being recognized as IRWA's Young Professional of the Year. Accepting the award, and representing not only my Chapter but all Canadian members, meant a great deal to me.

We have all heard about the aging demographics of the right of way profession, and the issue continues to be acute. This is why investing in junior staff and proper impartment of knowledge from our senior professionals cannot be overstated. I encourage every young professional to take all opportunities by the horns and immerse yourself in all IRWA can offer. This can be accomplished by serving on a board or a committee directly related to the profession, or by exploring courses that will broaden your understanding of the work you do. If you are proactive and engaged in your profession, success will follow and our profession will be made stronger in the years to come. ✪



*James is a Director & General Manager of the Altus Group in Halifax. He recently was named IRWA's 2014 Young Professional of the Year.*