



The Voice of the 1031 Industry
25 YEARS AND COUNTING

Continuing Education Takes on “Mammoth” Project

In the beginning, there was the phone call. The *FEA Update* reported that on July 8, 1998, the FEA Continuing Education Committee held its first meeting by conference call. Margo McDonnell chaired the first Continuing Education Committee, and played a key role in determining its goals. The committee set goals to expand the quality of the *FEA Update Newsletter*, to offer seminars and workshops, to develop a Speaker's Bureau, to continue to maintain and improve on the quality, content and educational value of all general Membership and Regional Meetings, and to assist members in the promotion of their business and of their membership in the FEA. Along these lines, Jim Casterline, a long-time FEA Director and then incoming president, recommended the FEA develop a certification program.

With gears in motion, numerous issues to tackle, and “diverse opinions on most of the issues,” the committee set out to establish a Statement of Purpose. FEA minutes read: “Although everyone agreed that such things as avoiding state regulation, protecting the public and adherence to ethical standards were important, it was decided that these goals should not appear as the part of the Statement.” FEA member Brad Penner, CPA, CES[®], co-chair and overseeing the statement in progress, recorded two streamlined versions of a Statement by November, 1999:

“Establish a nationally recognized certification program to provide public confidence in designated exchange accommodators and encourage high ethical standards among Federation of Exchange Accommodator members.”

“To promote the highest level of professional competence and increased knowledge of tax-deferred exchanges by establishing a designation based upon testing and continuing professional education.”

The two statements recorded in late 1999 are the basis upon which the current CES[®] Mission Statement was formed.

At the FEA Annual Conference and General Meeting in October, 2000, with nearly 100 in attendance, the FEA membership overwhelmingly voted to proceed with a voluntary certification program. In 2001, the term Certified Exchange Specialist[®] (CES[®]) was chosen over Certified Exchange Accommodator as the designation members wanted to use to convey their competence and professionalism.

In 2002, a professional certification program consultant was retained to assist the FEA with the development and implementation of its CES[®] Program and a Certification Council was created. While preparing for the 2002 Annual Meeting to be at the Monte Carlo Resort and Casino in Las Vegas, President Max Hansen acknowledged the Continuing Education Committee's hard work in an article in the June issue of the *FEA Update*:

“... Margo McDonnell, Brad Penner, and Tim Egan have been working on the certification and continuing education program. That has turned out to be a mammoth project. The Directors could not know when we began talking about the concept some years ago that it could be as complicated and labor intensive as it has proven to be. The Board has approved the hiring of a consultant who will provide the expertise to establish a very good program...”

The inaugural CES[®] examination was administered on May 15, 2003 in Washington, D.C. After a second CES[®] exam that same month, over 70 FEA had earned the CES[®] designation.