MY FIRST YEAR AS A GRP

LAUNCHED IN JUNE 2009, THE GREEN ROOF PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION PROGRAM TURNS TWO. HERE, A NEWCOMER TO THE INDUSTRY SHARES HIGHLIGHTS FROM HER FIRST YEAR AS A GRP

By Kathryn Harrold

Becoming an accredited Green Roof Professional (GRP) is a great asset for an established professional to acquire but also an excellent credential to help recent graduates distinguish themselves in a growing field. Last spring I took the plunge and became GRP accredited. For those of you who are thinking about becoming a GRP here is a look at my first year.

I wanted to become a GRP because the field sounded exciting with tremendous opportunity for transforming and healing the built environment. My academic background is landscape architecture and I have a career goal to create healing therapeutic spaces while simultaneously restoring the environment. Through green roofs, I saw great potential towards achieving both goals— not to mention that extra edge over other hungry graduates in a very tough economy.

The four-day GRP Boot Camp offered by Green Roofs for Healthy Cities was just as it sounds: intensive. I signed up thinking I would know everything there is about green roofs, but I was wrong; after working as a GRP at a green roof design firm for the past eight months, I have since realized one is never done learning. There are so many green roof scenarios and situations that just cannot all be covered in a book or class. The GRHC Boot Camp did, however, give me a very good foundation and enough information for me to worry considerably about remembering enough to pass the exam.

Before, during and after the GRP process I was looking for a job with GRP as a selling point on my resume either as pursuing GRP accreditation or as an accredited GRP. One of the main reasons I have my current job is because I was among the first 250 GRPs in North America after taking the exam in April 2010.

Prior to finding this job I think being an accredited GRP definitely helped secure me several interviews. Even for landscape architecture firms where they weren’t necessarily exploring green roofs yet, it was a door opener and always a topic of interest with interviewers.

Four months after taking the exam I found a job as an assistant green roof designer. The basic knowledge that I gained from the Boot Camp courses enabled me to speak “green roof” and quickly learn more about the industry. Within one month of joining the company, I was working on green roof components, plant lists, planting plans, and existing green roof sites.

Now I am also writing green roof press releases, newsletters, drafting green roof plans and writing specifications. I have even signed off on a few construction documents as a GRP. It was also nice being able to attend GRHC’s D.C. Regional Symposium and fully understand the expert speakers, as well as to be able to discuss the content with other industry attendees. Attending the lectures and the Integrated Water Management course also helped me earn GRP continuing education credits.

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