For those ready to take the proverbial leap into becoming a Certified Franchise Executive™, the question is simple: Why wait any longer? With changes in place to move the program forward and an ever-expanding reach across the globe, the reasons to become a CFE are more compelling and clear than ever.

There are more than 2,000 franchise graduates and candidates currently active in the CFE program. The CFE Class of 2018, with 212 individuals, is the largest group we’ve ever graduated in a single year. The number of international CFE graduates, at 56, represents more than 25 percent of the total – also a record. The students travelled from countries outside the U.S., including Australia, Brazil, Canada, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Poland, Singapore and Thailand. And our community is reaching further every year.

As an educator and founder of LeafSpring Schools (formerly Rainbow Station), a former pediatric nurse, chair of the ICFE Board of Governors and member of the IFA Foundation Board of Trustees, I have a front-row seat in seeing how achieving the industry’s stamp of approval can lead to prosperity. It’s not just for you: your entire franchise system network.

The CFE Class of 2018 is the largest group ever graduated in a single year. Understanding the “rules of the game” is crucial to developing a consistent brand for your franchisees and customers. And Certified Franchise Executives bring with them a deeper understanding of franchising best practices and industry standards that increase the likelihood of business success.

WHAT’S A CFE?

A CFE is a professional who has received training and specialized education in franchising, similar as accreditation programs in other fields such as finance, law or medicine. How does it feel to become a CFE? It brings a sense of accomplishment, respect among your peers, and affinity with an extensive network of distinguished individuals who have earned franchising’s gold seal. For many, it means so much more than making a commitment to ongoing education,
Putting three letters after your name, or proudly wearing a CFE pin at convention. It means you have accomplished a goal and done something that the most dedicated franchise leaders have achieved.

**WHY ME?**

The benefits of becoming a CFE are extensive. Whether it’s professional development, recognition as an industry subject matter expert, or amassing a network of franchise executives, gaining a CFE will elevate your status in the franchising community. The CFE designation demonstrates commitment to franchising and is frequently viewed as a distinguishing factor in the hiring process. You are never too young, too old, or too experienced to reap the rewards of a CFE.

**WHY NOW?**

With the 35th Anniversary of the IFA Foundation, the CFE program is moving toward the future at a rapid pace to meet a growing demand for professional certification.

To achieve that, we are implementing exciting updates to further enhance its global reputation as the professional training standard and differentiator in franchising. We are increasing the number of distance learning opportunities to include more courses from additional providers such as Tortal Training, Franklin Covey, Profit Soup, FranNet, video on demand from IFA Franchise University and courses that will address critical need areas. This means you'll have access to more and critical training programs at a time convenient for you. Stay tuned for more information. We are also elevating our programming for C-suite executives to include expanded initiatives like peer roundtables at the IFA Convention.

We’re developing new content for those seeking to re-certify or develop a specialization. One of the more popular changes we’ve already made is that you no longer have to wait until the next IFA convention to start officially using your CFE. You earned it, so start using it!

This change has already helped new CFEs. Tim Katsch, CFE, achieved the milestone of finishing his final credits one week after IFA 2018 in February. Under the previous policy, he would have waited 51 weeks until IFA 2019 to begin using the CFE designation. Instead, he became the first to use his CFE designation right away and is officially a member of the Class of 2019.

“Since being the first to be granted the privilege of using the CFE designation prior to the awards ceremony, I have already seen many rewarding benefits,” Katsch said. “As a leader for an emerging brand, you wear many hats; from engaging in site selection to running Discovery Days. No matter what hat you wear, you will find the CFE designation adds credibility, memorability and strength to everything you do.”

Katsch said the policy change “keeps the momentum moving forward, leading to more knowledge growth and empowerment.”

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FAST-TRACK

Location3 CEO Alex Porter, CFE, who graduated at IFA 2018, pursued his certification out of a desire to “know everything there is to know about franchising, and the CFE is a great step in that direction.” Many newer CFES consider the certification a way to fast-track franchising knowledge, while others with years of experience use it to stay on top of trends in the community. “It’s a commitment to myself to stay informed on changes in the industry, generate ideas for growth and advocate for the franchising world,” he said.

SCHOLARSHIPS

ICFE awards two scholarships each year valued at $2,500 to students enrolled in the CFE program – the Gray Plant Moody CFE Scholarship and the Irl Marshall CFE Scholarship. Natalie Nguyen, Franchise Recruitment Coordinator for Outdoor Living Brands, was the 2017 award winner for the Gray Plant Mooty CFE Scholarship, and Heather Todd, Franchise Consultant with the Mr. Electric division of Dwyer Group, received the 2017 Irl Marshall CFE Scholarship.

Why would you wait any longer to give yourself and your business a boost? Join the franchising industry’s top leaders and start earning your CFE today. Visit franchise.org/cfe to learn more and enroll.

Gail Johnson, CFE, is Chairman of LeafSpring Schools, formerly Rainbow Station. She is the 2018 Chair of the IFA Foundation’s Institute of Certified Franchise Executives (ICFE) Board of Governors.

(Photos shown from left to right) Many of the earliest CFE graduates are part of IFA’s current leadership. These graduates are among the earliest to achieve CFE status, are still active CFES, and have recently served on IFA’s Board of Directors or one of its committees.

- Melanie Bergeron, CFE, Two Men And A Truck, past IFA Chair and IFA Bonnie LeVine award recipient
- Susan Beth, CFE, NRD Capital, Bonnie LeVine Award recipient
- Jeff Bevis, CFE, FirstLight HomeCare, Chair of IFA’s VetFran Committee and member of the ICFE Board of Governors
- Nancy Bigley, CFE, Bottle & Bottega, past Chair of IFA Women’s Franchising Committee
- Lawrence “Doc” Cohen, CFE, LJC Management, member of the IFA Foundation Board of Trustees, former IFA Chair and IFA Entrepreneur of the Year award recipient
- Jerry Crawford, CFE, Jani-King, IFA Board Member
- Dina Dwyer-Owens, CFE, Dwyer Group, former IFA Chair and IFA Bonnie LeVine Award recipient
- Russell Frith, CFE, Lawn Doctor, former IFA Chair and IFA Hall of Fame inductee
- Robert Funk, CFE, Express Employment Professionals, IFA Hall of Fame inductee and IFA Entrepreneur of the Year recipient
- Cynthia Gartman, CFE, Seniors Blue Book, past ICFE Board of Governors Chair
- Steven Greenbaum, CFE, ComForCare, past IFA Foundation Chair and IFA Entrepreneur of the Year award winner
- Karen Satterlee, CFE, Hilton Worldwide, IFA Board Member and Franchisee Forum Chair
- Shelly Sun, CFE, BrightStar Care, Immediate Past IFA Chair and IFA Entrepreneur of the Year award recipient

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