



# 60th Anniversary COLD CHAIN INSTITUTE

Powered by the Global Cold Chain Foundation

## A COLD CHAIN EDUCATION GEM

*60 years of developing leaders in the GCCF Institute.*

The Cold Chain Institute, the jewel in the crown of the Global Cold Chain Foundation (GCCF), offers this unique training and development program that has provided skills and career aspirations to thousands of cold chain workers over two generations. Some of the leaders of today's biggest cold chain businesses are graduates of the Institute. As the GCCF prepares for its 60th anniversary celebrations, Cold Facts asks cold chain leaders and existing Institute faculty and staff about what makes the event so special and important.

### A Unique Program

When it started, it was a visionary idea. Launched in the middle of the swinging '60s, the first class met at the University of Oklahoma in a town called Norman. The Institute's core values were in place from the start.

GCCF Executive Director Adam Thocher explains. "The Cold Chain Institute is a three-year professional development and leadership program; it focuses on every single stage of the temperature-controlled supply chain. We educate everyone from warehouse supervisors and shift managers through the

project management officers and continuous improvement specialists to finance, HR and executive leadership across the cold chain. We've worked with specialists and scientists to establish a curriculum that is the best practice in the cold chain industry. The students receive a college-style experience with classes covering many practical topics."

There are many cold chain leaders quick to emphasize the unique identity of the Institute. Marty Steinmetz, longtime Institute faculty member and Chief Commercial Officer at Real Cold says, "The thing that stands out

### Cold Chain Institute Wins Prestigious Award

The Global Cold Chain Alliance (GCCA) has been recognized by the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) with a Power of Associations Gold Award for its successful Cold Chain Institute initiative.

"Congratulations to GCCA for exemplifying the impact associations have on the industries and professions they represent, and on society at large," said ASAE President and CEO Michelle Mason, FASAE, CAE. "It's always so incredibly satisfying to see associations going above and beyond their everyday mission to change the world. We're very proud to spotlight this award-winning initiative."

about the Institute program is the singular event, the one-stop shop. I think the variety of topics offered is one of the big things that makes [the Institute] a success."

Ashley Albers, Vice President of Human

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Resources at Nor-Am Cold Storage, says, “It’s hard to find industry-specific continuous education in our industry.” She highlights the unique role of the instructors, who are, in large part, operational leaders of cold chain businesses. “When a faculty member is in a class and talking to someone who has the same experience and a similar background, it does make it more impactful for the students.”

Larry Alderfer, President and CEO of US Cold Storage, graduated from the Institute in 1993. He highlights the networking value. “Our company supports the Institute because it is a fantastic program. In the last year, 100 of our supervisor-level employees benefitted from very specific training in the industry. They get to connect and to bond, they get to know people in other companies, learn how other folks are doing things, and as a result develop in themselves.”

### Building Careers

Bradner Cold Storage President Tim Ludwig highlights the challenge of identifying and nurturing talent across cold chain businesses. “Nobody shows up at kindergarten career day wearing a freezer suit, so one of the things that we like so much about Institute is when we are able to identify high-potential young individuals, who usually end up getting a job with us by accident rather than by design. It’s a great way for us to quickly open up their eyes to the career potential of our industry, and how there is so much opportunity to build a lifelong career.”

## A Winning Model

CEBA is celebrating the first successful year of its CEBA Professional program. With similar elements and objectives to the Institute, CEBA Pro is the first ever immersive training for concepts, terminology, techniques, and elements related to the design, construction, maintenance, safety, and long-term operations of a controlled environment facility.

The program fills an important training need for professionals such as Site Superintendents, Project managers, Project Coordinators, Project Engineers, Professional Engineers, Estimators, Architects,

Designers, and Pre-construction Coordinators/Managers/Directors from general and thermal contractors from CEBA member companies.

CEBA Executive Director Bryan Lynch said: We are immensely proud of the work that has been done to build and pilot this industry leading program. We are looking forward to fast growth in participation and recognition of this much needed program.

Find out more at: <https://www.gcca.org/about/controlled-environment-building/ceba-program/>

Rob Chambers, President of Americas at Americold Logistics, agrees. “As a leader in the cold chain industry, we are always looking to attract top talent, and top talent wants to have the opportunity to learn, to train to develop, and those types of programs are key to attracting the future leaders of our organization ... We have seen great success from people who have entered the Institute, gone through the entire program and become leaders in our company.”

### Global Reach

As the Cold Chain Institute enters its 60<sup>th</sup> year, it can now be called a truly global program. In 2024, the first classes launched in Sao Paulo, Brazil and Rotterdam, The Netherlands. These

two new programs join the growing young programs in Australia and Mexico.

It is striking just how possible it seems to have been to be able to replicate the chemistry of the established programs in new places. Joris Olbrechts, Owner of JodiFrost, Belgium and Chairman of the GCCA European Logistics Council, attended the Atlanta Cold Chain Institute in January 2023. “I was nervous whether we could replicate the unique feel and appeal of the North America program in Europe, but I did not need to worry. Our first European event was just as engaging, if not more so. It was a great start, and we can only expect it grow.”

Francisco Moura, CEO of IceStar, shares this enthusiasm and brings big passion and

energy to grow the programs in both Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking South America. “Cold Chain Institute is a unique experience to meet, to teach and to learn for cold chain professionals. For me it’s a passion, and I hope to see the Institute grow from its strong momentum in Brazil and Mexico City, into other parts of the continent.”

As both a GCCA Board member and Chairman of Refrigerated Warehouse and Transport Association of Australia (RWTA), Graham Harvey, Vice President of Quality, Safety and Sustainability at NewCold, has been a vital supporter of the Cold Chain Institute in Australia. He emphasizes the role of the Institute in building ties. “I see one of the key benefits [of the Institute] to this industry is to build better understanding within the wider industry. We have common problems. We compete on a certain platform. But we have the same issues, cost pressures, labor pressures, and regulatory pressures that sit there.”

Ludwig outlines the scale of the potential and ambition for the Institute’s growth. “My hope for the Institute in the next 60 years is to have it available and accessible across the entire world, without having to fly somebody from Asia or Africa to North America or Europe, for many more people to enjoy the unique experience.”

### Making Connections

Of all the value people place on the Cold Chain Institute program, it is the opportunity to build friendships and connections that stands out. Recent Institute graduate Hardeep Grewal, explains. “My favorite memory of Institute was interacting with my fellow students. What a joy and privilege to share my thoughts and learn so much and at the same time make friends and contacts.

The final word goes to Mickey Hoffmann of United States Cold Storage and Chairman of the GCCF, who had this advice for students at the 2024 graduation ceremonies. “No matter where you are graduating from, keep your network, keep your connections and continue learning. It’s really easy to go to work every day, get on your forklift or go to the office and do that every day, it’s when you get out of your comfort zone that you grow as an individual.”

If there is a way to sum up the purpose intended in Norman, Nebraska, 60 years ago, it probably can’t be summed up better than that.

The Institute’s 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events will start in February 2025 with Cold Chain Institute East, February 1-4 in Atlanta, Georgia,

and Cold Chain Institute West Tempe, Arizona. This unique program is undoubtedly well-positioned for growth not just in participation, but also geographic reach – the sky is the limit. 🌐

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