



## *Professional Development Initiative*

# What is Competency-based Education? How Will it Help Me?

BY HANNES COMBEST

*GCSAA Director of Education*

***Editor's Note:** This article was written before the Membership Standards Resource Group met in late June to revise various parts of the original PDI proposal. However, GCSAA education will change in content and delivery regardless of PDI. This article will give you some insights on how future education will be structured and made more accessible to all members.*

*The goal is not to make life more difficult for members, but to create meaningful learning experiences that will enhance a superintendent's ability to be successful on the job.*

**T**he objective of all association continuing education is to advance the knowledge, skills and abilities of the members.

GCSAA is therefore developing a state-of-the-art curriculum that provides golf course superintendents the tools needed to meet the challenges they face in managing the golf course, their staffs and their budget. The result of enhancing our education program will be the elevation of the professional qualifications of our members: golf course superintendents.

In the last two years, the Membership Standards Resource Group has been developing the Professional Development Initiative. The PDI is based on the belief that for golfers and employers to truly value superintendents, the association must develop a mechanism to recognize their accomplishments and to enhance their knowledge.

The MSRSG believes this can be accomplished through an integrated, competency-based curriculum.

Furthermore, research indicates that we must be able to measure the impact of this education and its effects on the playing conditions of the golf course. We need to give employers language they can understand, a bottom-line financial impact or as they refer to it "a return on their investment."

In order to develop the needed curriculum, we must identify what the employers of golf course superintendents need, want and value from their golf course superintendents. Then, we detail the knowledge, skills, and attributes required of superintendents to satisfy these needs. Education provides the means for superintendents to fill any gaps between those competencies that superintendents have and what they need.

Using a competency model will

document this process. The model consists of three major components: competencies, levels of proficiency and performance statements. The competency categories, which reflect a superintendent's skills and knowledge, are organized into appropriate clusters. Each competency category is then subdivided into proficiency levels that range from a Level 1 (a novice) to Level 5 (an expert).

Within each proficiency level are performance statements describing the observable behaviors of superintendents performing at that level of proficiency. The chart below is an illustration.

The competencies will be managed through a unique, internet-based program called the HR Web (more information on this program will be available in future newsletters). Although currently under development, members can view this tool by logging onto

the Members' Only section of [www.gcsaa.org](http://www.gcsaa.org)

So how will the competency model impact education for superintendents? As you may imagine, superintendents traditionally have focused their continuing education on the agronomic skills or golf course management. However, our research indicates that superintendents' professional demands are changing. Superintendents' job requirements have increased the need for competencies in management skills, leadership and communication. This doesn't diminish the necessity for good scientific education, but it does require superintendents to broaden their expertise into various areas.

The current proposal recommended by the MSRG requires Class A members and certified members to maintain some level of continuing education. These levels have yet to be defined. Many members have expressed frustration with this requirement be-

## Let's See Those Hands!

Excerpt from the May/June President's Message of the Carolinas GCSA in the Carolinas Green:

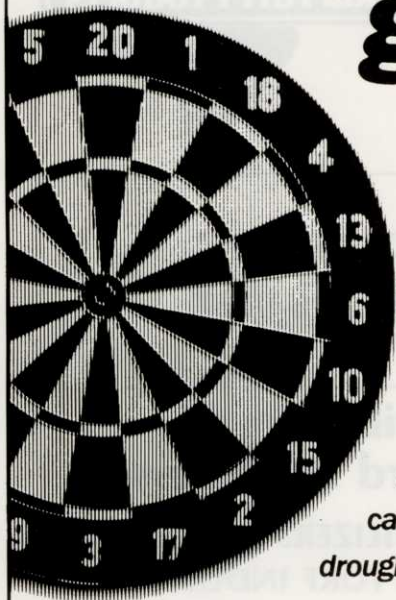
"...How many members would vote on PDI today? Not many hands up. How many of you would vote for:

- Increased salaries
- Enhanced job security
- Intensified recognition as a key member of the golf course management team
- Improved job opportunities
- Marketable credentials

Was that everyone's hand I saw going up? Can we agree that these are principles worth pursuing? These are the goals that PDI is intended to accomplish. Though we may not agree as to whether or not the current PDI proposal will meet these goals, I am sure golf course superintendents are excellent decision makers; therefore, I am confident that we will make the proper decision concerning our livelihood in the 21st century..."

Joel Ratcliff, CGCS  
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## Resource Utilization: Rules of Golf

**Task: Manage the Course to Accommodate the Rules of Golf**

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access key rules information (USGA <i>Rules of Golf</i> and local rules)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an understanding of how rules affect golf course setup</li> <li>• Play golf</li> <li>• Demonstrate basic knowledge of golfing rules and etiquette</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remain current on updates made to USGA Rules of Golf and local rules</li> <li>• Set up course for both regular and tournament play to conform to the Rules of Golf</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct staff training on rules and course setup as it relates to the rules</li> <li>• Play the course regularly to determine how course operation and set up affect play</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain the experience and training to administer rules at a state or higher level event</li> </ul>

cause they do not believe they will have access to enough educational opportunities.

Currently members can obtain recognized education on various topics through GCSAA seminars, self-study programs and through limited external vendors. However, in the future, local education venues (chapters, industry, and extension avenues) will play

an important part in meeting requirements for continuing education (either for classification or certification, dependent upon the final outcome determined by members).

Furthermore, the education department at GCSAA is planning to pilot several programs next year that provide members education through various alternative methods. Some of these

could include videoconferencing, online education, additional self-study programs and an experiential learning program called Action Learning. This form of education provides superintendents the ability to document on-the-job learning experiences and submit them for credit. A template to facilitate this process is in development.

The education department is cur-



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rently completing a curriculum map of the existing programs. This involves comparing the content of educational opportunities (like seminars and courses) against the competencies that superintendents need to be successful. Performing a gap analysis tells us whether our current programs match the competencies completely, somewhat or not at all. Due to the diverse nature of our members' jobs, we will not be able to offer all the education our members need. Therefore we will rely on our members to tell us what they want GCSAA to develop and what should be provided via external sources.

At GCSAA, we are challenging our existing ways of providing services to members. We are investigating new ways to turn information and research into education. The goal is not to make life more difficult for members, but to create meaningful learning experiences that will enhance a superintendent's

ability to be successful on the job:

In October, 1999 the education committee adopted a new vision and mission for this program that contained several guiding principles. We will use this as our guide for developing programs for the future:

GCSAA education will be the main contributor to the professionalism and competency of golf course management and will be consistent with the best practice standards for state-of-the-art content, delivery and instruction. This will be accomplished by designing learning opportunities that are:

- Interactive
- Accessible
- Learner centered
- Available with multiple delivery systems
- Competency based
- Global in scope
- Culturally responsive

This results in instruction that is practically transferred to the workplace

and provides optimal value to all stakeholders.

All of the questions have not yet been answered, but it is clear that the education program currently available to members will be of higher quality, more diverse and available to more members in the future.

## How To Hire A General Manager

GCSAA has a new Career Development booklet entitled, "How to Hire a General Manager." While the booklet is aimed at employers and owners of golf courses, I am trying to get the word out about its availability to golf course superintendents, too.

Some of the information in it should be of interest to superintendents who are interested in pursuing a career as a general manager.

Also, if a superintendent has a gen-

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## Shared Competencies

For job descriptions, here is a quick review of competency areas that are (potentially) shared by both general managers and golf course superintendents.

### Club Management

- Policy formulation
- Board relations
- Committee relations
- Career development
- Golf operations management
- Golf Course management

### Food and Beverage

- Pricing concepts
- Ordering/receiving/controls/inventory
- Quality control
- Accounting and Finance
- Budgeting
- Cash flow forecasting
- Compensation and benefits administration
- Financing capital projects
- Computers
- Business office organization
- Long-range financial planning

### Human Resources

- Employee relations
- Management styles
- Organizational development
- Hiring/retention of staff

- Balancing job and family responsibilities
- Time management
- Stress management
- Labor issues
- Leadership

### Building and Facilities Management

- Preventive maintenance
- Insurance and risk management
- Remodeling and renovation
- Hiring and overseeing contractors
- Energy and water resource management
- Security

### External and Government Influences

- Legislative influences
- Regulatory agencies
- Environmental law
- Labor law
- Club law

### Management and Marketing

- Communications skills
- Marketing through in-house publications
- Professional image
- Member contact skills
- Media relations
- Marketing strategies

**Editor's Note:** It is not the intent of GCSAA to push superintendents towards the role of general manager. There has been enough movement in that direction already coupled with expressed interest from a significant number of GCSAA members to warrant making this type of educational tool available to those who wish to become general managers.

eral manager position open at their facility and is interested in it, this booklet would be helpful to pass along to their employer.

The "How to Hire a General Manager" booklet is complimentary to GCSAA members and can be ordered by calling the service center at 800-472-7878.

While on the subject of the general manager position, I would also like to make your chapter aware that the Club Managers Association of America (CMAA) has extended an offer to GCSAA members to take education classes presented through CMAA.

This should be of interest to golf course superintendents who are interested in broadening their skills to pursue a career as a general manager. Refer to the CMAA at [www.cmaa.org](http://www.cmaa.org) or call 703-739-9500 for more information.

*KIM HECK*

*Sr. Director of Career Development  
GCSAA*

### From the Introduction to "How to Hire a General Manager"

As competition grows in the golf industry, some facilities have changed from a green committee or advisory board reporting structure to a general management structure in the interest of keeping their competitive edge with other golf facilities.

Many successful golf courses are managed by a triumvirate of the club manager, golf course superintendent and golf professional. However, if

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your facility is already operating under a corporate-style of management or you are considering reconfiguring your facility's management structure, you may need an excellent general manager to oversee the daily operations.

General managers for all types of golf facilities may very well come from the ranks of golf course superintendents.

- More than 90 percent of all golf course superintendents have attended college
- 71 percent have attained a two- or four-year college degree
- 31 percent of golf course superintendents have indicated an interest in pursuing the position of general manager

Although every golf course is different in its organizational structure, today's superintendents are increasingly assuming the responsibilities for other operational functions relating

to the management of the entire facility.

Superintendents already manage the largest work force and the greatest portion of most facilities' budgets. Additionally, they are responsible for vast acres and millions of dollars worth of real estate, and they must be fully aware of and comply with federal, state, and local laws, rules and regulations.

This expanded knowledge, broadened management skills, and continuing education makes the superintendent an obvious choice when needing to fulfill the position of general manager.

This booklet is written with information gathered by the career development department of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

It is intended to guide employers in their decision making when hiring for the position of general manager at their golf facility. Within this booklet, you

will find:

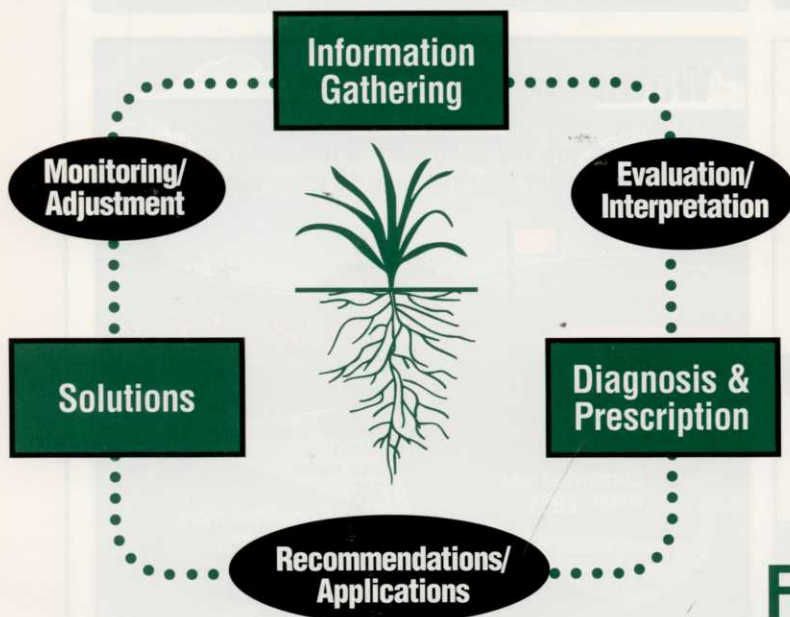
- The role of the general manager
- Analyzing the needs of your facility
- A comparison of job descriptions between the positions of superintendent and general manager
- The interview and selection process
- Creating a performance evaluation system for your general manager
- Ways GCSAA can help you

Not every superintendent is going to be the perfect candidate for a general manager position. There are a lot of business management skills involved in the management of an entire golf facility, and not every superintendent will have the desire to work more hours indoors nor the adequate training to meet the skills set required of a general manager.

However, with the right training and skills, a golf course superintendent should be the first place you look when hiring for the position of general manager at your golf course facility.

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