



## *Professional Development Initiative*

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

BY HANNES COMBEST

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*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:

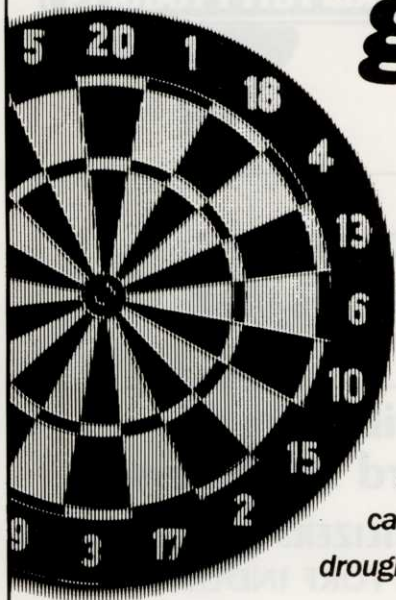
"...How many members would vote on PDI today? Not many hands up. How many of you would vote for:

- 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  
President CGCSA

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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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