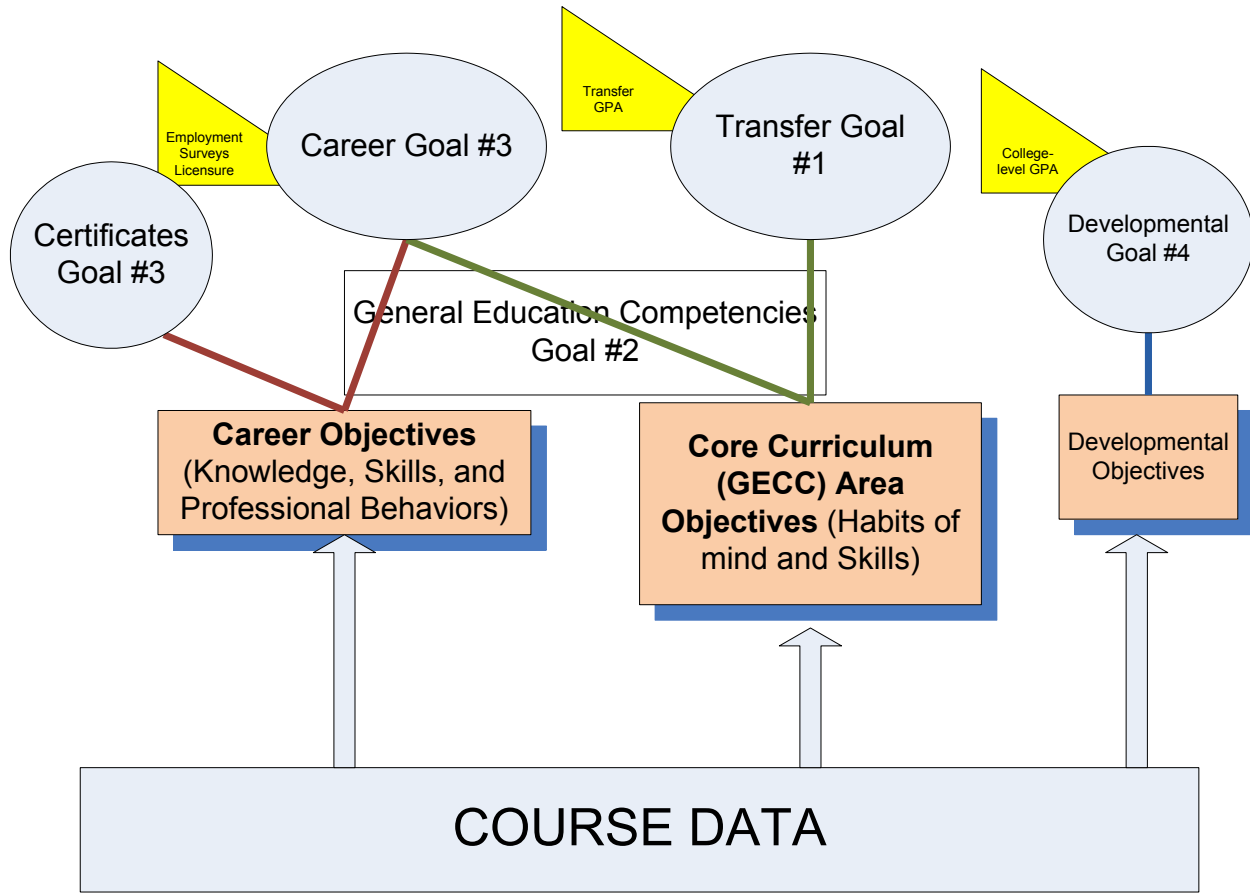


**The following rationale and proposal from the Assessment Core Team accomplishes a major streamlining of the assessment system developed in 2003. The modifications are designed to get less data but better data from the efforts of faculty; enhance the discussion, which we have come to value; re-focus data efforts on SVCC degrees instead of individual “major” interests; and move the system in the direction of more standardized tools and rubrics that HLC expects to find.**



**Transfer degrees (disciplines):**

Sauk’s current system collects discipline-level data based on the Nichols model. This model, over time, has proven impractical and ineffective for several reasons:

- Our faculty is small and multi-disciplinary. The burden of collecting discipline-level data in several disciplines is onerous and unfortunately, often pointless. Single-person discipline instructors can self-assess for the purposes of improving teaching and learning through experiential learning and informal formative instruments as effectively as and more efficiently than by artificial tools. An examination of discipline data folders shows that over time, instructors are neglecting data collection; adjunct-taught disciplines are without data; and aggregated data is the most rigorously collected and discussed.

- Discipline data ultimately tells us nothing significant (or even merely useful) about our graduates. Our transfer students do not achieve a specific major. In almost all cases, no prescribed set of courses is required, and no “capstone” course ensures a single point of exit or uniform set of mastered skills or body of knowledge. For example, a student who declares an “English major” may, in fact, earn an A.A. or A.S. degree without ever taking any particular literature classes. The degree attests only to the preparation for further study in a chosen field.

The conclusion is logical that what A.A. and A.S. graduates of SVCC acquire is General Education, through the General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) requirements established by the ICCB. This Core establishes the academic skills that will form the foundation for further study. That Core Curriculum is a more appropriate focus for assessment efforts than specific disciplines. This process is already in place in the existence of “AREA” data collection. A review of the assessment folder confirms that all of the core curricular areas (with the exception of Personal Health & Development) are engaged in collecting, aggregating, and discussing data. Without much alteration, this collection of data can replace the less effective discipline-level data and more accurately describe the skills our transfer students have acquired. Area-level assessment also has the advantage of enhancing discussion of a multiple-class sample.

**PROPOSAL:** Eliminate discipline-level assessment and revise the Area Objectives to specifically reference Transfer degrees, limiting data collection to courses that fulfill GECC requirements, according to the catalog, and enabling areas to conduct assessment that provides meaningful data for aggregation, discussion, and action where appropriate to improve the educational process. In addition, each Area would be asked to select at least one of the existing general education competencies—that in which it provides direct instruction-- and include it as a specific objective for regular area-level assessment. In addition, each transfer area will be asked to assess one objective specifically selected for its application to A.A.S. degree graduates. (Mathematics is already assessing MAT 106, the nontransferable math course designed and available for most career programs.)

### ***Career Programs***

The career programs leading to A.A.S. degrees have been established identically to the transfer degrees in the current system. The same results are observable: over time, instructors are neglecting data collection; adjunct-taught disciplines are without data; and aggregated data is the most rigorously collected and discussed. A.A.S. degree candidates take the GECC courses, but to a lesser extent. This reduced exposure to the GECC may be assumed to build habits of mind that enhance employability. In addition, the career programs’ objective sheets show that goals for these degrees are differentiated from the transfer degrees in valuing employment readiness.

Certificates are a subset of the Career programs at Sauk that are not now systematically assessed. The certificates require only content-area courses, so do not participate in the general education component of the degree programs. The skills mirror the primary content of the degrees or some portion of those degrees.

**Proposal:** Career programs will revise their area objectives so that each set of objectives includes the following: knowledge; skill; and professional behaviors. These objectives will provide data for both the Career programs and certificates. Having uniform objectives will also allow for institutional-level discussions of our career programs. In addition, each transfer area will be asked to assess one objective specifically selected for its application to A.A.S. degree graduates. (Mathematics is already assessing MAT 106, the nontransferable math course designed and available for most career programs.) Such assessment, taken across the GECC areas, will provide information about the role of the core requirements for the A.A.S. degrees. These objectives would not apply to certificate programs.

**External data:**

Because of over-dependence on external data at the time of the 2001 accreditation visit, the new system was developed first around internal classroom data. However, external data is an expected and important element in a mature assessment system. It allows for comparison to a standard outside of the college and confirms our internal standards. CAAP, on a three-year cycle, is one such confirmatory external data source, but it confirms only the GECC. As yet, we have no systematic way of including other important external sources: for transfer degrees, GPA reports from the 4-year institutions; for career programs, the employment follow-up survey, for example.

**Proposal:** The revision of the Area Objective Sheets should include a stated objective related to at least one external source valued by faculty in that area and already obtained by the institution on a regular basis (e.g. 4-year transfer GPAs for transfer; employment survey for career areas.) Some systematic means must be determined to allow incoming data to be disseminated to the appropriate areas for evaluation, discussion, and action.

**Application Notes:**

Each Transfer area would decide on ONE objective to be assessed and develop a common rubric for it. Adjuncts would be encouraged to participate. (Those who are multi-disciplinary across areas may still have more than one assessment to contribute.)

Faculty would continue to assess the TWO general education competencies each academic year for now while we look at how duplication may be eliminated and whether “project”-based assessment can reasonably replace classroom-based instruments.

Each Career area would decide on ONE objective to be assessed and develop a common rubric for it. Adjuncts would be encouraged to participate.

Career programs could opt to continue to assess a set of separate program objectives (most likely in Nursing) or to combine assessment across a like grouping of skills (e.g. Business Career programs).

Faculty in single-person disciplines will feel the change most, but by allowing them into conversations they have been denied to this point, the net change should be to improve the efficacy of the assessment process.