Core Component 3-a
Carl Sandburg College’s goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.

Student Learning Outcomes
In September 2001 Carl Sandburg College approved a “Philosophy for General Education” during Faculty Assembly. These goals outline student-learning outcomes. While some specific programs may add or elaborate on stated goals, the General Education Goals of the College are applied to all programs. The goals are to:

1. Communicate effectively, orally and in writing.
2. Perform basic arithmetic calculations and apply general mathematical concepts to interpret quantitative information.
3. Gain knowledge of the development and interaction of the individual, culture, and social institutions.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of physical and life science phenomena and understand the uses of scientific methods and theories.
5. Show an understanding of and the ability to respond in an informed way to the arts in some form, whether literary, musical, or visual.
6. Apply critical thinking and problem solving skills.
7. Recognize the need for commitment to lifelong learning in an ever-changing social and technological environment.
8. Understand the perspectives and contributions to human activities and experiences of people from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

Student Assessment
3.a.1 Process: All new students without previous College coursework are required to take an academic placement test (COMPASS) before meeting with a counselor unless they are enrolling in noncredit courses.
Outcomes: Student placement has always been a concern, especially in regard to mathematics. While half of entering students need some remediation in reading, 95 percent were placed in remedial math courses in 2009. Initially the COMPASS test started with pre-algebra. Based on feedback received from high school students and their counselors, many students who were in upper level high school mathematics courses were finding it difficult to respond to the questions in the pre-algebra section. As a result, these students were not able to advance to the next level of math and demonstrate their true skill level.

In 2008 adjustments were made to the reading cut-off scores. The reading specialist, through secondary testing, discovered the cut-off score range for the entry level remedial course in reading was too broad. Through consultation with other faculty in the developmental education department, the cut-off scores for reading were restructured to include additional remedial courses.

Starting with the fall 2008 semester, an Internet version of COMPASS was made available at area high schools for those pursuing dual credit. This form of testing replaced the pencil/paper ASSET test. This delivery system ensured better access to COMPASS testing and immediate score feedback to those high school students.

The College began phasing in mandatory placement beginning with English during the fall 2009 term. Reading was included for the spring 2010 term, with math following during the fall 2010 term.

Evaluation: Placement using the COMPASS test with the supplemental writing exam, E-Write, for Composition classes was implemented smoothly in 2009-2010. Continue with mandatory placement, but monitor its success and re-evaluate placement cut-off scores in a year based on student achievement.
3.a.2 Process: Instructors for entry level reading (RDG 088 and above), English (ENG 098 and above), and math courses (MAT 099 and above) also test students the first week to make sure the placement is the most beneficial to the student. Reading instructors give the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) and the Nelson-Denny reading tests, English instructors administer a writing test, and mathematics instructors have students take the Gateway Mathematics Test. If faculty believe the students’ skill level is either too high or too low for the course, then the student will be moved to the most appropriate course.

Outcomes: Most students are correctly placed in their reading courses, and if any reassignment takes place it is usually to enroll students in a higher level reading course. The English department rarely moves students down, but occasionally students are moved up to ENG 101. The math department usually has only two or three students per semester whose scores are terribly low. These students are advised that they may have academic difficulty and may need to seek tutoring help. There is not any data on how many move to another class as a result of advising. It is the student’s decision to move or not to move. Most, if not all students remain in the developmental class.

Evaluation: Continue with the first week diagnostic tests.

3.a.3 Process: English skills are vital in college success. Faculty in the English department believe it is important to make sure grading standards are the same regardless of the instructor in English 101. To determine if each student has acquired the skill set needed to go on to English 102, instructors administer an English Exit Exam. Students are required to write an essay the 12th week of the semester. All English faculty (part-time included) read and evaluate the essays. Each essay is read a minimum of two times by at least two different faculty to ensure grading consistency. Students must pass the exit exam before they are allowed to enroll in ENG 102 regardless of the grade they earned in ENG 101.

Outcomes: The percentage of students who fail the exit exam the first time is typically between 18 percent and 20 percent. Interestingly enough, students in
the fall semester have a lower failure rate, around 12 percent, than spring semester, which is approximately 25 percent.

Not all students retake the exit exam. Some students are in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that do not require ENG 102; others may be transferring and elect to take Composition 2 at the other institution. For those who retake, typically 50 percent pass the second time. They are allowed to retake the exam multiple times. Some who fail the exam the second time will pass on a third retake.

**Evaluation:** *Continue with the exit exam. However, monitor first time failure rates to look for trends to improve student success.*

**Process 3.a.4:** In November 2008 a [student satisfaction survey](#) was given by enrollment management consultants Noel-Levitz, Incorporated. The consultation firm was retained by the CSC Board of Trustees to conduct a comprehensive review of all aspects of the College operations and identify opportunities for improvement and ways to enhance enrollments.

**Outcome:** Out of 95 items surveyed, 76 had national data from community, technical, and private junior colleges available for statistical comparisons. Out of those 76 items, Carl Sandburg College scored better than the national norms on 40 items and lower on only four items based on statistical significance. The remainder of the data was not statistically significant. Some of the items CSC scored higher on were as follows: students feeling a sense of belonging, helpfulness of advisors and financial aid counselors, ease of registration process, tutoring, assessment procedures, internship experiences, and knowledge and availability of faculty. The four areas that scored lower than the national average for community colleges were quality of [vocational instruction](#), faculty consideration of student differences in teaching, bookstore staff, and method of expressing student complaints. These last four call for action; but specific response to the vocational question, for example, was that slightly more than half (51 percent) of students were satisfied or very satisfied that quality was “excellent” and more than two thirds (71 percent) were at least moderately assured of “excellence,” while only 13 percent went beyond “neutral” to any of the three “dissatisfied” positions.

As a result of these findings, the Instructional Team of the College assembled a Quality of Instruction Taskforce for one year to identify gaps in quality assurance processes and recommend implementation of procedures to
address these identified areas. One early recommendation of this taskforce going forward was to require a student evaluation of all adjunct faculty each semester (not just those with less than six semesters of experience as was the previous practice) to tighten up monitoring and quality control of part-time instructors. Additional recommendations included deans and associate deans sharing the results of the survey with all faculty. In addition, the College brought in an expert, Dr. Brenda Williams, to provide faculty development around effective classroom management strategies. After this, the taskforce was relieved of its duties until the survey is conducted again.

**Evaluation: Continue with this survey process.**