

What You Need to Know About Sauk's Accreditation!

Sauk Valley Community College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

The HLC is one of six agencies commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education to provide institutional accreditation.

★ Why is accreditation important?

Accreditation is a 3rd party, public declaration that we have systems to continually self-evaluate and make improvements.

- Federal financial aid is only available through accredited institutions.

No accreditation, no federal financial aid.

- Accreditation allows credits and degrees to transfer to other colleges and universities.

No accreditation, your credits and diplomas may not transfer.

- Credentials earned from accredited institutions are respected by most employers.

No accreditation, you may not get the job you want.

★ What is required to maintain accreditation?

Colleges and universities do an institution-wide self-study on how it compares to best practices in higher education, and submit a comprehensive report. An HLC team visits the institution to find evidence that supports or refutes the report's findings.

Sauk employees volunteered to work on the 2 year self-study, draft, and edit the comprehensive report.

Sauk submitted its report and the HLC team will arrive on September 19 for a 3 day evaluation visit.

★ Best Practice 1: Day-to-day activities serve to fulfill the mission

Sauk's Strategic Directions describe where we are going. The mission summarizes who we are. The vision defines what we aspire to become. The goals and objectives provide the roadmap to the vision. The key performance indicators give us a scorecard to measure our progress.

All of the College's planning processes are aligned with the strategic directions, and keep Sauk focused on achieving the vision.

College policies support the mission as it describes the rights and responsibilities, ensures that stakeholders are fairly treated, and that the College is organized to be compliant with all pertinent laws and regulations. The Annual Report summarizes the progress made to achieve the strategic directions.

★ Best Practice 2: Planning processes are forward looking, and guided by the mission

The first part of planning is evaluating where you are. Sauk has several evaluation processes such as student assessment, annual employee evaluations, and program review. The strategic planning process includes an annual environmental scan. Sauk constantly evaluates what it does, how well it is done, and what conditions are changing.

The second part is planning. All of the evaluation processes result in planning that is aligned with the Strategic Directions.

Every year, each instructional and non-instructional area evaluates and reports on the results from its previous plans and prepares new plans for the coming year. All of the planning processes are coordinated with the budget allocation process and with the Strategic Directions.

★ Best Practice 3: Focus on student learning and effective teaching

Student learning and effective teaching are the heart of Sauk. Curriculum is controlled by faculty, who use teaching methods that are appropriate to the content, and assess what students learn. They revise existing courses and curriculum, and develop new ones. A committee, comprised primarily of faculty, reviews and approves all curriculum changes.

Across all subjects, a series of learning outcomes have been established at the course, program, and institutional levels. Sauk's faculty-driven assessment system measures student learning against these outcomes. Faculty examine assessment data, identify weaknesses, and make appropriate plans. Their plans become linked with the Strategic Directions.

Outside of the classroom, Sauk provides several support services including counseling, tutoring, accommodations for disabilities, traditional and electronic library resources, study skills assistance, and technology. Campus renovations are underway to enhance the learning environment.

★ Best practice 4: Promote a life of learning

Sauk's commitment to learning starts with Board policy. Sauk relies on faculty expertise, and supports a wide variety of professional development activities pertinent to every employee's job.

The College regularly assesses program relevance through its program review process and seeks outside input to ensure that coursework will transfer to universities and meet workplace needs.

Sauk believes that students should be exposed to a multitude of ideas, cultures, ways of learning and knowledge so that they can better function in a fast-changing global society. Curricular and co-curricular activities extend learning opportunities beyond the classroom.

★ Best practice 5: Serve constituents in valuable ways

Sauk is the community's college. Students and the community participate in and attend Sauk's athletic, theater, music, cultural and diversity awareness events. The campus facilities are available for community use and are ready in case of a major area emergency.

Students have opportunities to evaluate the College and offer input. Sauk uses multiple approaches to learn from outside constituents, including feedback from employer internship supervisors, Work Force Councils, college representatives belonging to local organizations, PPD course evaluations, and community members who participate in program review.

College employees provide strong role models for community involvement by being involved with over 280 local entities.