Excelsior College

Website: www.excelsior.edu

Summary of Innovation: Excelsior College is a regionally accredited, nonprofit distance learning institution that focuses on removing obstacles to the educational goals and providing educational opportunity to adult learners. It offers more efficient and affordable access to degree completion through multiple avenues: its own online courses and college-level proficiency examinations, and the acceptance in transfer of credit from other colleges and universities as well as recognized corporate and military training programs. Excelsior College is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.[1]

Excelsior has developed a system to award academic credit for college-level knowledge gained outside the classroom.[2] Students document what they've learned in a portfolio that is assessed for academic credit. Prior learning can include work experience, self-study, community service, continuing education, corporate training, MOOCs, and professional seminars. This helps students reduce the number of courses they need to finish, save money by minimizing tuition costs, and ultimately finish their degree more quickly.

Online courses at Excelsior provide students with a scheduled syllabus and are led by instructors with graduate degrees. Students read textbooks, complete assignments, and respond to discussion questions on a weekly basis. Earning credit by exam lets students earn credit by taking one test after a period of supported self-study. Free guides explain what tests will cover and list recommended textbooks and learning resources.

Learning portfolio assessment is offered by Excelsior College in partnership with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) through LearningCounts.org™.[3] Students create a portfolio by matching their accumulated knowledge to material covered in specific college courses. Students can apply these credits to a degree program at Excelsior or transfer them to another school by placing them in a OneTranscript® record.

Excelsior College was founded in 1971 by the New York State Board of Regents, and was originally known as the Regents External Degree Program (REX). Initial development of the College was funded by major grants from the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation. In April 1998, the Board of Regents granted the College a charter to operate as a private, nonprofit, independent institution and on January 1, 2001, Regents College changed its name to Excelsior College. Today, an independent board of trustees governs Excelsior College and it is comprised of prominent individuals in the fields of education, business, and the professions from across the United States.[4]

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[1] https://www.excelsior.edu/about

[2] https://www.excelsior.edu/transfer-more-credits/prior-learning-assessment

[3] https://www.excelsior.edu/transfer-more-credits/prior-learning-assessment

[4] https://www.excelsior.edu/about

Currently, Excelsior offers more than 30 degree and certificate programs across five schools: Business, Health Sciences, Liberal Arts, Nursing, Public Service, and Technology.[5] Its largest programs are an associate's of science in Nursing and bachelor's of science in Liberal Studies

Students pay a $50 application fee; courses cost about $510 per credit hour. The average length of time to degree completion is 2.7 years.

Partners: Excelsior has established several institutions that serve as semi-autonomous strategic partnerships:

- **Center for Educational Measurement[6] –** Center for Educational Measurement is the home of Excelsior College® Examinations and UExcel® exams, serving Excelsior's degree-seeking students and others seeking to earn credit by examination. In addition, CEM provides resources for other academic and non-academic organizations seeking expertise in various forms of assessment of prior knowledge and competency.

- **Center for Military and Veteran Education[7] –** Excelsior counts more than 10,000 active duty military and veterans among its student population of over 36,000. Excelsior's deep commitment to service members is embodied in the Center for Military and Veteran Education, a unique full-service educational resource for military personnel, veterans, and family members. The CME supports military student success with a range of specialized benefits and programs. It is also the home of Excelsior College's Lt. Col. Bryant A. Murray Veterans Center.

- **The Lt. Col. Bryant A. Murray Veterans Center[8] –** The Veterans Center offers resources, information, support, and place to interact with other Veterans at Excelsior.

- **Career Center[9] –** Excelsior College Career Services is a vital component of the total educational experience. Designed for a distance education environment, the services provided are intended to empower each of our diverse populations to facilitate successful and lifelong career development.

- **National Cybersecurity Institute (NCI)[10] –** The National Cybersecurity Institute is an academic and research center dedicated to assisting government, industry, military, and academic sectors meet the challenges in cybersecurity policy, technology, and education. The Institute's unique team of cybersecurity experts draws from different industries and organizations who are working together to educate and advise the public and private sectors on today's cybersecurity issues and needs.

- **The Presidents' Forum[11] –** The Presidents' Forum, established in 2004, is a collaboration of accredited, national, adult-serving institutions and programs which have embraced the power and

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[5] https://www.excelsior.edu/about.

[6] https://www.excelsior.edu/exams/uexcel-home.

[7] http://cme.excelsior.edu/.

[8] http://veterans.excelsior.edu/.

[9] http://career.excelsior.edu/.

[10] http://www.nationalcybersecurityinstitute.org/.

[11] http://www.presidentsforum.org/.

potential of online education. The Mission of the Presidents' Forum is to advance the recognition of innovative practice and excellence in online learning. This is accomplished by providing a venue for leaders in higher education and stakeholders to share their knowledge and learn from others' best practices.

Targeted Population of Learners: Excelsior College focuses on adult working learners with an emphasis on those historically underrepresented in higher education. About half of all students a female. The average age of currently enrolled students is 37 years. More than 80 percent are working, and about 40 percent are minority. Additionally, the College has an explicit focus on military veterans, which comprises nearly half of the school's current student enrollment (about 34 percent of students are actively serving in the military, and about 12 percent are military veterans).[12]

Bringing the Innovation to Scale: Excelsior College vision is to be "a provider of choice for adults seeking access to higher education and academic success, and it is a model for addressing societal and workforce needs."[13]

In March 2017, received 2-year, $300,000 grant to expand its Online Writing Lab, which is used at over 20 colleges (including MIT) and was shown to increase students' final grades by 6.5 points compared to a control group.[14]

In April 2017, the College announced plans to work with Cengage to improve modularity and customized pacing of their online offerings.[15]

A group of former Excelsior College students have sued the institution over its online associate degree program in nursing, claiming the self-paced, competency-based curriculum clashes with an expensive and "subjective" clinical exam."[16]

The College sued a former student for selling test prep materials under their name and violating the honor code. [17]

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[12] https://www.excelsior.edu/about/fast-facts.

[13] https://www.excelsior.edu/about.

[14] https://campustechnology.com/articles/2017/03/28/excelsior-college-to-expand-online-writing-lab.aspx.

[15] http://wnyt.com/stem/excelsior-college-online-learning-courxam-program/4455050/.

[16] https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/02/24/former-nursing-students-sue-excelsior-college-over-deceptive-or-misleading-practices.

[17] https://www.timesunion.com/tuplus-business/article/Excelsior-College-goes-after-nursing-text-prep-10851873.php.