



Cell-Ed – Adult Basic Education via Smartphone

Summary of Innovation: Cell-Ed is a platform that provides basic educational instruction via simple mobile phones. The platform uses voice (audio) and SMS messages to deliver 437 adult education lessons (called “micro-modules”) to learners. Each micro-module consists of three components:

- (a) audio instruction – an audio lesson on a particular concept (vowels, consonants, words), and varying from 1-3 minutes in length, is introduced when the learner calls a designated number;
- (b) written instruction – an SMS message reinforcing the voice lesson is sent to the participant; and
- (c) interactive quiz – an SMS question is sent to the participant asking them about the lesson that they recently learned, and the participant must text a response. A correct response to the question triggers the beginning of the next micro-module, whereas an incorrect response leads to a repetition of the same micro-module until the user succeeds.

To activate the program and each micromodule, participants call the Cell-Ed phone number from their own mobile phone. Students can access the program 24 hours a day, seven days a week, allowing them to learn when, where and how they wish.¹ While a smartphone isn't necessary for participation, students do need access to a cell phone and regular access to a cellular network or WIFI connection to get and receive texts and to make calls.

Cell-Ed is currently exploring the possibility of going direct to learners and of monetizing some of its learning management system features.²

Partners: Cell-Ed's current business model is B2B2C (business to business to consumer), where Cell-Ed's direct customers are government agencies, nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations, and companies that buy “seats” over the duration of a contract. The exact client list is unknown. Articles describing Cell-Ed mention that the company has about 20 customers that have thousands of employees nationwide.

Targeted Population of Learners: English Language Learners, immigrants, adults with low literacy levels who are looking to enter the workforce or already hold jobs. The current service is designed to assist Spanish speakers.

Bringing the Innovation to Scale: Cell-Ed does not offer face-to-face time with a teacher, either in-person or by video, as would be the case with offerings by colleges, community centers, or nonprofits. The lack of these features may limit the learner experience in some ways, and reduces the variety of courses Cell-Ed can offer when compared to upmarket competitors.³ Cell-Ed's next steps are to create a direct-sale pipeline to the learner.

¹ https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/CellEd%20Paper_22july2014.pdf.

² <https://www.christenseninstitute.org/blog/innovators-worth-watching-cell-ed/>.

³ <https://www.christenseninstitute.org/blog/innovators-worth-watching-cell-ed/>.



Colorado State University Global Campus – An Online College Degree

Website: <https://csuglobal.edu/resources/online-education/3-p-model>

Summary of Innovation: CSU Global Campus is an online, fully accredited college degree program. The core approach is both participatory and project-based. The CSE website states that:

- CSU-Global seeks to engage each student through the incorporation of interactive modules and the infusion of multimedia, as well as through content with relevant international characteristics such as current industry and problem-based case studies. This results in courses that are intellectually stimulating and participative in nature. Students are expected to use problem solving, critical thinking, and questioning skills during course interaction with colleagues and instructors. Students interact with faculty via discussion boards and live classrooms.
- Recognizing that students need to be prepared for success in a global society, the curriculum at CSU-Global is student-centered, resulting in project-based learning. For example, the critical thinking assignments ask students to apply their theoretical and working knowledge of the course content to industry-relevant scenarios in order to improve processes and increase efficiency for specific organizations. The course portfolio projects require students to weave all course concepts into one comprehensive deliverable to demonstrate their competence in the core learning outcomes.
- All programs at CSU-Global afford students an opportunity to participate in a practicum or internship.
- Most programs culminate with a capstone course consisting of a project-based case study to help the student apply the program's concepts to real-life solutions.

Learners access the program via an online student portal. There are no set class times or locations. Through the portal, students have access to discussions and course work, with due dates for discussion posts or assignments on Thursdays and Sundays. Learning is module based, with critical thinking assignments and a mastery exercise test serving to gauge learning and demonstrate completion/mastery of each module.

A key factor in this program's flexibility for working professionals is the ability for every course to be offered every term, with an entry window opening at the beginning of each month. All CSU-Global faculty are available by phone, email, and webform during normal business hours.

CSU-Global offers degrees in a wide variety of majors and specializations, including:

Undergraduate Degrees in

- Applied Social Science
- Communication
- Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Administration
- Healthcare Administration and Management

- Human Services
- Information Technology
- Management Information Systems and Business Analytics
- Public Management
- Undergraduate Specializations/Certifications of Completion
- Criminal Forensics
- Criminal Justice Management
- Criminology
- Strategic Communications

Master's Degree Programs

- Healthcare Administration and Management
- Teaching and Learning
- Teaching and Learning – Educational Leadership Concentration
- Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Administration

Graduate Specializations/Certifications of Completion

- Contemporary Practices in Online Learning
- Criminal Justice Leadership
- English Language Learning (ELL)
- Fraud Management
- Teacher Leadership

The average annual cost is currently \$8,400 annually for undergraduate and \$9,000 for graduate programs. The cost per degree depends on the number of credits a student comes into the program with. Currently the learners are paying for tuition themselves, or through financial aid.

Partners: Colorado State University

Targeted Population of Learners: Although the platform of online degrees is a resource for many students, CSU-Global is specifically advantageous for adult learners and working professionals.

Bringing the Innovation to Scale: CSU-Global began in 2007. The college is currently operating on a large scale, and is in the forefront of national online university offerings. Student testimonials from review sites range from excellent to poor, but many of the poor reviews are about specific instructors and grade disputes. Many of the testimonials speak to the ease of the program in terms of access, and also speak to the employment opportunities the degrees have promoted.



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

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 Measurement⁶** – 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 Education⁷** – 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 Center⁸** – The Veterans Center offers resources, information, support, and place to interact with other Veterans at Excelsior.
- **Career Center⁹** – 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' Forum¹¹** – The Presidents' Forum, established in 2004, is a collaboration of accredited, national, adult-serving institutions and programs which have embraced the power and

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

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>.



Guttman Community College (CUNY) – Degree Programs that Emphasize Student Support and Experiential Learning

Website: <http://guttman.cuny.edu/>

Summary of Innovation: Guttman Community College is a new institution within the City University of New York's (CUNY) community college system.¹ It first opened in the fall semester of 2012 as an urban public institution that offers associate degree programs in an environment designed purposefully to nurture student success. Its strategic goal is to increase the graduation rate among community college students, especially those who enter higher education underprepared for college-level work, especially low-income, first generation students from groups that have been traditionally underserved in higher education. The College integrates excellence in teaching with proactive and responsive student supports and external partnerships, designed to increase the number of students who persist in their programs and attain a degree in a timely manner.

Although there are several characteristics of the college's academic offerings, three elements appear to be central to its planned program:

- the College has created extensive pre-college and immersion programs for students in conjunction with the first-year course sequence, designed to integrate academic and occupational majors with remedial education;
- operate a mandatory two-week summer bridge program that introduces students to the GCC curricular model and the demands of college-level work and full-time attendance in the first year;
- deliver a first-year core curriculum that contextualizes skills development in credit-bearing coursework, with embedded student advisement from professional staff; and
- promote connections between college and the workplace by engaging partners from New York City business, non-profit organizations and governmental agencies – formalizing experiential learning and making use of the city as an extension of the classroom.

Guttman is focused on providing education that leads to an associate's degree in business administration, human services, liberal arts and sciences, urban studies, and information technology.²

For the school year 2016 – 2017, Guttman charged annual full-time tuition of \$4,800 for New York City residents, and \$320.00 per credit out-of-city residents²

Targeted Populations of Learners: Like all CUNY institutions, Guttman is organized to reflect CUNY's mission as, "a vehicle for the upward mobility of the disadvantaged in the City of New York."

Approximately 45% of all Guttman students enroll under the age of 19. The majority of students are under the age of 22, and reside in the five New York City boroughs. Fewer than 1% of all Guttman students are from out of state.

¹ The City University of New York. Mission & History, 2018. <http://www2.cuny.edu/about/history/>

In the fall of 2016, the latest year for which enrollment data is available, Guttman had 995 students enrolled, with 60% identified as Hispanic, 27% identified as African-American, 8% identified as white and 5% identified as Asian or Pacific Islander.

Partners: Affiliate of City University of New York (CUNY) network, Kaplan Education Foundation, The Manhattan Chamber of Commerce. Additional community businesses that align with degree programs are listed on the Guttman Community College website.²

Bringing the Innovation to Scale: Guttman has already achieved a three-year graduation rate of 35%. It is only now reaching the period defined by experiential learning, and is working to engage employers and non-profit organizations to provide internships and other experiences. Guttman is also working to develop articulation pathways to higher education, which would enable graduates to earn baccalaureate degrees.

A 2016 case study noted that “Guttman has faced the growing pains that are inevitable in a start-up environment. Defining faculty roles, workload, and representation in Guttman’s unique organizational structure—which lacks departments and includes every faculty member in a governing council—has been particularly challenging. In addition, Guttman has had to balance its efforts to provide adequate support to its students with the need to ensure that students are prepared to succeed on their own after they leave”.³

² Guttman Community College: Fast Facts. <http://guttman.cuny.edu/about/fast-facts/>

³ Brown, Jessie & Kurzweil, Martin (2016) *Starting from Scratch: Lessons from Guttman Community College*. <http://www.sr.ithaka.org/blog/starting-from-scratch-lessons-from-guttman-community-college/>



Match Beyond

Website: <https://www.matchbeyond.org>

Summary of Innovation: Match Beyond, affiliated with the Match Charter School Network, offers accelerated associate's and bachelor's degree programs through a hybrid approach in partnership with Southern New Hampshire University – College for America. The organization provides personal coaching, study support, and job placement services to high school graduates and GED-recipients in Boston. Students complete a series of project-based modules to earn competency-based credits for completion.

“Match Beyond is designed to address a growing problem in Boston and across the nation. Among Americans over the age of 24 who attempted college, one in three left without attaining any degree and only half received a bachelor's degree. Eight in ten low-income college matriculants do not earn a bachelor's degree by age 24. This has negative consequences for the many who fail to complete – and for the local and national economies, which increasingly demand a more and better-educated workforce. Some estimates suggest that 14 million jobs will go unfilled in the next decade due to skills gaps.”

Match Beyond provides a personal coach for academic support and motivation, study space at a physical campus in downtown Boston, computer and internet access, lunch and dinner, transportation costs, personalized career coaching.¹

SNHU provides accredited Associates and Bachelor's degrees via an online and project-based program. low-cost and high flexibility, and timely reviews of student work and feedback.

The program currently focuses on six degrees – an associate's degree in healthcare management, an associate's degree in general studies with specializations in either business or customer experience, a bachelor's degree in communications with concentrations in business and healthcare, a bachelor's degree in healthcare management with concentrations in business and global perspectives, and a bachelor's degree in management with concentrations in insurance services, logistics and operations, and public administration.

The tuition cost for each program amounts to \$5,500, which is divided between \$3,000 to SNHU – College for America and \$2,500 to Match Beyond (billed through SNHU). Students can access federal financial aid via Pell Grants.

Targeted Population of Learners: Seeks students who live in Boston, have a high school degree or GED, want to earn a postsecondary degree, and seek a path to advance career. For reference, over 90% of students at Match Public Charter School identify as people of color. Student profile.²

Partners: The program has developed partnerships with several key Boston-based employers, including:

- Boston Children's Hospital

¹ <https://www.matchbeyond.org/get-a-degree/>

² <https://www.matchbeyond.org/student-profiles/tena/>

- Boys and Girls Club
- Brigham and Women’s Hospital
- Bright Horizons
- Comcast
- Eastern Bank
- Plymouth Rock
- Wellington Management

There are also more than twenty referral partners, including:

- Bottom Line
- Brooke Charter Schools
- College Bound Dorchester
- Match Charter Public School
- More Than Words
- Phoenix Charter School
- YearUP
- Youth Villages

Bringing Innovation to Scale: Match Beyond began in 2013 with nine students. As of 2017, it had grown to 130 students, and there are plans to grow beyond 500 within five years.³ In a recent announcement, Match Beyond will receive \$20 million in funding from The Shapiro Foundation over a five year period to provide scholarships to 1,000 DACA students, so they can enroll in SNHU—College for America.⁴

Match Beyond has identified the following issues for future focus as it scales its offering:

- balancing academic support and services with the College for America program;
- evaluating what’s “lost” in the shift from a traditional college experience to the online approach;
- quality of projects offered (higher order thinking skills);⁵
- scaling costs; and
- struggles with public perception that they only serve Match students.

³ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelhorn/2015/04/30/match-beyond-no-excuses-meets-disruption-in-higher-education/#25912fee516b>

⁴ <http://educationnext.org/new-path-to-a-college-degree-match-beyond-low-income-students/>



CareerGPS – Student Pathways Website for Applicants to Community Colleges in Massachusetts

Website: <https://careergps.mass.edu/home>

Summary of Innovation: CareerGPS is an online student pathway application that includes information on community college programs in Massachusetts, O*NET labor market information on occupations and state and regional listings of high growth occupations (hot jobs), including current number of openings. The application helps prospective students to explore occupations and to review their interests and skills and then connects them to degree and certificate programs at a community college of their choice.

The **Guided Pathway** option allows the applicant to provide information on their current educational, work and/or military status, and their professional and career interests. Individuals can take the O*NET Interest Profiler (60 questions) to help clarify their interests, how they relate to careers and how to select an occupation. For individuals who know the career they want to pursue, the option **Create Your Own Map** starts with selecting an occupational category and then exploring the related programs at the college of their choice. Both options result with the selection of an occupation and the related program(s) at a college. Applicants create a user account to send their profile and contact information to the college. There is also a link to the [MyExperienceCounts](#) website for individuals to explore the possibilities of credit for prior learning.

Applicants can enter preferences for college programs including:

- Program type – degree, certificate, noncredit workforce
- Availability – full-time/part-time; day, evening, weekend, online
- Comfort level for programs that require math (5 point scale)

Occupational listings include the following elements:

- starting salary, number of openings, projected job growth;
- job title (O*NET) and brief description including job tasks;
- educational requirements and required experience; and
- a search function that filters by workforce area of applicant's home zip code.

The CareerGPS website includes information on all occupations and all associate degree or certificate programs at Massachusetts community colleges. Noncredit workforce programs will be added over the next year.

The CareerGPS application has been in development since October 2015. The website went live on February 26, 2018. There is no cost to use the CareerGPS to explore careers and current high demand jobs, the training and competencies needed for those careers, and/or to submit applications to the college of their choice.

Targeted Populations: Any prospective student may use the CareerGPS website, but a target population is adult learners who want new skills to advance in their job or who want to explore changing careers.

Partners: The CareerGPS website was developed with funding from the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant¹ for the Guided Pathways to STEM (GPSTEM) project of the Massachusetts Community College Consortium, with Massasoit Community College as the lead grantee. A software development firm, fivestar*, designed the application, working with GPSTEM Data Integration Committees of community colleges and staff from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education.

Bringing the Innovation to Scale: The development of the CareerGPS website has been supported by the GPSTEM grant, which ends September 30, 2018. The community college consortium and DHE are committed to sustaining the CareerGPS website after the grant, but the funding source(s) and the level of resources to sustain CareerGPS have not yet been identified. With the recent start-up of the website, individual colleges will need to explore how the CareerGPS can complement and/or be integrated with their local admission processes and their college websites. A planned statewide marketing campaign to be released in March 2018. At this point, it is unclear what the volume of applications will be and the local resources needed to respond in a timely manner.

¹ This website was 100% supported by funding from the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant to the Massachusetts Community College Consortium, awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, Grant #TC-26450-14-60-A-25.



MyExperienceCounts – Massachusetts Community College Website that Supports Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) through Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)

Website: <https://myexperiencecounts.mass.edu/home>

Summary of Innovation: Individuals, especially adult learners, applying to community colleges often have accumulated learnings from work, life and military experiences as well as documented through prior examinations or other evidence of competency attainment. The process of assessing whether college Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) can be granted is referred to as Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). CPL can reduce the costs of college education and accelerate the student to successful program completion.

MyExperienceCounts (MEC) is a website for applicants to any of the fifteen Massachusetts community colleges that guides the individual through a CPL Wizard to prepare a standard portfolio of their prior experiences and learnings. The MEC website assists students to identify potential areas of CPL related to their interest in associate degree or certificate programs at the community college of their choice. The Wizard allows the applicant to create a user account and develops a CPL petition that is transferred to the college of choice. A college advisor/liaison who is a CPL specialist then contacts the applicant and follows through with a formal review of the petition.

There is no cost to student applicants to use the MEC website or to submit applications/portfolios. Once determined eligible for CPL, the student is usually responsible for a fee per CPL credit which is less than the tuition cost for such credits. There are a few types of CPL that are often provided at no charge – e.g., for those with military experience or advanced placement credits. The CPL fee schedule is specific to each community college and disclosed to the applicant as part of the MEC submission process.

The elements of the online CPL portfolio include:

- selected college and up to three degree/certificate programs;
- work experiences, with occupation and length of time at job;
- military experience;
- national examinations¹ – AP, CLEP, DSST, Excelsior;
- certificates, licenses, continuing credit courses;
- training courses provided by your employer;
- prior credit or noncredit college experience;
- proficiency in languages other than English; and
- professional skills/subject matter knowledge from informal study, volunteering, hobbies, etc.

¹ AP-Advanced Placement; CLEP-The College Board's College Level Examination Program; DSST-DANTES Subject Standardized Tests; Excelsior-tests offered by Excelsior College, NY, through an arrangement with Pearson.

The information provided in the portfolio may also prompt the CPL specialist to suggest to the applicant other PLA methods, e.g., departmental or challenge exams for specific courses that have been developed and customized by faculty of the specific college.

The MEC application/website was developed and tested during the lifetime of the GPSTEM PLA/CPL workgroup, from December 2015 through about June 2017. The website went live in September 2017.

Targeted Population of Learners: Any prospective student may use the MEC website for potential CPL opportunities, but a target population is adult/non-traditional learners.

Partners: The MEC website was developed with funding from the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant² for the Guided Pathways to STEM (GPSTEM) project of the Massachusetts Community College Consortium, with Massasoit Community College as the lead grantee. A software development firm, fivestar*, designed the application, based, in part, on recommendations of the GPSTEM workgroup on PLA/CPL led by North Shore Community College.

Bringing the Innovation to Scale: The development and maintenance of the MEC website has been supported by the GPSTEM grant, which ends September 30, 2018. The community college consortium has committed to sustaining the MEC website after the grant, with North Shore Community College as the lead/system administrator. There are a range of potential sources of funding to be explored, from other grant sources to consortium membership fees.

There has not been a statewide marketing campaign for the website but a GPSTEM-supported marketing tool kit has been provided to colleges to assist their local efforts to make applicants aware of MEC.

Individual colleges continue to work on integrating the MEC website with their local CPL processes and their college websites. An ongoing challenge is to maintain procedures to ensure that there is the most up-to-date information on programs of study, CPL fee schedules, local CPL liaisons and crosswalks of courses by type of CPL.

² This website was 100% supported by funding from the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant to the Massachusetts Community College Consortium, awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, Grant #TC-26450-14-60-A-25.



Northern Essex Community College – Competency-Based Education (CBE) Courses in Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Summary of Innovation: Northern Essex Community College (NECC) collaborated with Middlesex Community College (MCC) to develop seven Early Childhood Education (ECE) courses¹ in a competency-based education (CBE) format. Supported by a Performance Incentive Fund (PIF) grant from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE), the project was designed to make courses more readily available to current and future early childhood educators and thus help address an existing shortage of certified teachers.

CBE allows students to earn college credits at their own pace online while benefitting from one-on-one academic coaching. These flexible courses allow students to quickly demonstrate mastery of material they already know by completing authentic assessments. The online nature of each course also allows students to take additional time when necessary to focus on topics or new material they find challenging. They create an easier work / life / school balance, as students can work ahead on their schoolwork when they have more time and pull back when life demands it. They do this with the support of faculty, who work closely with individual students, and with an academic coach, who helps keep them on track through their courses.

While most NECC ECE courses are offered in multiple delivery methods, including online/hybrid courses, the CBE project creates additional options for accelerated coursework and a clear pathway for those seeking work in the field. The initial seven courses allow educators to meet coursework requirements for Lead Teacher Certification from the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, with the appropriate amount of required field experience through CBE coursework. ECE students may verify work experience through their employer or gain field experience by completing a practicum in the ECE program. The pathway will also support incumbent teachers in early childhood education centers who do not hold an academic degree in ECE; these learners can use the pathway to achieve state certification as a Lead Teacher and/or Center Director.

The costs to students for CBE courses will be the same as the cost of existing online or classroom courses. The CBE Early Childhood Education certificate and degree programs are eligible for financial aid.

The courses will be first offered in the fall of 2018. NECC also received a FY18 PIF grant to develop three more CBE courses needed for EEC certification as Center Director 1 and 2. These additional courses will be created during 2018, and NECC will develop a certificate program where all courses for EEC Director certification can be completed in CBE format. The full program will be available by FY19.

¹ NECC developed four courses: Child Growth & Development, Introduction to Early Childhood Education, Math & Science in Early Childhood Curriculum, and Learning Environments for Infants & Toddlers. MCC developed three courses: Child Growth & Development, Curriculum in Early Childhood Programs, and Program Planning & Environments for Children.

NECC is also developing Open Educational Resources (OER) for the program, specifically the development of a free Child Growth and Development textbook that will be openly licensed for use across the state. This will build upon NECC's role as the lead college for the community college consortium's "Go Open" OER initiative supported by the USDOL GPSTEM grant.²

Targeted Population of Learners: Incumbent early childhood educators are a target, as only one-third have a college degree and are not equipped with an academic background in early childhood education. Individuals wanting to enter the field would also benefit from the flexibility of CBE courses.

Partners: NECC and MCC worked together to design the first seven ECE courses in the CBE format. Together with six additional community colleges³ and Cambridge College, the two colleges are now collaborating to create a pathway to an ECE bachelor's degree delivered in a competency-based format.

Bringing the Innovation to Scale: NECC is also working with the seven other community colleges to train their early education faculty in developing CBE courses. The CBE Design Studio will include a series of workshops that teach faculty why and how to develop these courses. An online version will also be developed, with training on developing accessible materials. Planning for CBE courses/programs does have to take into account obtaining approval from NECC's accreditation authority, New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

² Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant to the Massachusetts Community College Consortium, awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, Grant #TC-26450-14-60-A-25.

³ Berkshire Community College, Bunker Hill Community College, Holyoke Community College, MassBay Community College, North Shore Community College, and Quinsigamond Community College.



Northeastern University's Level Bootcamps

Website: <https://www.leveldu.com/our-story/>

Summary of Innovation: Northeastern University has implemented a data analytics boot camp designed to equip professionals with the skills in analytics that employers are looking for. It is an intensive two-month program that helps prepare candidates for success in a data-driven world, and serves as a solution for top employers to find talent that knows how to understand, analyze, and contextualize data, and use it to tell a compelling story.¹

Level provides high-quality, intensive, 8 to 20-week experiential programs organized to deliver data science skills that learners need to advance their personal and professional goals. Programs have a focus on experiential learning, where skills are acquired hands-on by completing projects and case studies with leading companies.

Students graduate with a certificate and portfolio of projects showcasing their practical application work, and have the opportunity to continue their learning through articulation into various master's level degrees from Northeastern University.²

Level is available at campus locations in Boston, Charlotte, Seattle, Silicon Valley, Toronto, and online.

The course costs \$7,995 and can range in length. The course curriculum includes a combination of online classes and in-person sessions. Full-time is 8 weeks, but the period can range up to 20 weeks when taught as hybrid courses.

Targeted Population of Learners: Working adult, some college, some bachelor's degrees, some master's degrees

Partners: Northeastern University New Ventures, Care.com, MITx, and Humana.³

Bringing Innovation to Scale: Northeastern is committed to expanding Level and is also planning to launch marketing analytics boot camp. "Northeastern is also thinking about how to make the data analytics course materials accessible to a wider range of students. Currently, those accepted into the program have at least some familiarity with the subject matter, and they can afford to spend the time and money to earn their certificate. Northeastern is realizing the demand for tech-based, shorter, experiential and industry-aligned learning," says Nick Ducoff, who leads an incubator at the university that tests new models of education. Ducoff says his team is in talks with cities and states about developing an

¹ <http://www.northeastern.edu/levelblog/2015/09/24/meet-level-an-analytics-bootcamp-designed-for-you-by-northeastern-university-2/>

² <https://www.coursereport.com/schools/level>.

³ <https://www.leveldu.com/our-story/>

introductory course that would leverage some of Level's curriculum and serve as a primer for the more rigorous program in data analytics. 'I can't wait to find a candidate who only has a GED,' Ducoff says."⁴

Student reviews are generally positive, especially in regards to the capstone project and networking opportunities. There is an inherent tradeoff in the curriculum between using lectures in a classroom to help students master program content, when the program seeks to be rooted in experiential learning. Varying backgrounds and levels of experience among students slowed down the class.⁵

⁴ <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2016-05-11-why-northeastern-university-got-into-the-bootcamp-business>

⁵ <https://www.coursereport.com/schools/level>



Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) and College for America

Websites: <https://www.snhu.edu/>

<http://collegeforamerica.org/>

Summary of Innovation: Southern New Hampshire University is a private, nonprofit, accredited institution with more than 3,000 on-campus students, over 80,000 online students and an alumni network of over 84,000. SNHU offers over 200 programs, from certificates to doctoral level degrees.¹ Business administration and computer and informational studies are the two most popular undergraduate degrees.²

SNHU was founded in the 1930s; and developed during the 1960s into the New Hampshire College of Accounting and Commerce. During the 1990s, it was one of the first higher education institutions to develop an Internet-based distance learning program, now known as "SNHU Online and first Doctoral program."³

Because so many programs and degrees are offered to on campus students, off campus students and online students, the tuition amounts vary greatly. The school's website has a **Net Price Calculator** to support traditional students and non-traditional students in projecting what their full-time academic career could cost.⁴

College for America, SNHU's vehicle for workforce partnerships, was founded with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Lumina Foundation.⁵ This model is an online, competency-based education model focused on providing an affordable and flexible option for working adults to attain a credential or degree. The cost for this model starts at \$5,000 per year with discounts available at select employer partners. They claim 60% of their students expect to earn degrees without taking out any debt at all.⁶

Targeted Population of Learners: The average age of currently enrolled SNHU students is 21 years. There are 2,935 full-time on-campus undergraduates. The on-campus student population 83.2% White, 4.1% Hispanic/Latino, 3.3% Black/African-American, 2.0% Asian, and about 8% unknown or other. The ethnicity of its 80,000 online students and 1,072 graduate students is not reported.⁷

Partners: SNHU has numerous partnerships in the sectors of Education, Community/Community Service, Sports, and Military. Please see below a selection of partners by the author of this profile:

¹ <https://www.snhu.edu/about-us>.

² <http://colleges.startclass.com/l/2528/Southern-New-Hampshire-University-Academics&s=3jcSQv>.

³ <https://www.snhu.edu/about-us>.

⁴ <http://www.aidcalc.com/snhu/>.

⁵ <http://collegeforamerica.org/about-college-for-america/>

⁶ <http://collegeforamerica.org/about-college-for-america/cost-of-college-for-america/>

⁷ https://www.collegedata.com/cs/data/college/college_pg06_tpl.jhtml?schoolId=1165.

- Community Colleges of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and 20 other states
- Online course partnerships – Berklee Online, Landmark School, Worcester Polytechnic Institute
- Peace Corps
- Boston Celtics
- United Service Organization (USO)
- Warrior Transition Technology Training (WT3)

Bringing the Innovation to Scale: In 2017, SNHU outlined its plans for expansion. They include a focus on supporting military affiliated students, launching online competency-based bachelor’s degrees and associates degrees to refugees in Rwanda, opening a College for Engineering Technology and Aeronautics, and developing a partnership between the college’s Workforce Partnership division and College for America, in which degree credit can be earned for prior learning in certificate programs.⁸

“To support the new majority of students — often older, working, and with families — community colleges and private universities face a common challenge: the need to find ways to evolve their learning technology systems. Students expect a more consumer-grade experience with technology, and colleges and universities will need to meet those expectations.”⁹

⁸ SNHU, *The History of SNHU*, 2018. <https://www.snhu.edu/about-us/leadership-and-history/history>.

⁹ Thackaberry, Sasha (2017) *Mission Driven, Common Challenges*. <http://blogging.snhu.edu/academics/2017/07/14/mission-driven-common-challenges/>



SNHU/College for America and Partners Health Care

Website: www.partners.org/For-Employees/Workforce-Development/Our-Employees/College-For-America.aspx

Summary of Innovation: Partners HealthCare, Inc., is collaborating with College for America at Southern New Hampshire University to offer innovative, online, competency-based Certificate in Health Care Management Fundamentals, Associate (A.A.), and Baccalaureate (B.A.) degree programs designed to increase access to higher education for working adults – focusing on learners who are current employees of Partners and who are interested in earning additional credentials in order to improve their career.

In the foundation level Certificate in Healthcare Management Fundamentals program, students' master key competencies such as creating positive patient experiences, learning medical terminology and concepts, and understanding ethical obligations. Students earning the College for America Certificate in Healthcare Management Fundamentals complete competency based, real-world projects, developing valuable skills in the process. The goal is to develop strong and officially recognized competencies in:

- **Content Knowledge:** healthcare essentials, business essentials and science, society & culture foundational skills
- **Foundational Skills:** communication skills, critical and creative thinking, quantitative skills, and digital fluency and information literacy
- **Personal and Social Skills:** personal effectiveness, ethics and social responsibility, and teamwork and collaboration

There are two key components to this model. The first is that it is specifically designed to be user friendly and sustainable to full time working professionals. There are no tests or classes, the platform is 100% online and adaptable to an individual's schedule. Learning is based on real world application and projects. Students in all College for America programs receive Southern New Hampshire University transcripts that show details on mastered competencies as well as their traditional course and credit equivalents.

The second key component of the model is the idea of "stackable credentials". The College for America curriculum is comprised of real world projects which count toward skills-based goals. A certificate program consists of 10 goals and also constitutes the first half of an associate degree program. Each goal aligns with a traditional degree course and qualifies for three college credits.

Partners: Southern New Hampshire University -- College For America and Partners Health Care, Inc.

Targeted Population of Learners: Working professionals, specifically those who wish to pursue a career in health care management. In this case, the learners are specifically Partners Healthcare staff. Program offerings focus on areas from developing skillset of frontline entry level staff, to honing in on the promotable skill development of longer term staff.

Bringing the Innovation to Scale: The average cost is currently between \$2500 and \$3000 per student, per credential. However, Partners currently provides tuition reimbursement to staff seeking to access this program. Cost to Partners is \$3,000 for “all you can learn”. As Partners helped design this program with College for America, they may receive a slightly lower rate than other partners.

Since inception in 2014, the partnership between Partners and SNHU has led to about 460 enrollments; 62 have completed with Certificate, AA and BA degrees; 73% of those who started in Certificate or AA have gone on to use the stackable credit model to move to the next level (AA or BA degrees). 85 program participants have received 105 promotions to date (through 12/2017); many have received multiple promotions since the effort started in 2014.



StraighterLine

Website: <https://www.straighterline.com/faq/>

Summary of Innovation: StraighterLine is a platform that operates as a 'virtual' online college – it delivers no classes of its own, and does not award any degrees, but instead connects students to online courses that are offered through its 130 college partners. Students pay Straighterline a subscription of \$99 per month plus about \$59 per online course. As students successfully complete courses, the Straighterline process (a) guarantees full course credit/credit transfer within its network of accredited colleges plus (b) recommended course credit acceptance to degree programs at more than 2,000 additional higher education institutions.

The organization was founded in 2009 with goal of entering market at lower price point for online courses. The website claims to save students up to 60% or the total cost of a degree.

Straighterline offers the following services for its students:

- immediate access to a wide range of online courses delivered by recognized higher education organizations – students start their coursework on-demand;
- free one-on-one online tutoring, includes: writing center, scheduled, or drop-in;
- live student support – technical support, membership, or course support from Student Advisors;
- full course credit for courses within their degree plan; and
- free transcript processing and easy credit transfer.

Students who enroll in courses through Straighterline are provided with all course-related eTextbooks for free. The organization recommends that a three-credit course will typically require about 75 hours of study time, and suggests students plan to spend about 17-20 hours each week so they can finish a single course within a month.

Students cannot access federal financial aid through this approach, in part because Straighterline is not a qualifying higher education institution. The website estimates that one year of tuition and fees will cost about \$1,299 – lower than the cost for earning a degree directly from any of the partner colleges, and at a cost that is more affordable for students to pay directly.

Partners: Straighterline has about 130 colleges in its approved college partner network. Within Massachusetts, these include Lesley College, Pine Manor College, Bay State College, Fisher College, Urban College of Boston, Benjamin Franklin Institute, and New England College of Business. Straighterline also markets the fact that any credited courses will also be considered by more than 2,000 other colleges and universities for transfer to their degree programs upon request because of the recommendation of the American Council on Education's College Credit Recommendation Service (ACE CREDIT).

A series of employer partners offer tuition assistance to any employee who accesses courses or degrees through Straighterline, including Aaron's, Frito Lay, Harden Healthcare, RadioShack, 7-Eleven, Waste Management, Inc., and Xerox.

Finally, Straighterline has established strategic partnerships with a variety of organizations, primarily to enhance student services and provide the highest quality learning experience. These partnerships include:

- Moodlerooms, which owns Moodle, the world's leading Learning Management System, to serve as an open source platform for course delivery in the cloud.
- C-eLT provides offline and online one-on-one e-Tutoring services for Mathematics, Statistics, Sciences, English, and Accounting/Finance to undergraduates.
- eScience Labs supports students through hands-on science kits available.
- NetTutor delivers institution-specific online tutoring staffed with expert, U.S.-based tutors who know how to help students succeed.
- SkyWay provides affordable online college courses to America's rural areas through satellite broadband internet connections.
- SmarThinking provides on-demand, live, online tutoring, essay review, and essay grading services.

Targeted Population of Learners: Straighterline is not necessarily targeting any identified population of learners, but seeks to reduce the cost for any student who participates in online learning. According to data on the website, the current student population is 60 percent female, 12 percent active-duty military or military veterans, 7 percent international, 73 percent working adults, and 52 percent have at least one child.

Bringing the Innovation to Scale: Straighterline has about 15,000 student memberships per year.



UMass University Without Walls (UWW)

Website: <https://www.umass.edu/uww/>

Summary of Innovation: UWW is a bachelor's degree program focused on non-traditional students. It follows a traditional credit-hour model, allows for significant credit for prior learning (CPL) primarily through a portfolio process – including military training and other industry certifications, and transfer credits from other institutions. A student can earn up to 105 credits for prior course work, prior learning and work & life experience.¹ Of the 120 credits needed to earn a bachelor's degree, up to 75 can consist of transfer credits and at least 45 need to be residency credits, earned through UMass-Amherst). Up to 30 credits can be earned from a portfolio (one of the ways you can earn credit for your work & life experience) and count as residency credits.² Students follow traditional fall/spring semesters, but can also take winter and summer courses. Degrees can be customized and can be entirely online, a mix of in-person/online, or fully in-person.³

UWW was founded in 1971 with sixteen other universities across the country, with funding from U.S. Department of Education, to help non-traditional students gain access to higher education.⁴

The minimum requirements for admission are: have earned at least 12 transferrable semester credits of coursework and have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0. If you're a former UMass Amherst student the minimum GPA requirement doesn't apply.⁵

A student develops a program of study – called a concentration – with a faculty advisor. Students can choose from a number of traditional programs of study, or they can develop their own based on their own specific experience and career needs.⁶ The final credential is a bachelor's degree that falls within twelve interdisciplinary areas of study. Business studies and health and human services are particularly popular.⁷ There is a track that has been specifically developed to support early childhood educators earn their bachelor's degree to meet MA DEEC requirements.⁸

UWW charges several types of fees:

- \$135 Entering Fee (one time fee);
- \$75 Application Fee (one time fee; discounted to \$60 for former UMass Amherst students);
- \$75 Enrollment Fee (one time);⁹

¹ <http://www.umass.edu/uww/how-it-works>.

² <http://www.umass.edu/uww/how-it-works/degree-requirements>.

³ <http://www.umass.edu/uww/why-uww>.

⁴ <http://www.umass.edu/uww/history>.

⁵ <http://www.umass.edu/uww/frequently-asked-questions-whyuwwfaq>.

⁶ <http://www.umass.edu/uww/areas-study>.

⁷ <https://dailycollegian.com/2011/03/university-without-walls-experiences-highest-enrollment-in-40-years/>.

⁸ <http://www.umass.edu/uww/areas-study/early-care-and-education>;
http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs1/Workforce_Dev/mapping/20110228_ibe_mapping_project_report.pdf.

⁹ <http://www.umass.edu/uww/tuition-and-fees>.

- If a student chooses to apply for credit for prior learning, there is a \$1,190 flat portfolio review fee, no matter the number of credits;
- Courses cost \$390 – 525 per credit, if the student is taking a minimum of 2 courses per semester, tuition is eligible for federal financial aid;
- \$150 Program/Advising fee, paid each fall and spring semester;
- \$47 Registration fee, paid at the beginning of each enrollment term (Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter); and
- \$75 Special Transcript Evaluation fee (if applicable), paid to have a student's prior trainings and certifications evaluated for academic credit.

Targeted Population of Learners: Adult, non-traditional students, first-time degree seeking students. Has earned accolades for working with active military and veterans.¹⁰

Partners: UMass Amherst (part of Continuing Education), UMass Online

Bringing Innovation to Scale: UWW has awarded over 3,000 bachelor's of arts and science degrees. UWW is one of the largest majors at UMass Amherst. Unlike many other online learning platforms, many of which operate on a sub-contractor, adjunct model, UWW at UMass has twelve full-time faculty and five full-time administrative workers to support the 800+ students who engage with the program each semester.¹¹

¹⁰ <https://dailycollegian.com/2011/03/university-without-walls-experiences-highest-enrollment-in-40-years/>.

¹¹ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jesse-seaver/tear-down-the-wall-between-you-and-your-degree_b_3053693.html.



UW Flexible Option (UW Flex)

Website: <https://flex.wisconsin.edu/>

Summary of Innovation: The UW Flexible Option is a self-paced, competency-based learning platform that allows busy adult learners to start any month, study at their own pace, and earn credit using their existing knowledge. Several degree programs are available through this flexible format, and more are being developed. UW Flexible Option programs offer a more personalized, convenient, and affordable way for adults and other nontraditional students to earn a degree or certificate while balancing work, family, and other commitments.

Students in UW Flex make progress by demonstrating what they already know, whether that knowledge was gained through prior coursework, military training, on-the-job training, or other learning experiences. By emphasizing *what the student knows* rather than *how much time* is spent learning, the flexible format lets students advance toward a UW degree or certificate at their own unique pace.

Prospective students take a two-part Flex Fit survey to determine program readiness and whether UW Flex suits their needs. If admitted, students are assigned an Academic Success Coach (ASC). The ASC serves to guide, support, and encourage students along academic path.

A range of certificates and degrees are available through UW Flex, including certificates in business & technical communications, project management, substance use disorders and associate of arts & science degrees in business administration, diagnostic imaging, health sciences, information science & technology, and nursing.

This list of degree options was developed to match labor market demand in the state. Through 2024, the top three projected career fields in the state of Wisconsin fall into the sectors of STEM, business and entrepreneurship, and health care.

UW Flex charges a \$50 administrative fee for each student applicant, then charges \$2,250 for a 3-month subscription period covering 'all you can learn.' This option allows students to enroll in an unlimited number of courses in each three-month period. Student may also opt for a single course option costing \$900 for the period.

Partners: UW Flex was created in partnership between University of Wisconsin System institutions and UW-Extension, the Higher Learning Commission, and the U.S. Department of Education.¹

Targeted Population of Learners: UW Flex was developed for students who have some college credit but need high-quality degrees or certificates to reach their next educational or career goals. This includes adult learners who didn't have the opportunity to complete a degree earlier in life, adults with work experience who need a degree to advance in their field, adults with full-time jobs, parents, etc.²

¹ <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2014/11/flexible-option-a-directassessment-competencybased-education-model>.

² <https://flex.wisconsin.edu/blog/>.

Bringing the Innovation to Scale: Starting from its beginnings in August 2012, UW Flex has grown from a two-page concept paper to the reality that 19,000 prospective students began Flex Fit in October 2014.³

Three new degree programs are in the pipeline:

- UW-Parkside bachelor's degree in integrative professional studies – a stackable certificate model that gives adult students even greater pathway flexibility. UW Flex students in this program will be able to enroll in one or more competency-based stand-alone certificates or in a competency-based degree program in which individual certificates comprehensively 'stack' together to form the degree. Applications for enrollment in the first two certificates (global skills and sales) opened 2014. Additional certificates — in leadership, project management, professional writing, and public relations — will be rolled out with the Bachelor of Integrative Professional Studies program.
- UW-Madison alcohol and drug counselor certificate – a program driven by the Affordable Care Act, which changed training requirements for reimbursable work in the area of drug and alcohol counseling. (Nov 2014)
- UW-Stevens Point master's degree in geographic information systems. Demand for GIS experts is high, as an estimated 80 percent of all information is connected to a geographic location, and more than a half million professionals in a wide range of occupations use GIS in their work.

Enrollment and Financial Summary: Only one program (professional certificate program in substance use disorders) offered through UW Flex netted money this year according to an update prepared for the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents. The Flexible Option program brought in gross revenue of \$2.8 million in fiscal year 2017. University officials project that if current enrollment trends hold, the Flex IT program offered through UW-Milwaukee will generate positive net revenue in 2018, and UWM's nursing program in 2019. The program grew 42 percent in fiscal year 2017, to a total of 1,300 students since its inception, officials reported. Enrollment in the UW-Extension's business administration program, the first bachelor's degree offered by Extension, is small with eight current students, according to the report. University officials attributed that to the fact that the program is not yet accredited. Extension is working on the lengthy process with the Higher Learning Commission, a regional accrediting body. Hopes are for the program to become eligible for federal student aid by 2019, and become accredited in 2021.⁴

³ <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2014/11/flexible-option-a-directassessment-competencybased-education-model>.

⁴ http://host.madison.com/ct/news/local/education/university/uw-s-flexible-option-program-growing-but-not-netting-much/article_5176ee8d-20d7-5b03-a208-6d63ba927733.html.



Governor's Commission on Digital Innovation and Lifelong Learning

Western Governor's University

Website: <https://www.wgu.edu>

Summary of Innovation: WGU, a private, non-profit institution, offers online, competency-based college-level education, with learning documented through direct assessments that are based on fixed outcomes.¹ Although the assessments are connected with specific courses, a student does not need to complete a set number of hours in a course before taking an assessment and moving on. The curriculum is set up so that students progress fully at their own pace.² WGU maintains separate teaching faculty and assessment faculty. Students are assigned "program mentors" to serve as "your academic advisor, your coach, and a supporter...ensure that you stay on track, determine when you are ready for the required assessments, and help you schedule them accordingly."³

WGU offers 55 online bachelor's and master's degrees through four colleges – the College of Business, College of Information Technology, Teachers College, and College of Health Professions.⁴

WGU was established under the auspices of the Western Governors Association in 1995 and enrolled its first students in 1997.⁵

Tuition costs \$3,190 per 6-month term, regardless of number of courses taken.⁶ The average cost of a bachelor's degree is about \$15,000.⁷ Students can apply for federal financial aid for some programs (though see below).

Targeted Population of Learners: WGU strives to serve as many students as possible, including minorities, first-generation college students, learners with modest incomes, and any others whose lives or geographic locations do not allow them to attend traditional, campus-based colleges. The average age of the current student population is 37 years. Most students work full-time or part-time while taking courses. Most students pursuing a bachelor's already have some college experience.⁸

¹ <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/02/21/direct-assessment-and-feds-take-competency-based-education>.

² <https://www.agb.org/trusteeship/2014/1/competency-based-education-what-board-needs-know>.

³ <https://www.wgu.edu/student-experience/life>.

⁴ <https://www.wgu.edu/online-degree-programs.html>.

⁵ According to its website, the Western Governors' Association was established in 1984 to represent the governors of 19 western states and 3 U.S. territories in the Pacific. The association is an instrument for bipartisan policy development, information exchange and collective action on issues of critical importance to the western United States. <http://www.westgov.org>. To launch WGU, each member state contributed \$100,000 to the initial capital and development costs.

⁶ <https://m.wgu.edu/content/dam/western-governors/documents/financial-aid/TuitionComparison.pdf>.

⁷ <http://educationnext.org/competency-based-education-put-to-the-test-western-governors-university-learning-assessment/>.

⁸ https://www.wgu.edu/about_WGU/governors_industry.

Partners: Currently, 22 states are partners. Several states have affiliate schools with their postsecondary systems (Indiana, Washington, Texas, Missouri, Tennessee, Nevada, North Carolina).⁹

Bringing Innovation to Scale: As of January 2018, about 94K students are currently enrolled from all 50 states, including active duty military personnel and spouses overseas. More than 100K have graduated, with about 10K graduating each year.¹⁰ They plan to continue a 30% annual growth rate.¹¹

A 2017 audit by the Office of the Inspector General of U.S. Department of Education found that the school did not meet distance education requirements because there was not sufficient interaction between students and faculty. The audit stated that courses should have been labeled “correspondence courses” and therefore not been eligible for federal financial aid. OIG has called for WGU to pay back \$713M in federal financial aid and should no longer be eligible for federal aid.¹²

Additional links:

- <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/04/30/wgu-example-shows-chilly-policy-climate-competency-based-education>
- <https://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/articles/2016-12-08/what-employers-think-of-online-competency-based-degrees>

WGU assessment evaluation rubrics:

- <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/cbe2.1015/full>

⁹ <https://www.agb.org/trusteeship/2014/1/competency-based-education-what-board-needs-know>.

¹⁰ https://www.wgu.edu/about_WGU/students_alumni.

¹¹ <https://www.christenseninstitute.org/publications/the-engine-behind-wgu-configuration-of-a-competency-based-information-system/>.

¹² <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/09/22/education-depts-inspector-general-calls-western-governors-repay-713-million-federal>.