



Education
Advisory
Board

Community College Executive
Forum

Continuing Education Units

Organizational Structures and Marketing Strategies



Research Brief

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Community College Executive Forum

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1) Executive Overview

Key Observations

Centralizing Continuing Education (CE) units as stand-alone academic departments enhances resource efficiency and provides greater returns to scale; embedding CE units within academic departments improves alignment between CE and day-time equivalent courses. **Institution B** locates CE administrators and courses within each academic school and division (e.g., School of Business, School of Health Sciences) to align CE courses with their full-time equivalents and streamline the program approval process. **Institution A** and **Institution C** maintain centralized CE units that act as separate academic departments. Directors and chairs of CE disciplinary areas at centralized institutions report to the dean of their academic department (e.g., CE, Business, Health Sciences), who then reports to the Vice President of Academic Affairs. While all profiled institutions require dean approval for new program initiation, directors of CE units at decentralized institutions possess more control and flexibility over course approval.

CE units at profiled institutions offer a variety of general interest courses, full-time equivalent courses, part-time diploma and certificate programs, and professional development courses. CE units within academic schools at **Institution B** offer predominately full-time equivalent courses that can eventually lead to a part-time diploma or certificate. The CE unit at **Institution A** offers mostly non-credit courses and certificate programs for working professionals seeking to develop additional workforce skills or credentials. All profiled institutions offer courses residentially, online, and in hybrid formats to improve access for prospective students.

CE program directors set course prices at the government-sanctioned funded level or establish non-funded price levels based on student interest, industry demand, competitor pricing, and course resources. The government of Ontario provides subsidies for CE courses set at the funded price-level. Most CE units offer a high percentage of funded courses to alleviate the financial burden of maintaining CE courses. Standard 42-hour funded courses cost \$300.00 per course at **Institution A**. Non-funded courses typically consist of high-demand general interest courses (e.g., photography), non-credit workshops and trainings, and resource-intensive specialty courses (e.g., nursing, health sciences). The CE unit in the School of Health Sciences at **Institution B** subsidizes difference between funded and non-funded prices so that students do not feel the financial burden of enrolling in non-funded courses.

Administrators at profiled institutions market to prospective students through signature radio campaigns and taglines, advertisements in commuter newspapers and magazines, and attendance at local conferences and trade shows. Humorous radio advertisements that direct prospective students to the CE unit webpage resulted in a surge of website visits at **Institution B**. Contacts also locate advertisements for CE courses and programs in free magazines and newspapers that commuters and working professionals can collect at metro stops and bus stations. Traditional marketing strategies like purchasing billboard signs, taxi toppers, and paper flyers increase public awareness of CE courses. The School of Business and the School of Health Sciences at **Institution B** organize information booths at all local business conferences, symposiums, and trade shows to administer course booklets and flyers.



2) Governance and Reporting of CE Units

Organizational Structure and Reporting

Contacts either Centralize CE Units or Embed CE Units and Staff within Academic Departments and Schools

Institution A and **Institution C** maintain centralized CE units that operate as academic divisions of the college. Contacts at both profiled institutions report that the shared resources and returns to scale that a centralized model offers deter executive leaders from transitioning to an embedded organizational structure. CE courses and programs at **Institution B** exist within each academic school (e.g., Applied Technology, Creative and Performing Arts, Health Sciences, Hospitality, Recreation and Tourism, Liberal Arts and Sciences, Media Sciences and IT, Social and Community Services, Business) and division (e.g., Education and Training Solutions). Contacts at Institution B affirm that locating CE courses within their corresponding academic unit facilitates collaboration and consistency between CE courses and their full-time equivalents.

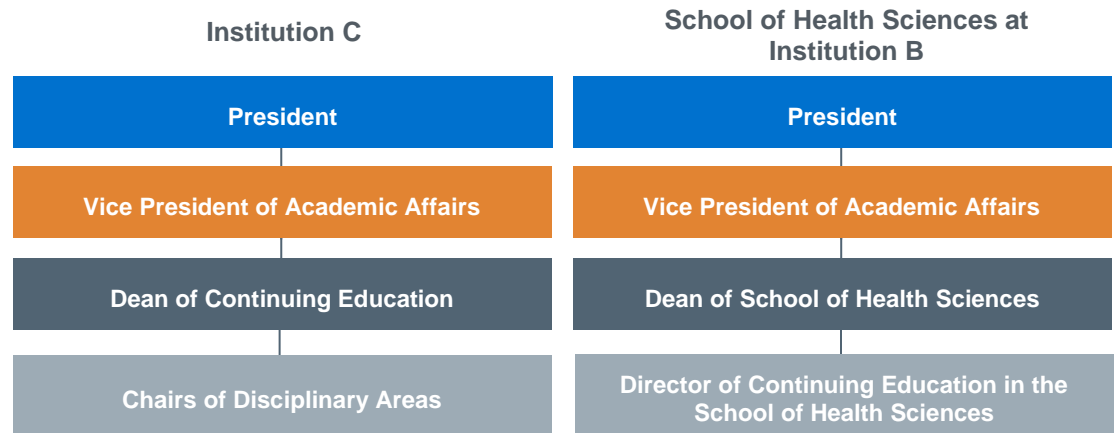
Advantages and Disadvantages of CE Unit Structures

	Centralized	Decentralized
Advantages		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Centralized control: CE deans standardize course approval processes and curricular components. ▪ Greater clarity: CE staff possess role-specific tasks, responsibilities, and duties that span across all CE disciplinary areas. ▪ Greater returns to scale: Centralized CE units share resources and revenues for all CE courses and programs (e.g., technological systems, IT support, marketing budget, administrative systems). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved alignment: CE and day-time courses resemble each other with similar curricula, deliverables, and outcomes. ▪ Streamlined decision-making: Directors of CE units possess greater control over curriculum and program approval. ▪ Greater flexibility: CE directors determine course curriculum, new programs, and deliverables based on student demand and industry need. ▪ Greater visibility: Prospective students easily navigate and select CE courses for specialty programs (e.g. nursing, health sciences professions) within disciplinary areas.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disjointed curriculum: Distance between CE courses and home departments may separate the curricular components of CE courses from those of traditional day-time programs, making it more difficult for students to transition from part-time to full-time programs. ▪ Rigidity of program approval: The program approval process at Institution C requires the support of high-level institutional executives, which slows and restricts innovation of new CE programs and courses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of shared resources: Contacts at Institution B report that the decentralized structure benefits highly profitable CE units (e.g., School of Health Sciences, School of Business) but restricts resources for less profitable divisions (e.g., Education and Training Solutions). ▪ Higher cost: Embedding CE units across all divisions and schools increases the amount of support, resources, and staff that CE units require.

Deans and Directors of CE Units Report to Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs

The Deans of Continuing Education at **Institution A** and **Institution C** report to the Vice President of Academic Affairs, alongside all other academic deans. While directors of CE units within academic schools at **Institution B** report directly to the dean of their school, directors also sit on a committee for continuing education, chaired by the Director of Continuous Teaching and Learning. The committee on continuing education meets regularly to discuss issues impacting all CE and online programs regardless of disciplinary area.

Reporting Structures with Centralized and Decentralized CE Units

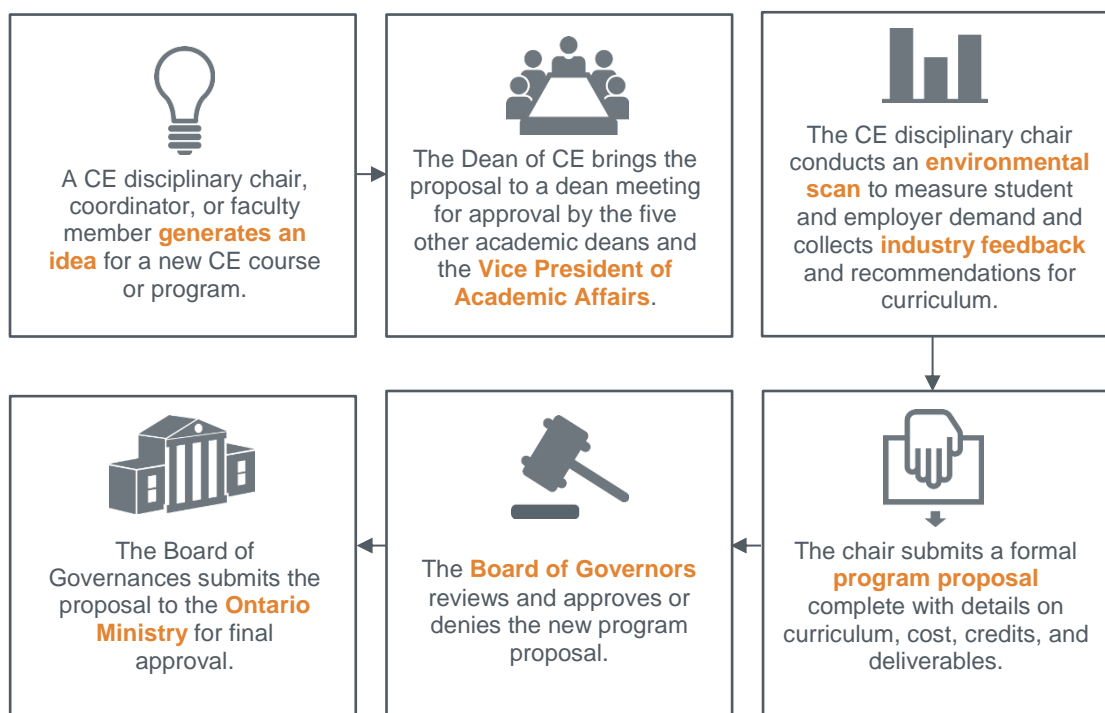


New Program Approval

CE Administrators Maintain Formal and Informal Guidelines to Oversee New Program Approval

The decentralized structure of **Institution B's** CE portfolio awards greater discretion to CE directors to approve and prioritize new courses and programs. While traditional day-time courses must progress through formal approval processes and gain approval by executive leaders, directors of CE units at Institution B create new programs and courses based on informal requests from faculty, student demand, and industry feedback. CE directors inform academic deans of new programs and develop standards and curriculum for CE courses based on full-time equivalents and industry need. Administrators at **Institution A** and **Institution C** maintain official approval processes that require formal project proposals, committee meetings to prioritize new programs, and approval by executive leaders and the Ontario government. CE course and program approval at Institution A and Institution C mirrors the approval process for traditional day-time programs.

CE Program Approval Process at *Institution C*



3) CE Programs and Courses

Course Offerings

CE Units Offer a Wide Variety of Courses that Differ Based on Disciplinary Areas and Available Resources

Course offerings vary greatly based on the institution and the CE unit's disciplinary area. The CE unit at **Institution C** and the School of Business, School of Health Sciences, and the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at **Institution B** offer almost exclusively full-time equivalent courses. However, the CE unit at **Institution A** and the Division of Education and Training Solutions at Institution B offers very few full time-equivalent courses. Institution A offers predominately continuing education courses, non-credit certificates, and training programs for working professionals. Contacts at Institution C report that CE administrators closely collaborate with full-time program staff and faculty to share curriculum, texts, and course deliverables.

CE Course Offerings at Profiled Institutions

Institution	School or Division	Types of Courses Offered	Delivery Methods	Most Popular Courses and Programs
Institution A	Continuing Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly non-credit certificates and courses Full-time equivalents only for courses with high failure rates (e.g., developmental math) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most courses offered face-to-face Hybrid Online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting courses and programs Marketing courses and programs



Student Enrollment
77 %

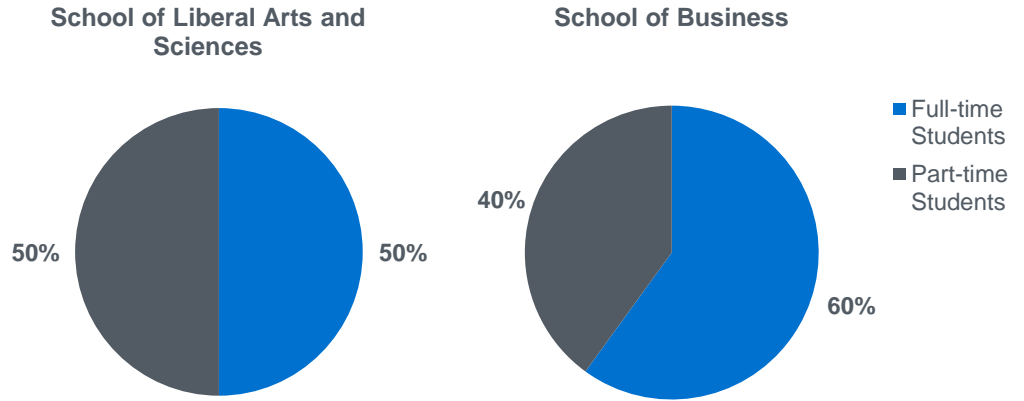
Seventy-seven percent of students enrolled in CE courses in the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences at **Institution B** are currently pursuing a certificate, diploma, or professional designation.

Institution B	School of Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mostly full-time equivalent courses ▪ Part-time certificates and diplomas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Face-to-face ▪ 80 online courses offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Immigration Consultant Certificate ▪ Legal Assistant Certificate ▪ Canadian Institute of Management Certificate
	School of Health Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mostly full-time equivalent courses ▪ Part-time certificates and diplomas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Face-to-face ▪ Online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coronary Care Certificate ▪ Nephrology Certificate ▪ Operating Room Certificate
	School of Liberal Arts and Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mostly full-time equivalent courses ▪ Part-time certificates and diplomas ▪ General interest courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Face-to-face ▪ Hybrid ▪ Online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ English courses ▪ English as a Second Language (ESL) courses
	Division of Education and Training Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General interest courses (e.g., sailing, truck driving) ▪ Professional development and training courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Face-to-face ▪ Hybrid ▪ Online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Truck transportation ▪ Condominium Management ▪ Housing Management certificate
Institution C	Continuing Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mostly full-time equivalent courses ▪ General interest courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Face-to-face ▪ Hybrid ▪ Online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practical Nursing program ▪ Business courses and certificates (e.g., accounting, marketing, human resources)

Students at Most Profiled Institutions Do Not Typically Transition from CE Courses into Traditional Day-Time Programs

Contacts at **Institution B** report that 50 percent of students enrolled in CE courses within the School of Arts and Sciences and between 50 and 60 percent of students enrolled in CE courses in the School of Business are full-time students who choose to enroll in online or evening courses. The remaining 40 to 50 percent of students in both schools consist mostly of working professionals enrolled in CE courses to gain additional workforce skills or credentials. Contacts at **Institution C** report that students regularly transition from CE courses into day-time programs and courses because of the parallel curricular structure of CE and day-time programs. However, CE students in the Division of Education and Training Solutions at Institution B and **Institution A** rarely transition from CE evening courses into traditional day-time programs.

Part-Time and Full-Time Enrollment at *Institution B*



Cost to Students

CE Administrators Set Course Fees Based on Student Interest, Market Demand, and Resource Allocations

Administrators at Ontario institutions set funded course fees at government-sanctioned price levels to receive subsidies from the Ontario government. The government of Ontario currently pays \$6.39 per credit hour for each funded course offered. The School of Health Sciences at **Institution B** offers higher proportions of non-funded courses than the School of Business or the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences because of greater resource costs and higher levels of student demand for courses. Administrators at **Institution A** and **Institution C** set almost all courses at funded price levels to encourage resource efficiency. Non-funded courses at Institution A typically consist of high-demand specialty courses (e.g., photography).

Cost and Proportion of Funded and Non-funded Courses at Profiled Institutions

Institution	School or Division	Funded vs. Non-funded	Cost
Institution B	Continuing Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 85 percent of courses are funded 15 percent of courses are non-funded (e.g., photography, computer programming) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$300 for standard 42-hour funded courses \$372 for 21-hour non-funded course
	School of Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almost all courses are funded Non-funded courses include workshops and trainings for non-profits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prices of funded and non-funded courses vary greatly based on student demand, resources, and competitor pricing
	School of Health Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almost all courses are non-funded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$350 - \$490 for a 45-hour funded course \$350 - \$490 for a 45-hour non-funded course
Institution A	School of Liberal Arts and Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly funded courses Some non-funded courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$360 for funded courses attached to a certificate \$400 for funded courses not attached to a certificate \$189 - \$375 for non-funded courses
	School of Liberal Arts and Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly funded courses Some non-funded courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$360 for funded courses attached to a certificate \$400 for funded courses not attached to a certificate \$189 - \$375 for non-funded courses

The School of Health Sciences at **Institution B** covers the excess cost of non-funded courses to set funded and non-funded courses at the same price level for students.

	Division of Education and Training Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only non-funded courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prices vary greatly based on student demand, resources, and competitor pricing \$250 for 15-hour non-funded courses \$9,000 - \$10,000 for 42-hour resource-intensive courses (e.g., truck training)
Institution C	Continuing Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almost all courses are funded Non-funded courses include workshops and special interest courses (e.g., glamour makeup) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prices of funded courses vary greatly based on student demand, resources, and competitor pricing \$280 for non-funded courses

CE Program Marketing

Contacts Market CE Programs through Radio Campaigns, Paper Advertisements, and Attendance at Local Conferences

Since CE units at **Institution B** share marketing budgets with home departments (e.g., School of Business, School of Health Sciences), CE administrators tailor school-wide marketing campaigns to fit CE course offerings. For example, CE staff within the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences applied the campus-wide campaign to recruit students to specific courses and programs (e.g., English as a Second Language courses, English courses). Contacts within the School of Business at Institution B report that effective advertising and marketing tactics over the past year have increased website visits and clicks. All contacts desire to expand marketing budgets and strategies to improve program visibility and student recruitment.

CE Marketing Strategies at Profiled Institutions

Initiate Signature Campaigns



Contacts at profiled institutions develop innovative campaign slogans and taglines to recruit new students. Marketing staff in the School of Business at **Institution B** broadcast humorous radio advertisements during rush hour. The CE unit at **Institution C** recently launched its “Open Late” tagline to communicate the availability of evening courses to working professionals. Contacts attribute the success and popularity of the tagline with increased enrollments in CE courses.

Advertise in Local Newspapers, Commuter Magazines, Online



Contacts at **Institution A** and **Institution B** purchase public advertisements in free commuter newspapers and magazines (e.g., Metronews, TO Tonight) to increase visibility of CE courses and programs. The School of Business at Institution B also markets programs by investing in billboard signs and taxi toppers.

Attend Conferences, Meetings, and Trade Shows



CE administrators in the School of Health Sciences at **Institution B** report that maintaining a regular presence and distributing CE course booklets at local business conferences broadens the visibility of program and course offerings. The School of Business at **Institution B** regularly staffs information booths with CE handouts at local trade shows.

5) Research Methodology

Project Challenge

Leadership at a member institution approached the Forum with the following questions:

- Which departments oversee CE units at other institutions? What administrators or offices do CE unit staff report to at contact institutions?
- How do administrators organize CE units within institutional structures? Do contact institutions situate CE units within centralized structures or embed CE units within academic departments?
- What administrators are responsible for developing, approving and prioritizing new CE programs at contact institutions?
- What types of courses do CE units at contact institutions offer?
- What course delivery methods do institutions offer for CE courses and programs?
- To what extent does the availability of equivalent traditional day-time courses impact CE unit planning?
- How do students typically transition between CE courses and traditional day-time courses at contact institutions?
- How much do CE courses and programs at contact institutions typically cost?
- What marketing and branding strategies do CE administrators employ to increase enrollment?
- What website designs and applications are particularly effective in enlisting students to enroll in CE programs at contact institutions?

Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- EAB's internal and online research libraries (<http://eab.com>)
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (<http://nces.ed.gov/>)
- Institution websites

Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed directors of CE units at institutions located in central Canada.

A Guide to Institutions Profiled in this Brief

Institution	Location	Approximate Institutional Enrollment (Part-time/Full-time)	Classification
Institution A	Central Canada	25,000/61,000	Primarily Undergraduate (MacLean's)
Institution B	Central Canada	27,000/57,000	Primarily Undergraduate (MacLean's)
Institution C	Central Canada	17,000/90,000	Primarily Undergraduate (MacLean's)
Institution D	Central Canada	18,000/35,000	Primarily Undergraduate (MacLean's)