

Aligning Continuing Education Units and Universities: Survival Strategies for the New Millennium

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ABSTRACT

The goal of the study presented in this paper was to understand and to start to document the contributions that a continuing education unit (CEU) makes to the university. Although continuing education contributes in both financial and non-financial ways, the financial benefits are often the only recognized contribution. The non-monetary contributions are significant, however, and may be the most critical.

A national survey of Canadian continuing education deans, conducted by the author, is discussed in this paper. Deans were asked to respond to a list of contributions that were identified by focus groups of continuing education programmers. Deans

RÉSUMÉ

Le but de l'étude présentée dans cet article était la compréhension et un début de documentation des contributions faites par une unité d'éducation permanente envers l'université. Bien que l'éducation permanente contribue de façons financière et non financière, les avantages financiers sont souvent les seules contributions reconnues. Cependant, les contributions non monétaires sont importantes, et peuvent être les plus cruciales.

Dans cet article l'auteur discute de son sondage national fait auprès de doyens canadiens en éducation permanente. Elle a demandé aux doyens de réagir à une liste de contributions identifiées par des groupes de consultation formés de programmeurs en éducation

were also asked to rank each indicator as to its level of importance in gaining support for a CEU within the university.

Outcomes were categorized on the basis of their financial contributions and on contributions to the teaching mission, the research mission, and the strategic directions and initiatives of the university. The findings provide evidence of significant contributions in all four categories, although the research contributions are ranked the lowest. CEUs may find the list of institutional outcomes identified in this paper useful in assessing their own contributions and in building support for their units.

permanente. Aussi leur a-t-elle demandé de classer chaque indicateur par son niveau d'importance; sa puissance de ralliement d'appui pour une unité d'éducation permanente à l'intérieur d'une université. Les résultats furent catégorisés par rapport à leur contribution financière et à leur contribution à la mission de l'enseignement, à la mission de recherche, aux orientations stratégiques et aux initiatives de l'université. Les résultats témoignent de contributions importantes dans toutes les quatre catégories, bien que les contributions de recherches soient classées les plus inférieures. Les unités d'éducation permanente peuvent trouver très utile la liste des résultats institutionnels identifiés dans cet article pour l'évaluation de leurs contributions et pour l'augmentation de l'appui envers leurs unités.

INTRODUCTION

The current economic and political environment in Canada is demanding greater accountability from all public sector institutions in order to satisfy competing demands for limited funds, as well as to ensure that the funding that is provided is not wasted, but supports societal needs. Blaney (1994) argues that improved accountability is a dominant theme in provincial reviews of higher education (p. 6). Dennison (1992) asserts that "more than ever, colleges and universities are expected to demonstrate that public funds are expended in the best interests of their clientele, rather than for self-preservation and self-interest" (p. 72).

Blaney (1994) contends that universities (and continuing education units) “are doing much of the work the community expects, but are diffident about telling [their] story” (p. 6). Similarly, Votruba (1996) asserts that “universities can and must do a better job of telling their story” (p. 36). Institutional responses to this concern have included a move to develop key performance indicators for universities (e.g., see Cave, Hanney, & Kogan, 1991) and the increased use of surveys of university graduates to gather data on their success and the impact of their education. Universities are also starting to publish documents that highlight the institution’s contributions to society (e.g., see AUCC, 1996). However, most of these efforts have focused on external impacts of the university on society. There has been little research, if any, conducted on individual departments within the university to discern their contributions to the institution and its goals.

With the continuing financial crisis, universities are also “choosing priorities—distinguishing between the areas central to an institutional mission and more marginal activities that could be reduced or eliminated” (Levine, 1997, p. 5). Although “all faculties within the university are feeling the effect of years of financial attrition, . . . a state has been reached on most campuses where the most important characteristic of continuing education, as seen by decision makers, is its revenue generating capacity” (Kirby, 1992, p. 59). Financial contributions are the most obvious benefits and the easiest to document; however, they are not sufficient to situate the continuing education unit (CEU) as central to the institutional mission. The non-monetary benefits that CEUs generate might be a more persuasive route to establishing centrality by demonstrating how the unit contributes to the institutional mission. As continuing education tends to be closely linked to the external community, the CEU’s activities may also help the institution to profile its contributions to society and respond to the demands for accountability.

The environment of the CEU is one of declining financial resources, increased threats of co-option, and heightened demands for accountability, in a culture that has not traditionally “blown its own horn.” Clearly, CEUs, like the universities, need to begin documenting their contributions in order to develop stronger support for their existence. “It is incumbent upon each academic unit to demonstrate accountability in a manner consistent with its particular mission” (Dennison, 1992, p. 73), and the mission of its parent institution. Votruba (1981) suggests that strengthening organizational support often “involves trying to develop more informed and supportive attitudes on the part of key organizational administrators and policy

makers" (p. vii). For CEUs, part of this process is telling their story in a way that demonstrates how central they are to the university's core mission.

Examining non-monetary benefits is a relatively new field of study in continuing education. Although program evaluation is common and CEUs are regularly reviewed, an analysis of the benefits a CEU brings to the institution has rarely been done. The primary goal of this study, therefore, was to start to develop a list of institutional outcomes and to identify indicators of the monetary and non-monetary benefits a CEU contributes to the university. A secondary goal was to provide university CEUs with a template that will assist them in conducting their own analyses.

UNIVERSITIES AND CONTINUING EDUCATION UNITS

Continuing education units have traditionally been seen as marginal to the central mission of the university. This has led to the financial environment described by Kirby (1992) above, with the result that many CEUs are fighting for survival. According to Apps (in Cauthers, 1991), some CEUs are too isolated from the rest of the institution, and "the challenge is to keep feeding back, to keep bringing along, to keep interacting with, to keep cooperating with the rest of the institution through whatever (means) we can think about" (p. 57). One approach to this challenge is to show the university community how the CEU supports the institution and its mission. The following sections on marginality and threats provide a context for the third section on building institutional support.

Marginality of Continuing Education

Donaldson (1991) defines the marginality of continuing education in four ways: organizationally, at the boundaries of the university; geographically, in terms of both programming and physical location; functionally, as part of the service mission; and professionally, with respect to other professions in the university (p. 121). The first two definitions are not of particular concern in this paper, except in the sense they contribute to the latter two.

Continuing education's location at the organizational boundaries is necessary, as a significant role for CEUs is providing a bridge between the institution and the community. Geographic marginality is significant in the sense that separate housing tends to contribute to the message that continuing education is not a core activity. It is the third definition—that of equating continuing education to the university's service mission and rating it lower than teaching and research—that is germane. The

marginality of continuing education as a profession is also significant, as continuing education professionals may be viewed as having no contribution to make to the teaching and research mission and may not be seen as professionals in the same way as faculty. Votruba (1987) takes a slightly different approach to the marginality of CEUs and argues that, regardless of the specifics, "their relative degree of centrality or marginality is based on the perceived contribution that they make to broader institutional purposes" (p. 187). This supports Donaldson's view that the continuing education function is seen as subordinate to the university's primary mission of teaching and research.

Threats from the University

A study of continuing education deans conducted in the early 1990s identified threats from the parent institution as the most significant and critical in terms of the survival of the CEU (Pearce, 1992). Specific threats are categorized into four groups: "resource allocation, decentralization of function, change in the system positioning of the continuing education unit, [and] lack of academic credibility" (p. 5). The deans in the study identified "two root causes: senior university administrators are academics, [and] the culture of the continuing education unit does not mirror that of the university" (p. 4).

The academic background of senior administrators results in a lack of understanding of continuing education due to the "training and the socialization that accompanies [their academic training]" (Pearce, 1992, p. 4). Part of the rationale for analyzing continuing education's contributions to the institution is to help senior administrators understand what CEUs do. This lack of understanding extends to many individual faculty members, as well, particularly those who have not had direct involvement in continuing education activities. Because universities have a highly decentralized organizational structure, faculty members have a great deal of power, and their personal goals "may only partially overlap with the total organization's goals" (Cyert, 1985, p. 123). Thus, it is important that individual faculty members also understand the contributions of the CEU to their own goals.

Pearce (1992) describes the cultural clash, the second root cause identified by the deans, in three ways: "(1) differing attitudes toward change, (2) the tension between creating quality programs versus generating revenue, and (3) the scholarly expectations of the parent organization versus the program/revenue function ascribed to the

continuing education unit" (pp. 4–5). Deal (1987) identifies additional cultural contrasts as differences in the student body, a practical versus theoretical focus, the importance of teaching ability and a more experiential approach to teaching, a higher risk environment, and faster feedback provided by students. Blaney (1986) notes differences in discipline-based versus cross-discipline or interdisciplinary program development, community and learner focus, fiscal policies, and power locus (p. 75). To these could be added a partnership approach to program development, the need to market programs, a demand for a higher level of customer service, and faster planning and delivery schedules. "Thus most universities currently house two very different subcultures. . . . Neither group will understand the language or behavior of the other" (Deal, 1987, p. 97).

With the increasing government emphasis on job creation and corporate support and sponsorship, other subcultures have developed that may have similar issues (e.g., faculties of business). Consequently, it may be easier to gain support from those groups that straddle the two cultures—they are academics but have some understanding of the continuing education environment. Blaney (1986) argues that "any serious conflict with those other cultures, particularly with that of the university, will impede general support and effectiveness" (p. 74). The need to reconcile these differences and create a broader understanding of each other is another reason for CEUs to tell their story.

Another significant threat arises from the increasing interest of academic units in conducting their own continuing education activities. This interest stems from the growing demand from society for lifelong learning and the view that continuing education is a revenue source that can offset declining budgets. Financially lucrative program areas are the most likely to advance this notion; if these academic units were to conduct their own activities, CEUs would likely be left with those activities that meet only minimum costs, if that. This would substantially decrease, if not eliminate, the financial contributions from CEUs, which are seen as their primary contribution, and further reduce support for them. Nonetheless, the potential financial benefit from CEUs is not a sufficient condition for survival and is, in fact, questionable itself "for continuing education of a high quality is expensive, and there is intense competition in markets that are not unlimited" (Freedman, 1983, p. 15).

Building Institutional Support

Votruba (1987) argues that CEUs must “build and maintain support within their own parent organizations on whom their very existence depends” (p. 185). If “organizational support is given to those subunits that are perceived to be serving essential organizational priorities” (p. 187), then CEUs must start to educate senior administrators about their function in terms of those organizational priorities. Blaney (1994) also asserts the importance of emphasizing the university mission. “Our case for continuing studies must be made—if it is to be credible and effective—within the context of the university’s fundamental values” (p. 14).

A large part of building institutional support is an awareness of organizational politics. Bolman and Deal (1991) developed a model for looking at organizations that includes four frames: structural, human resources, political, and symbolic. “The political frame asserts that, in the face of enduring differences and scarce resources, conflict among members of a coalition is inevitable and power inevitably becomes a key resource” (p. 187). Bacharach and Lawler (1998) also emphasize power as a key resource, and political alignment and the development of coalitions as necessary for “mobilizing joint, collective action in support of certain organizational strategies, policies, or practices over others” (p. 71). Coalitions increase the probability of success in situations where the control of organizational resources is low or the activity is marginal, and a power inequity exists between parts of the organization (see pp. 81–85 for a discussion of the power-dependence theory).

Power takes a number of forms, but two are of particular interest to CEUs—information and expertise, and alliances and networks (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 196). Continuing education professionals have experience in developing alliances and networks, both within the university and externally in developing programs. By aligning themselves with the university’s mission, CEUs are more likely to strengthen their internal alliances. At the same time that CEUs try to bring continuing education closer to the core of the institution, they must identify the critical skills and expertise that continuing education professionals add to the activity and the value that a centralized function provides. In short, CEUs need to do a better job of informing the university community of their role in delivering continuing education and their contributions to the university’s mission.

Michigan State University’s (1995) model of outreach is described in their publication *Points of Distinction*, and provides a useful approach to

considering the types of indicators that are likely to be important to the university. In their model, outreach is “not seen simply as a synonym for ‘service’; rather, the tripartite mission of the university—teaching, research, and service—can be viewed as having outreach forms and non-outreach forms” (p. 23). Outreach activities are “performed for (and with) the particular sectors of the public which will benefit directly from faculty expertise” (p. 24). The link between outreach and teaching is defined as the delivery of credit courses at non-traditional times and locations (including delivery at a distance), as well as “noncredit seminars, workshops, conferences, exhibits, and performances for continuing professional education or to a nonacademic audience” (p. 23). Outreach research is “contextualized to address problems in the real world and to develop knowledge for a particular setting” (p. 23). Finally, outreach and service are extensions of “expert knowledge to serve the public, referred to as *public service*” (p. 24). This model may help continuing education professionals identify their contributions, and it suggests an approach for categorizing those contributions in order to demonstrate how CEUs support the institutional mission.

STUDY DESIGN

Institutional research on the contributions of a CEU to its parent university is a relatively new field. This section describes the design of the study undertaken by the author as a form of exploratory research that “provides a heuristic benefit in familiarizing the researcher with the phenomenon, and hence aiding in the identification of important variables and questions” (Palys, 1992, p. 82). Exploratory research also suggests a less rigorous approach to design issues, as developing an understanding of the phenomenon under study takes precedence over rigid adherence to scientific methods (p. 82).

This study combined qualitative and quantitative approaches in a two-phase design that used a qualitative focus group to develop a more quantitative questionnaire. Palys (1982) suggests that exploratory researchers often use “*strategic sampling of insightful informants*” (p. 83) who are familiar with the field and able to provide informed details. Weiss (1994) also argues that purposive sampling is particularly appropriate for small samples where random selection may not “provide us with instances of significant developments that occur infrequently” (p. 23). In the focus groups, this approach to sampling also ensured participation from three sectors of

continuing education: extension credit, distance education, and non-credit.

The initial focus group in this study consisted of continuing education programmers from Continuing Studies at Simon Fraser University. Programmers were deliberately selected for the focus groups, as the researcher felt they would be able to generate a broader range of outcomes (the goal of the study) than other members of the university, due to their intimate involvement with the activities of the CEU. Data from the focus groups were analyzed to draw out a variety of monetary and non-monetary benefits, and a questionnaire was then developed incorporating this data. Respondents were asked to evaluate the initial set of outcomes and indicators, and to add additional ones. The questionnaire was sent to deans of CEUs and either presidents or academic vice-presidents of universities across Canada. As they were best able to judge who would be able and willing to provide information, deans were asked to solicit the participation of their president or vice-president academic.

Continuing education deans were selected for this phase of the study for several reasons: they would likely be familiar with the indicators and able to assess (at least somewhat) their importance within their own institutions; they were more likely to see the value in participating in the research; and finally, they were a small enough group to survey within a short period of time. Presidents and vice-presidents academic would provide the essential perspective of the senior administration. The perspectives of other members of the university, including academic faculties and departments, ancillary units, and individual faculty members, are also important, but this is an area for further research.

A total of 106 questionnaires were mailed to the 53 member institutions of the Canadian Association for University Continuing Education; 20 were returned by continuing education deans for a return rate of 38 percent. Only 3 vice-presidents academic (6%) returned questionnaires. Although this may have been due to busy schedules, it could reflect the lower esteem in which continuing education is held or simply that some deans were not able to persuade their senior administrators to participate. Due to the low response rate for this group, their data is not included in the findings. Deans may find it easier to solicit data from senior administrators in regular face-to-face meetings, which would be crucial for determining whether the CEU's perspective matches that of senior administrators.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The goal of this research was to begin to generate a list of outcomes and indicators that would identify the financial and non-financial contributions that a CEU makes to its parent university. Thus, the primary result of both the focus groups and the questionnaires was the construction of this list. In order to measure the importance of each indicator, questionnaire respondents were asked to rank each indicator as essential, very important, important, or not important.

Several respondents chose to specify "not applicable (NA)" in cases where the contribution did not apply in their institutions; others may have chosen to rank the indicator even if it did not apply. The questionnaire did not include a NA category, but it may be useful to do so in further research as a way to identify which indicators are common across most institutions. The programming and responsibilities in each institution are different, however, and each CEU can choose which outcomes and indicators are important to track. The goal of this research was not to generate a set of contributions that would apply in all cases, but to provide CEUs with a broad range of suggestions that would assist them in documenting their own "story."

The list of contributions identified in the focus groups and questionnaires is presented under four categories: monetary, programmatic and teaching, scholarly and research, and strategic. Kirby (1992) suggests that financial benefits are those that the institution usually identifies (p. 59), and they are certainly the easiest to quantify. However, as it is unlikely that the institution has a full awareness of the size of these contributions, all monetary contributions are grouped together. The second and third categories correspond to the teaching and research mission of the university. Documenting the CEU's contributions to the primary mission of the university helps to align it with the institution, thus, these categories are important both in gaining support for the CEU and enabling it to build institutional linkages. It is also in these areas that individual faculty members are likely to see benefits. Only a few monetary benefits accrue to individual faculty, and strategic contributions are aimed primarily at supporting the institution as a whole. The final category of strategic benefits is quite broad and designed to identify those contributions that support the public image of the institution and assist in pursuing new directions. Further research may indicate that this category should be divided further, or may suggest additional categories that were not used in this study.

The following tables (Monetary Contributions, Programmatic and Teaching Contributions, Scholarly and Research Contributions, and Strategic Contributions) include the percentages for the 20 continuing education deans (38%) who responded to the questionnaire. Some indicators were left blank and, therefore, not all percentages total 100. Although the response rate was relatively low, it does provide some agreement with the initial list of contributions and some indication of the relative importance of each indicator. The indicators in each table have also been ranked, based on the mean, although this is tentative, again, due to the relatively low number of responses. This provides an indication of the average level of importance for each indicator.

Monetary Contributions

This category identifies the financial contributions that the CEU makes, including benefits that accrue to individual faculty members and staff, academic departments and faculties, ancillary units, and the institution as a whole. The data on most of these are relatively easy to gather and to quantify. However, several of the indicators may be difficult to measure, as the data for them is not readily available. A rationale for each outcome follows.

Contract and other overheads: In some institutions, CEUs are required to include an overhead amount in all research grants, consulting, in-house programs, or international projects they are involved in. This is to cover the additional administration costs that the institution might incur, although it seems likely that, in most cases, these are minimal. Thus, these funds may accrue to general revenue. Overheads may also be shared with academic departments that are involved in these activities.

Credit tuition fees: In some institutions, tuition for credit courses administered by the CEU accrue to general university revenue, with funding for these activities provided by the university. In others, the CEU retains the tuition fees and uses these to cover expenses, with any surplus retained, shared, or returned to the institution. In either case, these are funds that the university may not have received without the activities of the CEU. This indicator will not be important to CEUs that have no responsibility for credit programming.

CEU students who subsequently become regular degree students: Many adult students are first exposed to university study through a non-credit course or program. This participation may stimulate them to continue their education in a degree program, which will generate tuition fees and

possibly contribute to the provincial grant. This indicator is likely to be difficult to measure, as information on non-credit course participation is not usually captured, although it may be provided on admission applications. If it is identified by a CEU as an important indicator, it may be worth requesting that the information be captured when students are admitted. Otherwise, anecdotal information may be obtained from individual students or from surveys of non-credit students.

Profit sharing or other financial split with academic units: In some institutions, the CEU's programs are developed in close cooperation with academic units, which are, therefore, entitled to share in any surplus. In other institutions, any surplus may be shared or returned in total to general university revenue, regardless of the participation of an academic unit. Some CEUs may also be expected to return either a percentage of revenue or a specific amount of revenue to the university. This is one of the most obvious financial benefits and is easily measured. It is also one of the more important outcomes, and the source of a major threat to the CEU, namely, academic departments' interest in pursuing their own continuing education activities.

Bookstore, university press, housing and food, room rentals, duplicating/print shop: These are all ancillary units that may receive part of their revenue from the activities of the CEU. The importance of these indicators may vary, depending on how reliant these units are on this share of their revenue.

Employment of undergraduate and graduate students as instructors, teaching assistants (TAs), tutor-markers, research assistants: Many graduate students require financial support to pursue their studies. Although academic departments provide much of this support, employment opportunities may also exist in the CEU. Academic departments are likely to appreciate the availability of external opportunities, thus, generating support for the CEU. The wages paid to students are an individual benefit and are likely of less interest to the department or the university than the number of additional students who receive employment.

Provincial grant: In some provinces, government funding received by the university is based on the number of credit full-time-equivalent (FTE) students. The additional students involved in courses administered by the CEU therefore increase the government grant (except where there is a maximum number of FTEs funded). The importance of this indicator depends on provincial funding arrangements.

Supplemental income for faculty and staff: This is a benefit that accrues to individual faculty or staff members and may contribute to their support of the CEU.

Free/reduced tuition for university staff and faculty: Some CEUs provide their non-credit courses to faculty and staff for free or at a reduced cost. In cases where the university or department would have covered the cost, this money is saved. In other cases, the staff or faculty member saves the funds.

Donations to university: With reduced government funding, universities are increasingly pursuing donations from a variety of sources, including alumni. Most non-credit students are not recognized as alumni, however, and may not be solicited for funds, although many of them may be willing to support the university or may influence their employers to make donations. Some CEUs also work with professional associations in developing and delivering programs, and their partnership with these associations may contribute to their financial support of the university.

Research funding: Some continuing education faculty and staff may pursue funding for research projects they are either individually or jointly conducting. Although in most cases there is no direct financial return to the institution, there may be some overhead funds, as identified above; it may also contribute to the reputation of the university as a research institution.

Funding for non-CEU faculty to attend conferences: This is another benefit that accrues to individual faculty members. In many cases, travel and professional development funds are very limited and assistance provided to these faculty might encourage their support for the CEU.

Table 1: *Monetary Contributions of CEU*

Figures in the first five columns are the percentage of respondents who selected that ranking. Some indicators were left blank and therefore not all percentages total 100. The final figure is the mean for the indicator and is calculated by adding the responses for each ranking, multiplying by 1 for essential, 2 for very important, 3 for important, and 4 for not important, and then dividing by the total responses for that indicator (NA responses are not included in the calculation of the mean). This provides an average level of importance across the respondents.

Contribution	Indicator	ES	VI	IM	NI	NA	Mean
Contract and other overheads	Overheads transferred to central administration	35	15	25	10	5	2.1
	Overheads transferred to other university departments	5	20	25	30	10	2.7
Credit tuition fees	Fees paid for credit courses administered by CEU	45	15	5	25	10	2.1
CE students who subsequently become regular degree students	Number of students and programs entered	25	15	40	15	5	2.5
Profit sharing or other financial split with academic units	Funds transferred to other units (may be from non-credit or credit programs)	15	30	30	15	10	2.5
Bookstore	Course texts purchased by CE students	15	30	30	25		2.7
Employment of undergraduate and graduate students as instructors, TAs, tutors, markers, research assistants	Number of students employed	10	20	35	20		2.8
	Fees paid to students	10	25	30	30	5	2.8

(Table 1 continued)

Contribution	Indicator	ES	VI	IM	NI	NA	Mean
Provincial grant	Grant paid for credit students administered by CEU (in some provinces this is based on FTEs)	5	35	15	35	10	2.9
Housing and food services	Fees paid for conferences and other programs	20	5	20	35	20	2.9
Duplicating/print shop	Costs paid by CEU for services		25	45	30		3.1
Supplemental income for faculty and staff	Instructional and other fees paid in addition to regular salary		25	40	30	5	3.1
Donations to university	Donations from course participants and/or their organizations	10	10	25	45	10	3.2
	Donations from professional associations who have partnered with CEU	10	10	15	45	15	3.2
Rentals from external groups who had initial contact with CEU	Fees paid by external groups for rooms, audiovisual rentals, food services, etc.	10		35	35	20	3.2
Research funding	Funds awarded to CE staff and faculty		5	25	55	10	3.4
Funding for non-CEU faculty to attend conferences	Registration fees and other expenses	5		25	55	15	3.5
University press or similar unit, if part of CEU	Sales of books and other learning resources where funds accrue outside the CEU or are split with another unit	5	10		65	15	3.6

ES Essential, VI Very important, IM Important, NI Not important, NA Not applicable

Additional indicators suggested by respondents were support for libraries, which would be comparable to the ancillary units already identified, and employment of students in television productions, which would enhance the students' education (a teaching contribution), save money, and provide employment. The student employment outcome could be expanded to include this type of employment.

As could be anticipated, the responses varied at least partially as a result of the type of programming the CEU does or the provincial funding arrangements. In some cases, the CEU has responsibility only for credit programs, in others only for non-credit programs. Some provinces base their funding on the number of full-time-equivalent (FTE) students, while others don't. The high rating for CE students who become degree students may be attributable to student recruitment rather than a source of revenue, particularly as these students are not usually identified. This suggests that this indicator is more of a strategic contribution, but it should be clarified in future research. The indicators with the highest ratings are also those that generate more substantial funds (overheads, credit tuition fees, and profit sharing). Funding for faculty to attend conferences is an individual benefit and might be ranked higher by faculty members. The low rating on research funding is likely attributable to the minimal funding that is achieved. The university press rating is understandable as few CEUs have this responsibility.

Programmatic and Teaching Contributions

This category attempts to identify those outcomes that contribute to the teaching mission of the university. It includes programs offered through the CEU, development of instructional skills for individual faculty, and assistance with the development of new credit programs. The benefits accrue to individual faculty members as well as to academic departments and the university. As with monetary contributions, responses will vary depending on the type of programming being conducted. Some of this data is readily available; other data are less accessible.

Types of programs, courses offered, distance education courses: These indicators provide a description of the range of programming that the CEU conducts.

Increased access: This is likely to be a significant contribution to increasing the numbers and locations of students who can access credit and non-credit courses.

Types of students served: The description of the types of students served by the CEU may be particularly important when the university is reaching out to non-traditional students. It may also be another factor in student recruitment.

Academic and external partnerships: Many CEUs work in close cooperation and partnership with both internal and external groups. A listing of academic partnerships demonstrates the range of participants within the institution. External partnerships may increase community support for the institution.

Cooperation with academic units in developing new credit programs (e.g., at SFU the director of the Writing Program worked with the director of the Centre for Studies in Publishing to develop a Master's degree in Publishing): Many universities are looking at the development of new programs aimed at professional audiences. CEUs can bring their expertise in working with professionals and community groups to the development of these programs.

Incubator role: The risk and cost of testing new programs and new markets can be substantially lower through a CEU. This could be a significant benefit for an institution interested in expanding its activities in new areas.

Combining credit and non-credit courses (e.g., English students take a non-credit writing course as part of their credit course): Non-credit courses are often more practical, and the combination increases students' skills and enhances their education.

In-house contracts: This indicator describes programs delivered on contract for specific groups or organizations. Organizations that are satisfied with the programs are likely to be more supportive of the CEU and the institution (a strategic objective).

Teaching by CE staff and faculty: The staff of CEUs with faculty status are expected to teach just like other faculty members (although their teaching loads may be considerably lighter). Staff in other units may also teach in their academic discipline. This indicator compares continuing education professionals to faculty members and may encourage a perception of them as professionals.

Development of communication, teaching, course development and instructional design skills for faculty, teaching assistants (TAs), and tutor-markers: Some CEUs offer professional development programs for non-credit instructors and/or university faculty and graduate students to help them improve their skills.

Faculty and graduate students who participate in continuing education activities may also increase their skills due to individual coaching sessions. Continuing education students tend to expect a high level of teaching ability from instructors and are more able to demand this than regular university students (if they're unhappy, they don't stay in the course). Consequently, continuing education staff often work with instructors to help them improve their instructional skills. Participation in the development and delivery of distance education courses and on-line instruction also improves instructional skills.

Evaluation services: CEUs usually have extensive experience in conducting program evaluations. This expertise may be available to academic units that are interested in conducting an evaluation.

Student practicums: Some programs offered through the CEU may provide practicums for regular students. This not only increases the benefits they receive from their education, but also reduces the number of external practicums that must be found.

Faculty able to test new research with professionals through non-credit teaching: Faculty members who are conducting applied research have an opportunity to test their research on a professional audience. This is more likely to occur in a non-credit course than in their regular classes, where students may or may not have a background in the field.

Expand teaching resources: Non-credit instructors who have the appropriate academic credentials may become sessional instructors. Teaching non-credit courses may also be a potential entry point to the university for faculty seeking employment.

Table 2: Programmatic and Teaching Contributions of CEU

Figures in the first five columns are the percentage of respondents who selected that ranking. Some indicators were left blank and therefore not all percentages total 100. The final figure is the mean for the indicator and is calculated by adding the responses for each ranking, multiplying by 1 for essential, 2 for very important, 3 for important, and 4 for not important, and then dividing by the total responses for that indicator (NA responses are not included in the calculation of the mean). This provides an average level of importance across the respondents.

Contribution	Indicator	ES	VI	IM	NI	NA	Mean
Types of programs	Programs leading to credentials (including degrees)	50	30	15		5	1.6
	Other types of programs	30	25	25	5	5	2.1
	Programs in support of professional credentials	35	25	15	20	5	2.2
Increased access	Number of students who only participate in courses administered through CEU	45	35	10		10	1.6
	Number of students outside commuting distance who participate in distance education	35	15	20	20	5	2.3
Types of students served	List of target markets, particularly non-traditional sectors	30	55	10	5		1.9
Academic partnerships	List of departments/other units	20	55	15		5	1.9
External partnerships	List of external partners	20	55	15	5	10	1.9
Cooperation with academic units in developing new credit programs	Description of involvement	25	40	30		5	2.1

(Table 2 continued)

Contribution	Indicator	ES	VI	IM	NI	NA	Mean
Incubator role	New programs and/or markets developed	20	25	40	5	5	2.2
Combining credit and non-credit courses	Number of students served	30	20	5	15	10	2.1
	Number and type of courses	10	10	35	25	20	2.9
Courses offered	Number/level of degree courses	35	25	10	20	10	2.2
	Number/level of non-degree courses	30	15	15	35	5	2.6
In-house contracts (courses and programs)	Number of courses and organizations	20	30	20	15	10	2.4
Teaching by CE staff and faculty	Number and names of courses taught	20	20	20	20	10	2.5
Development of communication, teaching, course development, and instructional design skills for faculty, TAs, and tutor- markers	Anecdotal evidence from participants and/or data obtained from evaluations	15	25	15	30	5	2.7
	Instructor development workshops offered	20	15	20	35	10	2.8
	Number of individual coaching sessions	10	15	20	40	10	3.1
Evaluation services	Number of courses/ programs evaluated		40	30	15	10	2.7
Student practicums	Number of students and type of practicum	10	20	20	40	10	3.0
Faculty able to test new research with professionals through non-credit teaching	Anecdotal evidence from faculty	10	10	30	35	15	3.1
Expand teaching resources	Number of non-credit instructors who become credit sessionals or faculty	5	10	25	40	20	3.3

ES Essential, VI Very important, IM Important, NI Not important, NA Not applicable

The only additional indicator suggested was running a satellite campus, which might be considered more of a strategic contribution.

As might be expected, contributions that support the regular degree programs and that benefit regular students tended to be more highly ranked, as these contribute directly to the core teaching mission. The slightly lower ratings for distance education courses were likely because not all institutions have a distance education program. Although the ranking for evaluation services was in the mid-range, the number of respondents who felt it was very important or important is possibly a recognition of continuing education professionals' expertise in conducting program evaluations. It may also reflect the feasibility and desirability of making this service available to the university community. Teaching by continuing education faculty, although it is comparable to other faculty in the institution, was also ranked in the mid-range, as many CEUs are not responsible for teaching. The development of instructional skills and the ability to test new research are individual benefits and, as indicated above for financial support for conferences, may be ranked differently by faculty members.

Scholarly and Research Contributions

This category is designed to document contributions to the research mission of the university. Indicators include those that showcase research within the CEU and those that provide support to faculty members in their own research. Although data on the CEU's research activities are easy to gather, data external to the unit may require a more extensive effort and are likely to be incomplete.

Academic and professional expertise of CE staff provided to university and external agencies: As discussed above, continuing education professionals have strong backgrounds in a variety of areas that may be of use to other university departments. Consultation by external groups may not only contribute to the profile of the institution but also be a link to the public relations and social responsibility roles discussed under strategic contributions.

Support for community-based research (financial, staffing, or other support): Many institutions are interested in becoming more involved in the external community, which is also a way to contribute to society. This indicator is linked to the public relations and social responsibility roles of the institution, but could also include benefits for faculty members who are interested in community research.

Publications and presentations by CE staff and faculty: This indicator is comparable to the publication record of regular faculty.

Distance education study guides commercially published as texts: Some study guides developed for distance education courses have subsequently been published as textbooks, thus becoming available to students across the country. This indicator also serves to profile the faculty member and the institution, and may support the tenure and promotion of individual faculty members.

Research related to teaching and course development (conducted by non-CEU faculty): Some faculty, because of their involvement in continuing education activities and their academic interests, have conducted research in this field. This is particularly apparent in the development of new learning technologies.

Other research conducted by CE staff and faculty: Not all research is conducted under contract, nor is all research published. This indicator captures the research that is done for other reasons (e.g., teaching, program evaluation).

Research or consulting contracts awarded to CE staff and faculty: Again, this is comparable to regular faculty, but it also serves to increase the profile of the university in the community.

Assistance to research centres and institutes in disseminating their research: This might also be included under the previous category as some CEUs offer programs that help disseminate the research of academic centres and institutes.

Participation in joint research: Continuing education professionals can complement faculty members' research with a more applied background and experience in adult and continuing education.

Faculty research or consulting contracts obtained with support of programmers or because of their involvement in continuing education: This contribution accrues to individual faculty members, potentially because of their exposure to professionals in the field. Data may be quite difficult to collect as it depends on anecdotal evidence.

Provision of research subjects: Faculty and graduate students may be able to access continuing education students for their research projects. As with research and consulting contracts, this is an individual benefit.

Table 3: Scholarly and Research Contributions of CEU

Figures in the first five columns are the percentage of respondents who selected that ranking. Some indicators were left blank and therefore not all percentages total 100. The final figure is the mean for the indicator and is calculated by adding the responses for each ranking, multiplying by 1 for essential, 2 for very important, 3 for important, and 4 for not important, and then dividing by the total responses for that indicator (NA responses are not included in the calculation of the mean). This provides an average level of importance across the respondents.

Contribution	Indicator	ES	VI	IM	NI	NA	Mean
Academic and professional expertise of CE staff provided to university and external agencies	List of specific instances	10	35	35	10	10	2.5
Support for community-based research (could be financial, staffing, or other support)	Anecdotal evidence of support	5	20	35	25	15	2.9
Publications and presentations by CE staff and faculty	List, including any awards	15	5	40	30	10	2.9
Distance education study guides commercially published as texts	Number of publications	10	15	15	50	10	3.2
Research related to teaching and course development (conducted by non-CEU faculty)	Anecdotal evidence from faculty	10	10	20	45	15	3.2
Other research conducted by CE staff and faculty	List of research projects and relevance	10		40	40	10	3.2
Research or consulting contracts awarded to CE staff and faculty	List of research projects	5	10	25	40	20	3.3
Assistance to research centres and institutes in disseminating their research	Number /type of programs organized and number of participants	5	11	21	47	16	3.3
Participation in joint research	List of projects and partners	5	10	20	45	20	3.3
Faculty research or consulting contracts obtained with support of programmers or because of their involvement in continuing education	List of projects, anecdotal evidence from faculty members	5	10	20	50	15	3.4
Provision of research subjects	Numbers of students who participated in what projects	5		30	50	15	3.5

ES Essential, *VI* Very important, *IM* Important, *NI* Not important, *NA* Not applicable

No additional indicators were suggested.

Because the main responsibility of CEUs is delivering programs rather than conducting research, the ratings in this category were generally lower than the previous ones. Research is also limited and often in a discipline (i.e., adult and continuing education) that is not well recognized by many institutions. CEUs with faculty status are more likely to be involved in research and, thus, may consider research contributions more significant than those without faculty status. This situation may have contributed to the variability in the rankings. The relatively high ranking for the academic and professional expertise of continuing education professionals may be explained by the resources provided to internal units and the increased reputation resulting from external groups seeking that expertise. The fairly high ranking for community-based research was somewhat surprising as the past two decades have seen a shift in continuing education to a more entrepreneurial focus (e.g., see Hass, 1992), with less emphasis placed on community development activities. However, this may be linked to the strategic contribution of supporting the university's social responsibility role, as well as to increasing institutional support from the community. The last two indicators support individual faculty members and, as above, may be ranked higher by them.

Strategic Contributions

This last category of contributions is somewhat mixed, as the indicators address various roles and directions of the university. Indicators include those that increase community support for the institution and influence its reputation locally, nationally, and internationally. They also include the support of strategic institutional directions, such as becoming a leader in learning technologies. This category may have the most potential for developing new ways of gaining support for CEUs within the university. Some of these indicators will also be specific to particular institutions (e.g., international activities, learning technologies).

Positive community and public relations: Most of the CEU's activities are directed to the external community, and many programs are developed in cooperation with community groups. In addition, as numerous program participants and instructors are only involved with the university through the CEU, many of its activities generate community support.

Build reputation as an innovator in learning technologies: With the growth of learning technologies, this is a strategic direction for some institutions.

Support university's social responsibility role: One way to gain support from and become a part of the community is to be a good "corporate citizen." Like public relations, many of the CEU's activities are directed to the "good" of the community (e.g., public programming, support of community-based research).

Meet public expectations for public programming from universities: Universities are public institutions, so many people expect them to offer programs of interest to the general public, at either a very low or no cost.

Build international linkages through development projects, increase international profile of university, and support sense of international responsibility: Many institutions are increasingly interested in international activities, partly because of the huge potential and demand for programs and projects (a source of new revenue and reputation). Their international activities may also serve to attract international students to the institution, another source of student recruitment.

Help meet provincially mandated FTE (full-time-equivalent) targets: Some provinces mandate the number of FTEs a university must serve in order to maintain its funding. Credit courses offered at non-traditional times and in non-traditional ways (e.g., at a distance) provide increased access to the institution for students who may not be able to attend as full-time day students. In some cases, courses offered via distance education may also be cheaper to deliver than face-to-face courses (a financial outcome).

Development of faculty expertise in on-line learning: This contribution supports the goal of being an innovator in learning technologies. It also benefits individual faculty members by increasing their skills.

Non-credit teaching experience of faculty increases their community profile: Non-credit teaching exposes faculty members to a large number of professionals and organizations, which may lead to their achieving further research, consulting, or teaching contracts. Again, this is an individual benefit rather than an institutional one, although it may also help to promote community relationships.

Table 4: Strategic Contributions of CEU

Figures in the first five columns are the percentage of respondents who selected that ranking. Some indicators were left blank and therefore not all percentages total 100. The final figure is the mean for the indicator and is calculated by adding the responses for each ranking, multiplying by 1 for essential, 2 for very important, 3 for important, and 4 for not important, and then dividing by the total responses for that indicator (NA responses are not included in the calculation of the mean). This provides an average level of importance across the respondents.

Contribution	Indicator	ES	VI	IM	NI	NA	Mean
Positive community and public relations	Positive news stories	35	25	30			1.9
	Letters from influential leaders	25	15	30	5		2.2
Build reputation as an innovator in learning technologies	List of publications, conference presentations, consulting requests, etc.	35	15	30	5	5	2.1
Support university's social responsibility role	Number/type of public programs	20	30	35	5		2.3
Meet public expectations for public programming from universities	Number/type of public programs	25	25	25	10	5	2.2
Build international linkages through development projects, increase international profile of university, and support sense of international responsibility	Number and type of international projects	20	20	30	5	10	2.3
	Number and home of domestic and international visitors	15	15	15	10	10	2.4
Help meet provincially mandated FTE targets	Number of FTEs in extension and distance education courses	30	10	10	30	5	2.5
Development of faculty expertise in on-line learning	Number of faculty taught/helped	20	20	25	20	5	2.5
Non-credit teaching experience of faculty increases their community profile	Anecdotal evidence from faculty	10	15	35	15	15	2.7

ES Essential, VI Very important, IM Important, NI Not important, NA Not applicable

Additional indicators suggested by respondents included: student recruitment and retention; good will (this could be considered part of positive community and public relations or social responsibility); publicity; support of off-campus university facilities; involvement of community members in the university; running a satellite campus (as indicated under programmatic contributions); the management of non-profit university entities such as the art gallery and child care centre; and serving on university committees and governing bodies.

The high rankings for public relations and social responsibility could be expected as continuing education has traditionally been seen as a public service activity. These types of indicators are also likely to be relatively common across most institutions. The use of learning technologies is a relatively new field that is expanding rapidly, and many institutions are pursuing opportunities in it. This also demonstrates the importance of supporting institutional initiatives and directions as it allows for a broader base of support, beyond public service. The relatively low ranking on FTE targets may be attributable to differences in provincial funding arrangements, as in the case of provincial grants based on the number of FTE students in the monetary category. Faculty profile is again an individual benefit.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The CEU's contributions to the university were categorized into four types: monetary, programmatic and teaching, scholarly and research, and strategic. A financial category allowed all monetary benefits to be collected in one place. Although the questionnaire responses indicated the highest support for outcomes that contribute the most money, the potential and range of lesser outcomes may not be well known or understood, and may serve to generate targeted support within the institution.

Programmatic and teaching contributions were designed to support the university's teaching mission, and the high value placed on those that contributed to regular teaching tends to support the feasibility of aligning CEUs with the teaching mission.

Scholarly and research contributions were designed to support the research mission but were generally valued lower than other categories. This is likely due to the emphasis placed on program development over research. This is an area where greater support may be generated from faculty members who come to recognize continuing educators as professionals.

The final category of strategic contributions included outcomes that support the external view of the university and that promote new initiatives and directions. This category both confirmed importance of the public service mission and suggested that supporting institutional initiatives is critical. Although the list of contributions is not definitive, it does provide a starting point for future research and for institutions interested in studying their own units.

Future Research

There is significant potential for future research in this field. Important outcomes were identified by the continuing education deans who responded to the questionnaire, but a number of other stakeholders and beneficiaries could be identified and consulted, including senior administrators, academic departments and faculties, ancillary units, and individual faculty members. As well, members of the Board of Governors (or equivalent body) may be able to generate additional strategic benefits, as they provide an external perspective to the university.

A comparison of these subgroups may provide information that would allow a targeted communication strategy that addresses the interests of different groups. Lauer (1997) argues that a communication strategy should take a marketing approach, that is, “determine the needs of your audiences and then develop a communication program that meets those needs” (p. 125). However, this must be done within the context of the values of the organization. “The most effective external messages will result from an alignment of audience or market need and the character and beliefs of the organization” (p. 125). This argument suggests that targeted communication within the institution may be more effective than a single message. A comparison may also suggest that an indicator of little interest to one group may be of value to another group.

Not all indicators, or even the categories, were totally clear to the respondents; thus, there is a need for further definition. In addition, because a “not applicable” option was omitted from the questionnaire, the applicability of the indicators across institutions is also unclear. Further explanations would also be useful for some of the findings. For example, the fairly high ranking of continuing education students who subsequently become credit students may be attributable to the potential financial contribution or the result of the potential to recruit new students. It would be useful to clarify and confirm or refute the proposed explanations.

Applying the results of this research in an institution is a natural goal for future research. As this study has provided a list of potential contributions, individual institutions could further define their own outcomes and indicators and assess the feasibility of collecting data on each. Such an effort would be a good indication of the usefulness of this study.

Recommendations for CEUs

Continuing education deans should first consider whether it is worth the time and effort to conduct their own studies. If such an effort is determined to be worthwhile, a steering committee might be struck to direct and conduct the research. This would ensure a broader range of perspectives and ideas, and may increase buy-in from both stakeholders and staff, which may subsequently make it easier to collect data. It is recommended that the committee include continuing education programmers, as they may be able to identify other contributions specific to their activities. It might also include representatives from senior administration, academic departments and faculties, ancillary units, and faculty members. If this is not possible, they should be consulted in order to identify outcomes that are important to them. The committee would decide which contributions are significant for their institution and would assess the feasibility of collecting data. Although some indicators may be important, if data collection is too difficult or too incomplete, it may not be worth including them. The final reporting should be targeted to the various stakeholder groups and should emphasize the benefits that are applicable to each.

It could be anticipated that this information may still “fall on deaf ears.” Many members of the university community are not supportive of continuing education, and may feel its contributions are not very important regardless of the strength of the data. However, a highly targeted communication strategy that speaks directly to the specific audience, as suggested by Lauer (1997), may help alleviate this. In addition, with the decentralized structure of the university, it is important to communicate with all levels of the institution. Finally, continuing education deans and programmers could communicate data from such a study whenever there is an appropriate opportunity. It may help CEUs build better relationships with other units, as well as with individual faculty members and senior administrators. Like water on a stone, the message may gradually wear away the resistance.

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BIOGRAPHY

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