



Continuing Education in Colleges and Universities: Challenges and Opportunities (New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, Number 140)

White, Ronald G.; and DiSilvestro, Frank R., eds.
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Book Review

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That continuing education (CE) was only recently added to many traditional programs makes it understandable that it has still to gain the respect of some departments in many colleges and universities. Certain trends - well-outlined in this book - have brought CE to the fore in the academy, and readers who have not recognized these trends will have to account for their institutions' tardiness in catching up. Ten essays chart these developments, each exploring some facet of the CE phenomena. The essays are more practical than speculative; they orient the reader to relevant knowledge about current trends and how best to implement a state-of-the-art CE program.

The economy and the technological boom are the major incentives for CE development, and the implications each has for such programs are well-covered in the essays. While disposable income has made CE attractive for the self-enrichment of a healthily aging population, retooling the present workforce to adapt to a changing economy indicates a significant need and opportunity for business and academia, respectively. Hence, CE's profitability must be considered more closely, advantageous as it is for revenue-conscious higher education. Lisa Braverman's essay explains why educators do well to note business practices (sometimes a loathed subject in academia), demographics, marketing, and innovation when designing CE programs. Nontraditional students will only increase in the near future, and effective marketing of CE will require innovation and nuance since marketing to nontraditional learners in the workforce differs significantly from traditional recruitment. To this end, some schools have enhanced their CE marketing departments, realizing that sophisticated use of social

media and a better understanding of adult learners' needs are more effective than the former "one size fits all" modes of recruitment based on criteria geared toward traditional students.

Rebecca Nichols's article addresses the role of the community college as a partner in economic development. Not only do these schools meet needs in retooling the workforce, but they also play a role in creating jobs. To this end, Nichols offers seven examples of innovative community college programs around the country.

The essays acknowledge online education as the greatest recent innovation affecting CE. While nontraditional students continue to prefer brick-and-mortar campuses, they are opting for online education (38 percent by one survey) for its efficiency, a trend productive of increased revenue streams but one yet to gain more widespread acceptance and improvement of delivery. MOOC impact is considerable and is discussed in several of the essays.

Another specific factor for CE is "Prior Learning Assessment" (PLA), or the acceptance of work and life experience (such as military service) in addition to or in lieu of "seat time" credit hours. While this practice is not new, Rebecca Klein-Collins and Judith B. Wertherin argue that it is fueled by adult learners' need to complete a degree quickly and to attract older workers. Left unanswered are questions about the merit of "life experiences" that cannot be readily measured in any way equivalent to classroom assignments.

Successful CE programs require the cooperation and understanding of their sponsoring institutions even as these programs keep in line with institutional missions. They also build lasting relationships with regional business, industry, and other entities requiring employees to keep updated certification. Such are the challenges and opportunities before CE programs everywhere.

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