

UAACCE Continuing Education Forum Position Paper/February 2004

Introduction. Continuing Education is a community outreach activity of colleges and universities. It offers credit, noncredit, and professional courses. Continuing education is known for flexible educational opportunities and for offering programs that enhance cultural and economic development within communities. Continuing education units share the common mission to deliver education and service to nontraditional learners; each unit's mission is unique as it works within the mission of its institution. Utah continuing education units cover a continuum of higher education activities from general-interest enrichment courses, to vocationally oriented courses taken for career enhancement, to courses that meet requirements for re-licensure, to technology delivered degree programs designed for part-time students.

Continuing Education Values.

- Learning is a lifelong endeavor.
- Higher education should be available to all students, including workers, parents, and rural populations. Continuing Education responds to this challenge by delivering instruction at extension sites, offering alternative schedules, and using technology to extend an institution's resources to the community.
- Higher education should be responsive to the wants and needs of its community. Continuing Education responds to this challenge by serving as an "incubator" for new programs.

Continuing Education Issues.

As advocates for nontraditional students, Continuing Education needs to:

- Collaborate with academic departments to deliver quality instruction in off campus settings in time slots outside the conventional school day.
- Increase noncredit programs for older adult learners as interest in lifelong learning increases.
- Frequently scan the marketplace to ensure it can respond to just-in-time workforce retraining needs.
- Reshape its role in the campus community as a services and outreach entity that supports academic departments.

Who Are We?

Continuing Education activities can be delineated into three broad categories:

NONCREDIT PROGRAMS. "Noncredit" refers to structured learning activities that contribute toward personal development and/or occupational training. Noncredit activities do not carry traditional college credit: noncredit courses and programs 1. are developed to meet community, business and industry needs; 2. serve all ages from youth through retirement; and 3. respond to market demand for content in timely subjects. Upon completion, students may receive a certificate, CEUs, or other professional credential; for some noncredit activities, there may be a credit option. Within the Utah System of Higher Education, noncredit programs may take the form of lifelong learning, conferences and workshops, certificate programs, and contract instruction for business and industry.

CREDIT PROGRAMS. Continuing education departments are, historically, responsible for credit programming including evening school, summer session, distance learning, study abroad, and intensive language programs. Many CE credit activities are very similar to credit classes developed by an academic department. Distance learning instruction, which cover teaching and learning events in which the student is separated from instructor and/or fellow learners, may have more unique qualities. Today, correspondence, broadcast television, videocassette, the Internet, and computer technologies are common delivery modes. Utah students may take a single class or earn full certificates and degrees through continuing education credit programs.

PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS. CE offers both credit and noncredit professional development opportunities from computer instruction to grant writing. These programs are prepared to respond to just-in-time workforce training and greatly support our communities. Professional programs may be developed for and available to a specific employer or may be open to the public.