

DEVELOPING A RETAIL MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY COMPETENCY-BASED PROGRAM: RETHINKING EDUCATION

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Competency based education is defined by the US Department of Education (USDE) as a transition away from seat time, in favor of a structure that creates flexibility, allows students to progress as they demonstrate mastery of academic content, regardless of time, place, or pace of learning (USDE, 2014). The USDE also says this type of learning leads to better student engagement because the content is tailored to their unique needs (USDE, 2014). But why does it matter to marketing educators?

Because of higher student engagement, cost factors, and the fact many students have some college, but no degree (Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, No date), this method of education could be the next “big thing” in education (Fain, 2013).

Many states such as New Hampshire, Michigan, and Ohio have adopted policies to encourage these types of programs (US Department of Education, 2014), while Universities such as Northern Arizona, Capella, and Washington Governor’s College are currently offering competency based programs, with success (Mendenhall, 2012).

Competency based education requires a shift in thinking—both from a systems perspective, and a faculty perspective. From a systems perspective, an entire university, college, and department must shift their traditional thinking. For example, since a competency based program isn’t tied to time such as quarters, the registrar must change processes to meet the needs of such a program. Financial aid must also change processes. In addition, marketing a competency based program is different, because the market for such a program is unlike that of a traditional student out of high school.

From the faculty’s perspective timing is also an obstacle as they too, must mentally eliminate time barriers for students in order to successfully adopt a competency based program. In addition, the role of faculty changes—from that of a lecturer to that of a coach and mentor to students. From a curriculum perspective, faculty must shift from thinking about courses to thinking about competencies, and implement reliable final assessments to measure learning.

This interactive special session will define competency based online programs, and discuss the model that the Central Washington University - Information Technology and Administrative Management (CWU-ITAM) department used to develop their Retail Management and Technology Bachelor of Science degree in just six months. Topics will include:

The presenters will:

- Define competency based education and its uniqueness
- Discuss various approaches and models for competency based education in the marketing field
- Present CWU-ITAM’s processes for and challenges of developing a competency based program in Retail Management and Technology in such a short time period
- Share lessons learned by CWU administrators, faculty, and staff during program planning and implementation
- Discuss and brainstorm the future of competency based education.

References

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