State of the Field: Postsecondary CBE in the US

In 2018, American Institutes for Research, in partnership with Eduventures® Research (a division of the National Research Center for College and University Admissions®), surveyed institutions of higher education across the United States to better understand how they are adopting and using competency-based education (CBE).

This survey builds on the 2016 & 2017 Deconstructing CBE reports, based on research conducted by Eduventures®.

Who were the **501** institutions that responded?

- 54% public
- 41% private non-profit
- 5% private for-profit

| 69% 4 year institutions | 31% 2 year institutions |

**430** are in the process of adopting or interested in adopting CBE

- at the planning stage
- offer competency-based courses only

**Institutions with programs offer a total of **512** certificate and degree programs**

- Undergraduate programs: 427
- Graduate programs: 85

- Nursing and computer sciences were the most commonly reported CBE program disciplines.

Which students are being served by CBE programs?

- 50% reported students of color
- 75% reported adults age 25 or older
- 50% reported students with prior credits

...make up at least half of their student population

In the last academic year...

- 44% had fewer than 50 students enrolled
- 16% had more than 1000 students enrolled

Note: to capture the diversity of CBE programs, we defined these as entire programs of study typified by at least one of the following: learning is measured in competencies; students advance between courses or complete the program based on mastering all required competencies; or courses or programs are substantially “self-paced” by students, with support.
What do schools think are the benefits of CBE?
What do institutions think are the barriers to adopting CBE?

The top benefits of CBE are perceived differently by institutions with programs and those without.

**With CBE programs**
- Increasing the **quality of students’ learning** by requiring students to demonstrate mastery of each competency
- Allowing institutions to **innovate** with teaching and learning

**Without CBE programs**
- Allowing students to **make their own choices** about pacing throughout the program
- Allowing institutions to **clarify the competencies** associated with courses/programs

**Barriers to CBE are perceived to be similar** except for the **lack of on-campus expertise** among institutions without programs.

- **57%** With CBE programs vs. **53%** Without CBE programs
- **56%** With CBE programs vs. **60%** Without CBE programs
- **50%** With CBE programs vs. **53%** Without CBE programs
- **58%** Without CBE programs

**Federal student aid regulations**
- **57%** With CBE programs
- **53%** Without CBE programs

**Institution’s business processes**
- **56%** With CBE programs
- **60%** Without CBE programs

**Program start up costs**
- **50%** With CBE programs
- **53%** Without CBE programs

**Lack of on-campus expertise**
- **36%** With CBE programs
- **58%** Without CBE programs

What might CBE look like in the future? **78%** of respondents believe the number of CBE programs nationally will grow in the next 5 years.

Has CBE implementation changed since 2016?

**89** institutions participating in this survey completed the Deconstructing CBE survey in 2016 fielded by Eduventures® and funded by Ellucian.

Among these 89 institutions . . .

**Adoption of the core elements identified in Deconstructing CBE has increased, although adoption remains below 33%**
- Direct Assessment
- Mapping competencies to seat time
- Learning outcomes at the program or course level
- Prior learning assessment for credit
- Self-pacing of courses and programs.

**Institutions describing themselves as “in the planning stage” of CBE implementation remained consistent around 38%**
- The share offering between one and five CBE programs increased by 10 percentage points.