The National Study of Non-Credit Course Activity

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Abstract

This paper presents preliminary results from the National Study of Non-Credit Course Activity, which is funded by a grant from the Lumina Foundation. This research examines how non-credit data are collected and used by institutions, state and federal agencies, and national associations. An online survey was administered to all state SHEEO offices and to a sample of 2,086 Title IV, degree-granting institutions. Interviews were conducted with key informants, including association and agency staff. The results are used to describe a national portrait of non-credit activity, to develop a standard definition, and to highlight emerging policy issues related to the use of non-credit data.

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Introduction

The Lumina Foundation has sponsored a variety of efforts to understand issues of equity and access for nontraditional students. This research paper describes the results of this work to date about non-credit course activity. It is part of a larger project housed at the University of Virginia concerning "Non-traditional Learners in Postsecondary Education: Emerging Pathways to Access and Success." With the data and information collected through this study, it is expected that policy analysts and researchers will better understand how the changing nature of institutional mission (as seen with burgeoning enrollment in non-credit course enrollments) is related to issues of access and economic productivity. It is hoped that a previously hidden portrait of postsecondary education will emerge, one which documents the large and growing area of non-credit learning.

Non-credit courses are a primary vehicle with which institutions provide workforce development, information technology (IT) training, and occupational/career education for non-traditional students entering or desiring mobility in the workforce. Many types of training are delivered as non-credit, short-term classes in a variety of formats and modes. While this varies with state resource allocation models, revenues from non-credit classes are generally recouped directly by public institutions that are starved for state appropriations. These offerings represent a much-needed infusion of discretionary income and are used to address the particular needs of the immediate community. They are also an attractive option for institutions interested in change, innovation, and serving the needs of non-traditional students. By focusing on practices and policies for data collection, it is hoped that this first-of-its-kind national study and portrait of non-credit course activity will guide the future of policy analysis about non-traditional students.

This study of non-credit activity focuses on three lenses:

(1) the *national perspective*, as seen through the data collections, surveys, and planning of the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and national higher education associations such as the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the American Council on Education (ACE), and The League for Innovation in the Community College (League);

(2) *the state perspective*, as seen through State Higher Education Executive Officer (SHEEO) organizations and the national SHEEO association; and

(3) *the institutional perspective*, documenting the availability of data and interest in non-credit course activity policies at Title IV, degree-granting, two- and four-year institutions.

This paper highlights key, preliminary findings from the study related to the growing interest in non-credit data as well as the availability, definition of, and reasons for collecting non-credit data.

Literature Review

One of the most critical issues facing postsecondary education is the tremendous increase in the amount of non-credit course activity. Non-credit courses are the most flexible and diverse of institutional offerings (Grub et al, 2002; Nock and Shults, 2001). They are one of the greatest levers which institutions have at their disposal to quickly respond to the needs of business and industry and their community (AACC, 2002; Harmon, 2003; Hickman, 1997). Non-credit courses potentially allow students to increase their job marketability and access to the market place (Adelman, 2000; Cantor, 2000; Flynn, 2002). While some states have attempted to collect these data, there is no national statistical portrait of the impact of non-credit classes in the United States (Jenkins and Boswell, 2002; UCEA, 2002). As expressed by Bailey, "we do not have a good sense of the overall size and importance of these activities at individual colleges" (2003, p. 17).

Cantor (2000) explains that accrediting agencies such as the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) have "formally recognized the value of noncredit continuing education to lifelong

learning and career development" to the point where continuing education units (CEUs) "have emerged as a medium for recognizing and documenting the successful completion of noncredit courses of study" (p. 51). Formal "continuing education" is not the largest segment of noncredit study, however. Other important forms of noncredit include workforce development and land grant extension activities. There are also thousands of corporate universities and businesses that provide training, for which there are scant data (Adelman, 2000).

At the end of the 1990's, Adelman documented that there is "a new, parallel universe of postsecondary credentials" and a new system of credentialing (2000, p. 1). These include vendor certification programs, skills upgrades, and self-improvement (Nock and Shults, 2001). A similar development occurred in the area of homeland security in the wake of the World Trade Center disaster of 9/11/01. Flynn et al (2003) examine the phenomenon of post-911 non-credit, "one-shot" training and the "rush toward meeting these education and training needs" (p. 1). For example, a new Certified Security Network Professional non-credit program focuses on firewalls and intrusion detection. Others teach non-credit classes about topics such as defense and countermeasures (Campbell and Hawthorne, 2003).

Workforce development efforts occur through "a plethora of entities" (Report of Joint Subcommittee, 1998) and touch many types of students. Many of these efforts are not coordinated through postsecondary institutions or agencies and are therefore not recorded as part of enrollment data. Bailey (2003) explains that "community colleges have enthusiastically developed programs to serve the workforce development needs of local employers and workers through customized training and non-credit programs" (p. 15). Bailey et al document the view of some community college staff that " many students, perhaps the large majority, are not seeking degrees and their needs are being met by non-credit courses or sequences of credit courses that do not necessarily result in degrees" (2001, p. 62). Vorhees and Lingenfelter, in their study of state policies for adult learning, estimate that "56% of the workforce needs some education beyond high school to do their jobs" and that the number is growing (2003, p. 4). Unfortunately, there are significant problems in consistency and coordination in the reporting of statewide

tracking systems for workforce development. Since reported data are not uniform, it is feared that "the Federal government will be unable to compare data across states" (Brustein, 1999, p. 15).

Methodology

A variety of activities are being undertaken as part of this research study. These include: (1) *surveys* (state and institution versions, conducted online and in print); (2) *interviews* (by telephone and in-person with federal, state, association, and institutional contacts); (3) *interviews with key informants* such as Peter Ewell of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) and Tom Flint of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL); (4) a comprehensive *literature review* about non-credit, workforce development, and land grant/extension programs; (5) a *review of existing datasets* (population and sample surveys by NCES, AACC, and others); (6) a *review of previous Lumina research* conducted by NCHEMS about unit record data; (7) a *review of Internet websites* about non-credit-related data; (8) collection of sample non-credit course catalogs; and (9) case studies of states and institutions.

National Perspective

Telephone and in-person interviews with national higher education associations were conducted to determine how important non-credit is to their organization and member schools, and what kinds of data and reports on non-credit activity are produced or used. These associations included AACC, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), ACE, the Association for Institutional Research (AIR), CAEL, the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), EDUCAUSE, the National Council for Research and Planning (NCRP), the Society for College and University Planning (SCUP), SHEEO, the League, and the University Continuing Education Association (UCEA).

Extensive dialogue was held with staff from NCHEMS about the study and the author visited NCHEMS twice, once for a meeting specific to the project and a second time to participate in planning for the NCHEMS Lumina follow-up project. NCHEMS collected extensive documentation as part of its

"Following the Mobile Student" project about statewide unit record data systems (Ewell et al, 2003). Peter Ewell arranged for the documentation about data dictionaries to be loaned to project staff, who reviewed the files for information about non-credit course activity

Additionally, the Government Accounting Office (GAO) announced in Fall 2003 that it is undertaking a study of workforce development at community colleges. Every attempt has been made to build a dialogue with the GAO to learn from this project and prevent duplication of effort. However, GAO guidelines do not permit dissemination of any results prior to the report's release to Congress.

Extensive dialogue was held with staff from the Postsecondary Division of NCES, particularly Associate Commissioner Dennis Carroll and IPEDS Director Susan Broyles. There appears to be great interest in a possible national collection of non-credit data by NCES.

State Perspective

An online and paper survey was mailed to 86 state organizations using mailing and email contact lists from NCHEMS and SHEEO. These represent all states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The survey was pilot tested by 15 state organizations at the SHEEO conference in May, 2003 and additional feedback was gathered from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), the State University of New York system office (SUNY), and the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS).

State surveys were mailed in the second week of August, 2003 after review by key informants such as Peter Ewell. Follow-up emails were sent in September and October, 2003. Many states responded using the online survey form and this version was also used for data entry. Additional follow-up phone calls were made to increase the response rate. Participants were encouraged to complete the survey online, but could complete and mail back the paper version if they chose.

Additional interviews and conversations were held with state officials and SHEEO staff such as Hans L'Orange and David Wright over the past years in order to build case studies of states which illus-

trate the tensions and problems inherent in collecting and using non-credit course data. Project staff met with SHEEO staff in Denver in Summer, 2003 and at the SHEEO/NCES Network Conferences held in May, 2003 and March, 2004. Telephone and in-person interviews were also held with officials from Illinois and Missouri.

Institutional Perspective

An online survey of active, Title IV, two and four-year, degree-granting institutions was conducted beginning in February, 2004. Using the new Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Dataset Cutting Tool, a dataset was cut for the project team to use. The sample was carefully analyzed so that it matched the IPEDS universe. Pilot testing of the online institutional survey was done with a small subset of institutions in November, 2003 at the Virginia Association for Management Analysis and Planning (VAMAP) conference in Williamsburg, VA. The institutional survey was administered from mid-February through May, 2004.

A special restricted license was obtained from NCES in order to send the institutional survey to IPEDS institutional Keyholders. This was applied for in December, 2003 and received in February, 2004 and required the implementation of an NCES-approved security plan. Analysis of the IPEDS Keyholder contact list for the sample of institutions found some contacts with many institutions listed under their responsibility. These contacts were telephoned to ask whether they wanted to complete the survey separately for each of their institutions, or as a whole. For example, the University of Phoenix has many campuses, but was expected to have the same policy toward non-credit across all of them. The Pennsylvania State University system, on the other hand, has a single contact person for all campuses. Penn State was predicted to vary somewhat by location, depending upon campus differences in mission, course offerings, and administrative information systems.

Follow-up emails were sent to maintain an adequate response rate. A complex system for tracking the various states of responses was developed as part of a “behind-the-scenes” web application. This included the opportunity for institutional contacts to change their contact information and reroute the survey

via email to another person. The online institution survey was designed based on lessons and data gleaned from the state survey. If possible, individual institution data from the sample will be weighted by Carnegie classification and control to calculate a national estimate of non-credit course activity. Other survey questions address issues such as the utility of existing administrative information systems.

Results

Table 1: Response rates by Carnegie classification within Control

	Respondents	**%**	**Sample**	**%**	**Population**	**%**
Public						
Associates	264	22.4%	496	23.8%	994	23.4%
Baccalaureate	23	2.0%	43	2.1%	82	1.9%
Masters	74	6.3%	143	6.9%	270	6.4%
Doctoral	54	4.6%	92	4.4%	165	3.9%
Missing/other	39	3.3%	89	4.3%	268	6.3%
Subtotal	454	38.6%	863	41.4%	1,779	41.9%
Private, for profit						
Associates	101	8.6%	209	10.0%	404	9.5%
Baccalaureate	5	0.4%	6	0.3%	12	0.3%
Masters	3	0.3%	5	0.2%	8	0.2%
Doctoral	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	0.0%
Missing/other	114	9.7%	157	7.5%	367	8.7%
Subtotal	223	19.0%	377	18.1%	793	18.7%
Private, nonprofit						
Associates	45	3.8%	75	3.6%	134	3.2%
Baccalaureate	179	15.2%	239	11.5%	477	11.2%
Masters	88	7.5%	160	7.7%	318	7.5%
Doctoral	24	2.0%	48	2.3%	90	2.1%
Missing/other	163	13.9%	324	15.5%	651	15.3%
Subtotal	499	42.4%	846	40.6%	1,670	39.4%
Total	1,176	100.0%	2,086	100.0%	4,242	100.0%

Response rates

For the state survey, the overall response rate is 94.2% (81 of 86). Item response rates within the respondent group are as high as 100% for some questions. Forty-seven states and the District of Columbia are represented. Agencies from Maryland, Ohio, and Texas were non-respondents. Of the 81 respon-

dents, the majority (47 or 58.0%) are responsible for both two- and four-year institutions; while 17 (21.0%) oversee only two-year schools and another 17 (21.0%) oversee only four-year schools.

For the institution survey, there is currently a 56.4% response rate (1,176 of 2,086). Information about Carnegie classification, control, and level was obtained from the IPEDS data for 2002. The Carnegie classifications are combined for similar types of schools. For example Master's I and Master's II institutions are combined into Master's. Schools without a current Carnegie classification are combined with specialized schools into a category called Missing/Other. The breakout by collapsed Carnegie classification, level, and control is described in Tables #1 and #2, which compare the response rate to the sample and to the total IPEDS population for Fall, 2002. Overall, these response rates suggest that the respondents are roughly comparable to the sample and to the population.

The sample of institutions was developed by the University of Virginia team working on other projects as part of this Lumina grant on non-traditional learners in postsecondary education. Some institutions in the IPEDS population for 2002 were closed or inactive in 2003. The sample of 2,086 schools was created by selecting every other institution in each category of interest. These sampling categories included collapsed Carnegie classification, control, and state, among other variables.

Table 2: Response rates by Level within Control

	Respondents	**%**	**Sample**	**%**	**Population**	**%**
Public						
Four or more years	172	14.6%	329	15.8%	669	15.8%
Two years, less than four	282	24.0%	534	25.6%	1,110	26.2%
Subtotal	454	38.6%	863	41.4%	1,779	41.9%
Private, for profit						
Four or more years	114	9.7%	145	7.0%	299	7.0%
Two years, less than four	109	9.3%	232	11.1%	494	11.6%
Subtotal	223	19.0%	377	18.1%	793	18.7%
Private, non-profit						
Four or more years	457	38.9%	775	37.2%	1,543	36.4%
Two years, less than four	42	3.6%	71	3.4%	127	3.0%
Subtotal	499	42.4%	846	40.6%	1,670	39.4%
Total	1,176	100.0%	2,086	100.0%	4,242	100.0%

The importance of non-credit

National perspective

Nationally, NCES is working to increase the use of IPEDS for policy analysis. As part of adding value to IPEDS, NCES proposed to calculate a new variable for instructional expenditures per student FTE. NCES also held an IPEDS Technical Review Panel (TRP) in February, 2004 to examine possible value-added variables. In the comments and feedback received back from both efforts, numerous concerns were raised about the calculation of productivity measures because they do not include non-credit course activity in the enrollment data.

Discussion at the IPEDS TRP meeting suggested that non-credit course activity is one of the leading reasons why data about instructional productivity, faculty, and financial data are inaccurate. Non-credit teaching faculty are included in faculty counts and instructional costs of IPEDS surveys, but non-credit student enrollment data related to these faculty and costs are not. Non-credit activity is rated as very important by the community college and adult education associations, including AACC, the League, and CAEL. ACE rated non-credit as an important issue.

Staff from SCUP, AIR, AASCU, and UCEA stated in interviews that non-credit is not very important to their mission or interest, except where they themselves provide non-credit instruction at their own conferences and professional development programs.

AACC recognizes that non-credit is a "very hot topic," especially in describing the role community colleges play in workforce development. AACC staff report that non-credit is too often associated with leisure studies such as basket weaving, when there is a tremendous amount of IT training offered. Another problem pointed out by AACC staff is that much non-credit training is done through contracts with businesses where students do not enroll individually. These students do not therefore appear in administrative information system and unit record reports. Non-credit courses are offered under flexible scheduling that does not fit traditional calendars for reporting. It is very difficult to measure the economic

impact of community colleges without a way to measure the amount and types of non-credit activities. Community colleges need data on non-credit to be able to "tell their story" and demonstrate how they successfully meet the needs of business and industry and serve their communities (Phillippe, 2003).

League staff feel similarly, reporting that they place "a great deal of importance" on non-credit and that lifelong learning must be a necessity for the U.S. to compete in the world economy. The League is very interested in the idea of creating transcripts of non-credit activity (Warford, 2003). Staff from CAEL report that students can be sitting side by side in the same class, while some are taking the course for credit and others for non-credit. This depends on the source of funding and the nature of the enrollment process and further exacerbates the question of data collection. There is enormous employer interest in non-credit (Flint, 2003). ACE is also interested in non-credit in order to help make the case for the impact and importance of community colleges (King, 2003).

In contrast, UCEA staff report that, while there is some interest in contract reporting, they are not interested in non-credit. To be a hot topic for postsecondary education, there must be interest in Congress and a tie-in to either costs or standards and non-credit does not have this appeal. Distinctions between credit and non-credit are not important, according to UCEA staff, so studies of non-credit are not worth "a hill of beans" (Kohl, 2003).

State perspective

Almost half (48.1%) of respondents (39 of 81) to the state survey report that non-credit course activity is important or very important to their agencies. Of these, 21 SHEEOs (25.9%) report that it is very important. These include Alabama, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. One interview with the state SHEEO office for North Carolina illustrates this perspective with the following statement: "It is critical that we begin capturing non-credit activity of community colleges… only then can we tell the whole story" (Brown, 2003).

In some states such as Virginia, there is a polarity of opinion about non-credit activity. The VCCS has collected and reported non-credit regularly over the years, though not recently. VCCS staff view non-credit as an important topic, though they have not formally collected non-credit data for a few years (McHewitt, 2003). SCHEV, the coordinating board for four-year and proprietary institutions, does not have much interest in non-credit, in part because it is not tied to issues of resource allocation (Massa, 2004).

Institutional perspective

At the institution level, 349 of 848 respondents (41.2%) report that non-credit course activity is important or very important. This response varies widely by Carnegie and control. Approximately 40.6% (128 of 315) of responding Associate's colleges report that non-credit is very important to them. This contrasts sharply with only 4.0% of Baccalaureate, 13.3% of Master's, and 10.9% of the Research/ Doctoral classification. Of the 390 public institutions which responded to this question, 258 (66.2%) report that non-credit is important (111) or very important (147).

When asked what percentage of their total institutional activity is non-credit, 47.6% of institutions could provide these data. The majority of Associates (56.8%) and Research/Doctoral schools (59.0%) could provide these data, compared to 38.6% of Baccalaureate and 45.5% of Master's. Most of these institutions are public (70.3%), with only 39.1% among private, not-for-profit and 20.6% among private, for-profit.

The definition of non-credit

Approximately 42.6% (20 of 47) state agencies report that they have a uniform definition of non-credit for their state. States and institutions were asked in their respective surveys what definitions of non-credit activity are used. Possible definitions include: (1) having no credit applicable toward an undergraduate or graduate degree, diploma, certificate, or other formal award; (2) not part of the academic curriculum; (3) offered through continuing education; (4) not supported by state funded formula; (5) not

appearing on a degree transcript; and (6) in a contract for business and industry. These data are displayed in the following table:

Table 3: Institutional and state agreement with definitions of non-credit

	Not applicable to degree	Not part of academic curriculum	Offered through Cont. Ed.	Not funded by formula	Doesn't appear on transcript	Contract for business & industry
Associates	50.5%	36.1%	41.0%	25.4%	30.7%	39.8%
Baccalaureate	45.4%	15.9%	13.5%	6.3%	14.0%	9.7%
Master's	46.7%	37.6%	38.2%	26.1%	33.3%	26.7%
Research/Doctoral	51.3%	32.1%	33.3%	26.9%	32.1%	35.9%
Private, for profit	26.0%	12.1%	3.1%	2.2%	7.2%	11.2%
Private, non-profit	39.9%	20.2%	19.0%	8.0%	17.4%	9.4%
Public	61.2%	44.9%	53.5%	35.9%	42.1%	50.2%
Total	45.5%	28.2%	29.3%	17.7%	25.0%	25.5%
State SHEEOs	77.6%	35.8%	49.1%	34.0%	35.8%	43.4%

The definition of non-credit varies by control. Except for baccalaureate institutions, it is consistent across collapsed Carnegie classifications. There is general agreement with the definition that non-credit is not applicable toward a degree or other formal award. Among public institutions, non-credit is usually defined as being offered through continuing education and in contracts with business and industry. Definitional statements about whether non-credit is part of the academic curriculum, funded by formula, or listed on transcripts do not appear to be accepted by many institutions.

The response of state agencies is consistent with the institutional responses, with strong support that non-credit is not applicable to a degree or formal award and some acceptance that it is offered through continuing education and as part of a contract for business and industry. However, the only definition consistently held by both states and institutions is that non-credit is not applicable to a degree.

An open-ended question on the two surveys asks states and institutions to provide their definition of non-credit. While these data are still being analyzed, at least one state agency cited the NCES definition. This definition defines non-credit as “A course or activity having no credit applicable toward a de-

gree, diploma, certificate, or other formal award" (IPEDS, 2004). This definition, however, may leave too much to interpretation. It may be better to focus on whether a course activity is academic in nature, requiring further delineation of the term "academic." For IPEDS, an academic program is "An instructional program leading toward an associate's, bachelor's, master's, doctor's, or first-professional degree or resulting in credits that can be applied to one of these degrees." Both IPEDS Glossary definitions hinge on the nature of the award after completion. This is not consistent with non-credit programs such as Cisco or Microsoft certification. These certification programs are offered for credit in some states and not-for-credit in others, even though the curriculum and award are identical.

The availability of non-credit data

Preliminary analysis suggests that 53.0% of responding state agencies collect data on non-credit activity (35 of 66). A number of reasons are given for why states collect non-credit data, including: quality assurance/accountability (5); funding (5); reporting requirements (4); other planning purposes (3); resource allocation (2); and as a result of computer system upgrades (2). Only two agencies report that they include data on private institutions in their collection of non-credit, California and the District of Columbia. Approximately 37.0% (30 of 81) state agencies collect non-credit data either by term or annually.

Asked whether they collect data on non-credit, the majority of institutions (64.1%) report that they do. This ranges from a high of 81.4% among Associates colleges, followed by Research/Doctoral (72.5%), Master's (64.0%), and Baccalaureate (38.0%). Most public institutions report that they collect data on non-credit (87.8%), compared to 43.3% of private, not-for-profit and 28.2% of private, for-profit schools.

The complexity of non-credit data

The majority of state respondents (71.4%) report that their data on non-credit course activity are clean and reliable (20 of 28). When asked why, they responded that the data are run through an edit process (2); are more reliable because they are linked with finance data (2); are standardized in format and

verified as error-free (2); and are part of a larger reporting system (2). Five agencies reported that the data collection process is inconsistent or incomplete for non-credit. Some of the explanations for this are that: "We are still in the infancy stages of collecting the data;" that "not all non-credit activity is reported;" that "programs have inconsistent reporting criteria;" and that they are "changing definitions."

The greatest proportion (83.0%) of institutional respondents to this item reported that their data are clean/reliable, with Associates at 87.9%, Baccalaureate 83.6%, Master's 81.4%, and Research/Doctoral 66.7%. Public, private for-profit, and private not-for-profit institutions all reported approximately the same level of data reliability, (83.5%, 87.8%, and 81.7% respectively).

The state survey included a question about the types of non-credit data which are collected. Among the 31 respondents to these items, a number of different variables are documented as available as part of administrative information systems. In rank order by the percentage responding, these include headcount (100.0%), delivery method (89.5%), the number of courses (80.6%), the number of hours (70.4%), the number of activities (64.0%), topic (64.0%), discipline (61.5%), location (62.1%), student information (58.3%), Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) codes (56.0%), and instructor (52.0%). Ranked by the number of state agencies which include these data, the highest include: headcount (31), number of courses (25), number of hours (19), and delivery method (17).

It was hoped that the institutional data collected for this project could be used to calculate a national estimate for the amount of non-credit activity offered. The responses are inadequate for this purpose. However, another interesting question is addressed in the data: How many schools are able to report non-credit by certain types of data? As Table #4 suggests, most schools are unable to provide estimates of non-credit data. Public schools are much better prepared to do so, though the reporting requirements of private, for-profit institutions would preclude an interest in this analysis.

Associates and Research/Doctoral institutions are in most cases the best prepared to count non-credit activities. Of these, the number of students served through workforce development, the number of workforce development activities, and the duplicated and unduplicated headcount of non-credit enroll-

ments are the most frequently available data. Data on CEUs are best reported by Research/Doctoral institutions (21.8%), followed by Master's (15.8%), but noticeably less by Associates colleges (11.5%). Public institutions provide much greater estimates of CEUs (20.3%) than do privates. Data on extension activities are mostly available at Research/Doctoral institutions, which is obviously linked to the land grant mission held by some public research universities.

Table 4: Institutional ability to report non-credit data by type

	Work-force number	Work-force activities	Extension number	Extension activities	Head-count	Duplicated headcount	Other activities	CEUs
Associates	29.3%	20.2%	7.8%	6.3%	26.6%	25.4%	21.7%	11.5%
Baccalaureate	8.2%	8.2%	1.0%	1.0%	13.5%	10.1%	15.0%	3.9%
Master's	16.4%	12.1%	9.1%	5.5%	20.6%	13.3%	18.8%	15.8%
Research/Doctoral	21.8%	21.8%	12.8%	11.5%	20.5%	21.8%	26.9%	21.8%
Private, for profit	5.8%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	0.9%	1.3%	0.4%
Private, non-profit	6.4%	4.8%	3.4%	2.6%	13.2%	8.4%	11.0%	5.8%
Public	37.9%	29.7%	11.5%	9.3%	34.1%	31.7%	32.4%	20.3%
Total	18.5%	14.2%	5.9%	4.7%	19.3%	16.0%	17.4%	10.4%

A separate question asked schools about whether they collect data on CEUs. The majority of Research/Doctoral (58.8%) and Master's (51.4%) institutions collect CEU data, whereas only 45.8% of Associates and 19.7% of Baccalaureate schools do. The majority of public institutions (59.5%) collect CEU data, where only 24.1% of private, not-for-profit and 32.6% of private, for-profit do. The discrepancy between this survey item and the previous one dealing with reporting by type suggests a possible problem with the questionnaire language.

The institutional survey asked schools to estimate the percentage of non-credit activities by type. These include four categories: (1) existing courses delivered on-site; (2) existing courses delivered off-site; (3) courses customized to business/industry needs delivered on-site; and (4) courses customized to business/industry needs delivered off-site. Table #5 documents the results and suggests that public institutions, in particular Associates and Research/Doctoral institutions, are best able to respond to this question. Research/Doctoral institutions lead the way with existing courses delivered on- and off-site, but Associates colleges lead the way with customized courses, both on- and off-site. Almost a third of re-

sponding Associates colleges provide customized non-credit courses to business and industry, either on-site (31.7%) or off-site (31.2%).

Another institutional survey question asked respondents what percentage of their non-credit courses are delivered using technology. Three levels of utilization are broken out as follows: (1) classroom courses with no technology; (2) a hybrid of classroom and technology; and (3) all technology-based. As Table 6 suggests, public institutions are much more involved than privates in providing these non-credit opportunities. In the delivery of existing and custom courses to meet the needs of business and industry, Research/Doctoral institutions lead the way, followed by Associates colleges. Approximately 34.6% of Research/Doctoral institutions provide non-credit courses that utilize a hybrid of technology and classroom experiences, followed by 25.6% of Associates colleges.

Data on non-credit courses delivered completely with technology are provided by 26.9% of Research/Doctoral and 20.7% of Associates institutions. Despite the mission of online, private for-profit programs such as the University of Phoenix, only 4.0% of private, for-profit institutions offer non-credit courses completely through technology, compared to 30.0% of publics. Other statements from University of Phoenix staff reinforce that its focus is primarily on credit courses (Paden, 2004).

Table 5: Institutional data on non-credit activity by type and purpose

	Existing on-site	**Existing off-site**	**Custom on-site**	**Custom off-site**
Associates	33.2%	26.8%	31.7%	31.2%
Baccalaureate	9.7%	5.8%	7.7%	5.8%
Master's	20.0%	20.6%	19.4%	16.4%
Research/Doctoral	35.9%	32.1%	28.2%	29.5%
Private, for profit	6.7%	3.6%	7.2%	3.1%
Private, non-profit	11.0%	6.0%	6.2%	4.8%
Public	42.5%	37.4%	41.4%	40.3%
Total	22.4%	17.7%	20.0%	18.2%

Table 6: Institutional data on utilization of technology in non-credit

	Courses w/ no tech	Courses w/ hybrid tech	Courses w/ all tech
Associates	30.0%	25.6%	20.7%
Baccalaureate	15.0%	13.5%	5.3%
Master's	26.7%	19.4%	16.4%
Research/Doctoral	38.5%	34.6%	26.9%
Private, for profit	6.3%	4.9%	4.0%
Private, non-profit	15.6%	11.0%	5.4%
Public	40.7%	35.9%	30.0%
Total	23.6%	19.5%	14.6%

Funding issues

Approximately 17.5% (10 of 57) responding state agencies state that funding is provided based on non-credit. This is lower than the result published by the Education Commission of the States (ECS) 1999 Community College Finance Policy Survey, which found that 46% of respondents (21) have policies where non-credit generates state support (ECS, 2000).

A comparable number of institutions (17.3%, or 128 out of 739) report in the institution survey that they receive state funding based on non-credit activity. These institutional responses vary by collapsed Carnegie classification and control. Among institutions classified as Associates, 37.8% (107) of the 283 respondents to this question report that they receive state funding for non-credit, in contrast to Baccalaureate (2.6%), Master's (7.5%) and Research/Doctoral (6.1%). Public institutions (34.7%) are the greatest number receiving state funding for non-credit, as expected, with negligible responses for private for-profit and private not-for-profit.

The following state agencies report that they incorporate state funding for non-credit: California, Georgia, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, and Utah. In each of these states, institutions also reported that they receive state funding. However, other states are reported in the institutional survey as providing funding for non-credit, suggesting that the language of the question was not clear to respondents.

A clear problem for policy-makers, according to institution survey respondents, is that while non-credit "produces enough money to more than cover its promotion and production costs, it does not fully cover the salaries and benefits of the staff." Funding when it does take place for non-credit is substantially below that for credit, though "the basic cost of non-credit instruction is similar to credit." Too often, colleges "do not have the funds to pay the personnel needed to provide non-credit courses to our community" and there is "less and less financial support for non credit courses offered for workforce development purposes and enrollment in these has plummeted as the grant funding for them has decreased."

Administrative information systems

Among state respondents, 78.1% (25 of 32) report that non-credit data are available as student or course unit record data. The NCHEMS Lumina-funded study about "Tracking the Mobile Student" collected folders of information that included data dictionaries for 52 state organizations. Of these, only 7 agencies (13.5%) in 6 states collect information about non-credit as part of their unit record systems. These include Florida, Massachusetts, New York, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Utah. Four states collect non-credit student data at the unit record level - Florida, Massachusetts, New York, and Tennessee. Two collect course data - New York and Utah. Utah also collects non-credit data by budget code and Oklahoma obtains data by type of group served, focus and format of activity, and geographic origin.

A large number of institutions report that their unit record data systems include information about non-credit. The least utilized unit record system is facilities, although 56.0% of public institutions report that facilities unit record data on non-credit courses are collected. The highest rates of student, course, and facilities unit record data collection are among Associates colleges and Research/Doctoral institutions.

Table 7: Institutional data on non-credit collection in unit record data by type

	Student unit record data	Course unit record data	Facilities unit record data
Associates	80.6%	82.8%	51.8%
Baccalaureate	52.0%	54.9%	26.5%
Master's	59.3%	70.7%	30.8%
Research/Doctoral	78.3%	84.8%	48.6%
Private, for profit	19.7%	18.3%	3.1%
Private, non-profit	52.4%	55.3%	25.4%
Public	84.3%	90.1%	56.0%
Total	64.9%	68.7%	37.9%

Asked to document their specific administrative information system, almost half (53.6%) of all schools (630 of 1,176) name some type of software. The majority of schools employ local, hybrid, or other software. Among the vendor software installed, SCT and Datatel are reported most frequently. There are no Research/Doctoral institutions with Datatel, but 12.8% of them have SCT. Associates colleges rely on either Datatel (8.8%) or SCT (8.5%) when local/hybrid/other systems are not listed. The greatest number of respondents from private, for-profit institutions (10.8%) report that they use Oracle, though few others do. SAP was rarely listed.

Table 8: Institutional data on administrative information system software

	Datatel	Oracle	PeopleSoft	SAP	SCT	Local/ Hybrid & Other
Associates	8.8%	0.7%	5.4%	0.2%	8.5%	36.1%
Baccalaureate	7.2%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	9.2%	33.8%
Master's	10.3%	1.2%	3.0%	0.0%	9.7%	37.0%
Research/Doctoral	0.0%	1.3%	3.8%	0.0%	12.8%	42.3%
Private, for profit	0.0%	10.8%	1.3%	0.4%	1.8%	17.9%
Private, non-profit	7.8%	0.2%	0.8%	0.0%	5.4%	35.7%
Public	9.0%	1.1%	7.3%	0.0%	12.6%	41.4%
Total	6.8%	2.6%	3.4%	0.1%	7.5%	34.5%

Conclusions

The results of this first-ever National Study of Non-Credit Course Activity suggest that non-credit activity is an important issue for many state agencies and many institutions. It is very important to public institutions, particularly community colleges. There is relatively little interest in or ability to report on non-credit among private institutions, especially for-profits.

Nationally, postsecondary associations such as AACC, ACE, and CAEL want more data on non-credit so that they can better tell the story of how community colleges are meeting the needs of business and industry and the community. The possibility of NCES collecting data on non-credit as part of IPEDS is being discussed and is receiving support from the AIR and the higher education association community. It is hoped that with more data about non-credit, other output measures used for productivity such as student FTE will be more accurate. The results of the forthcoming GAO survey of community college workforce development data are eagerly awaited.

It is clear from the literature review and interviews with key informants that there is little previous research or data collection in this area. Some states and agencies such as California, Illinois, North Carolina, and SUNY have reported on non-credit data for years. Many others have never collected this type of data. In some states such as Virginia, there is a polarity of opinion between two- and four-year coordinating boards about the importance of non-credit data, in large part because these data are not tied to resource allocation models. Only 10 agencies report that non-credit activity is state-funded.

The focus of research/doctoral and master's institutions is less on non-credit and more on continuing education and awarding CEUs. Many universities have extensive programs and administrative offices for continuing education and associations, while community colleges often have multiple offices with separate responsibilities for workforce development, continuing education, evening programs, and non-credit. A greater percentage of community colleges report large amounts of on- and off-site customized training for business and industry. Community colleges trail research/doctoral institutions slightly in

their use of technology for non-credit courses, but they have much higher levels of technology utilization than do Baccalaureate or Master's institutions.

Only a handful of data elements about non-credit could be provided in the survey of institutions. The most available data elements are: duplicated and unduplicated headcount enrollment; number of workforce development activities; delivery method; and number of hours.

Non-credit data are excluded from most states' unit record data systems. At the institution level, most public institutions report that non-credit data are included in their unit record data systems, including student, course, and facilities data. Based on this availability, SHEEO agencies should consider adding non-credit to their unit record data collections in order to help move forward the idea of a federal, non-credit data collection and to assist in developing standards.

Most non-credit data are considered by institutions to be clean and reliable, though there are expected problems with definitions and coding in administrative information systems. It is somewhat surprising that more schools do not report that they collect non-credit data by CIP code. This is of critical importance to understanding the changing nature of higher education, particularly for tracking increases in technology training. This lack of data is probably due to the nature of business practices in non-credit course offerings, including payments through third-party business contracts in which students do not actually enroll individually and therefore no administrative information system records are created for these enrollments.

In order to conduct a national collection of non-credit data, it is necessary that a more accepted, standard definition be developed. Most institutions and states agree with the statement that non-credit activity is "not applicable toward a degree or formal award." Other definitional statements vary in acceptance between public and private institutions. Public institutions focus on how non-credit is usually offered through continuing education and through contracts with business and industry. However, these three statements cannot be combined to create a coherent definition suitable for all types of institutions.

The pioneering examples of SHEEOs such as the North Carolina Community College System and the State University of New York should be recognized as best practices for collecting and reporting on non-credit. The problems of states such as Missouri, which are very interested in workforce development but have disparate offices for collection and reporting, should also be examined to understand the data issues which are involved. While regulations for reporting are met in order to receive funding, non-credit data are scattered across various state entities and agencies and across various institutional offices and there is a great risk that the results will not be uniform or consistent.

Interest in non-credit is not necessarily tied to whether it is state-funded. Despite high levels of rhetoric about the importance of higher education to economic development, there is wide variation between states in the value they place on data about non-credit, particularly for workforce development. The interest of community colleges and research/doctoral institutions is consistent and predictable, given their mission and service role. The variation between states may be due to different opinions about who should subsidize the cost of non-credit education and who should pay the true cost of training.

Overall, important information about non-credit data has emerged from this research and new areas for study have been highlighted. This focus on non-credit has the potential to significantly improve productivity measures of for-credit student enrollment. Non-credit data help tell the story of how public institutions, particularly community colleges, are meeting the needs of business and industry and workforce development. There are already a great deal of non-credit data available at the institutional level which can be tapped for state and federal policy analysis. Without data about the amount and type of non-credit activity, the portrait of postsecondary education is incomplete and the complex relationship between states, institutions, the labor market, and the economy is less than fully understood.

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