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Spring April, 2015

Certifying Enrollment Management Professionals

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/ctremblay/13/
Certifying Enrollment Management Professionals
By Dr. Christopher W. Tremblay

Most current professionals who serve in an enrollment management leadership capacity likely were trained “on the job,” or at professional development events, primarily because credit-bearing credentials, degrees, and other formal programs were non-existent (Phair, 2014). However, that landscape has since changed and now there are multiple ways for enrollment management professionals to receive a formal education to enhance one’s enrollment management skill set. This article is designed to introduce and review those current academic offerings that provide credibility to the field of enrollment management.

The primary training categories include: college admissions counseling, enrollment management, financial aid/financial planning, and college access and success. This article will highlight a set of 35 non-credit and credit-bearing offerings: 12 certificates, 15 credentials, three online programs, one endorsement, one specialist designation, and three master’s degree concentrations. It expands information collected and reported by Young in 2012. For each type of training, information about courses, admission requirements, cost, and unique aspects are reported. Every attempt has been made to capture all of the known offerings available at this time.

**Certification Defined**
Certifying enrollment management professionals has yet to be exactly formalized. To certify means to make content official and/or genuine (Merriam Webster, n.d.). Such certifying processes are designed to validate one’s knowledge. Throughout educational history certificate programs have provided a body of knowledge in various academic disciplines. According to Cherif (2000), “A certificate program is a sequence of courses constituting a specific number of credit units or classroom hours that provides instruction in a coherent body of knowledge with a specialized field, and leads to the attainment of a specified set of learning objectives” (p. 57).

Holt (1991) points to the practicality and relevancy of certificate programs and that they “focus on areas of specialized knowledge or information and contain a number of courses and hours to meet the occupational, professional, or personal improvement needs of well-defined audiences” (p. 4).

All of these trainings offered within the field of enrollment management are designed to share that specialized knowledge and enhance the skill set of professionals working within this field.

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COLLEGE ADMISSIONS COUNSELING OPTIONS

In college admissions, there are six credit-bearing certificates, two online program offerings, and one forthcoming specialist.

Graduate Certificates in College Admission Counseling

Since 1990, graduate certificates in college admission counseling have been available in the United States (Tremblay, 2014). As of 2014, they are located at six different institutions in three states (Tremblay, 2014). These programs are offered at Eastern Michigan University, Hamline University (St. Paul, Minnesota), the University of California-Berkeley, University of California-Los Angeles, University of California-Riverside, and the University of California-San Diego (Tremblay, 2014). The four programs offered through the University of California system schools offer a post bachelor’s certificate; whereas Eastern Michigan University (EMU) offers a post-masters/concurrent master’s degree certificate (Tremblay, 2014). The EMU certificate is uniquely called a Postsecondary Planning Specialist and is really targeted at school counselors rather than higher education professionals (Tremblay, 2014). These certificate programs range in price from $1,600 to $13,000 (Tremblay, 2014). These programs are targeted for college admissions officers and others seeking this type of knowledge (Tremblay, 2014). Practicums in the certificate programs are prevalent, but differ greatly in format and expectations (Tremblay, 2014).

The readings used among the courses in the certificate programs are varied except for a reliance on one single textbook. The Fundamentals of College Admission Counseling textbook authored and published by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) is the most common reading among all certificate programs (Tremblay, 2014). Currently, it is the only designated textbook developed for these certificate programs.

The certificate program courses vary in number and subjects and the number of courses required to earn the certificate ranges from three to seven (Tremblay, 2014). The topic of college admissions is instructed in 100% of the programs (Tremblay, 2014). This is followed by a career planning course in all but one of the programs, a counseling course in some of the programs, and a financial aid course in half of the programs (Tremblay, 2014). Individuals who are or have been practitioners in the areas related to college counseling are primarily serving as the instructors of the courses in the certificate program (Tremblay, 2014). Graduate certificates were once also offered at Suffolk University and the University of California-Davis, but those programs have since closed (Tremblay, 2014).

Two Online Program Offerings

The latest university to offer training in college admissions and college counseling is Rice University (Rice, 2014a). In Fall 2013, Rice began offering an online program called “Fundamentals of College Counseling” (Tremblay, 2014). Rice’s Center for College Readiness offers this four-module training in a one-month time period at a cost of $475 (Rice, 2014b). While no graduate credit is offered, Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credits or Continuing Education Units (CEU) are available (Rice, 2014b). The four module topics include Intro to College Counseling, Exploring Colleges, Financial Aid & Scholarships, and The Admissions Process (Rice, 2014b). The Center’s newest online program is called “Undergraduate Admissions Process,” and it “explains the factors that go into the ‘holistic review’ process of highly selective colleges and universities in the United States” (Rice, 2014c, n.p.). The four module topics are labeled Objective Data, Subjective Data, Special Variables, and Holistic Review (Rice,
Both educational programs offered through Rice (2014a) are online only. Rice University (2014a) indicates these programs are available for all types of educators, including teachers.

**ASCA College Admissions Specialist**

Adding to four other specialist designations, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2014) is launching a new College Admissions Specialist in November, 2014. The cost to earn this specialist designation is $99 and is valid for five years (ASCA, 2014). Because this is a forthcoming offering, limited information is available at this time. According to the ASCA website, this specialist designation “gives you the information and knowledge you need to help your students during the college search and admission process” (2014, n.p.). Five continuing education units (CEUs) are available with this specialist offering (ASCA, 2014).

Altogether, these nine certificate programs, online programs, and specialist designation provide training to help professionals assist students to prepare for and enter a postsecondary institution.

**ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT OPTIONS**

In the specific field of enrollment management there are four certificates, one endorsement, and two master’s degree concentrations (AACRAO, n.d.a; USC CERPP, n.d.a; Bay Path, 2014b; Bay Path, 2014c; ACU, 2014a; University of Miami, 2014c; Vanderbilt, 2014).

**AACRAO SEM-EP**

The American Association for Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers (AACRAO, n.d.a) offers a Strategic Enrollment Management Endorsement Program (SEM-EP). This endorsement, referred to on the AACRAO website as a “professional certification” is a non-credit bearing notation (AACRAO, n.d.a). AACRAO began this program in 2012 and describes this program as a “self-paced professional development program and career advancement track for in-service enrollment service professionals” (personal communication, J. Head, September 29, 2014; AACRAO, n.d.a; AACRAO, n.d.b). AACRAO’s website indicates the curriculum was approved by leading enrollment professionals (AACRAO, n.d.a).

There are five requirements to enroll in this program: five years of experience in the SEM field, earned at least a bachelor’s degree, employed in the field, admission application endorsed by a supervisor or mentor, and a one page vita/resume (AACRAO, n.d.c).

The curriculum requires individuals to complete four main elements: enrollment management online course, four on-demand webinars, field visits, and a capstone research project (AACRAO, n.d.b). As an option, students can substitute AACRAO’s online course, SEM 201, for the capstone research project (AACRAO, n.d.d). The capstone research project “focuses on tracking and analyzing a local population of students from the candidate's institution and concludes by reporting conversion outcomes” (AACRAO, n.d.d). Individuals can select a retention study or a prospective new student study for the capstone project (AACRAO, n.d.d).

According to the AACRAO website, there are 13 enrollment management professionals who serve as the faculty for this program (AACRAO, n.d.e). The tuition cost for this program is $1,799 for AACRAO (n.d.f) members and $2,099 for non-members. Students will incur additional travel costs for the field visits, especially if the AACRAO Strategic Enrollment Management conference is used to fulfill that requirement (AACRAO, n.d.b). The field visits to college campuses are expected to last six hours: two hours in Admissions, two hours in the Registrar’s Office, and two hours in the Enrollment Management area (AACRAO, n.d.h). A field experience and peer review form identifies the 15 types of information
that must be gained from these visits (AACRAO, n.d.h). According to Joe Head, the SEM-EP advisor, individuals pursuing this endorsement are enrolled from both public and private colleges, including Canada and most are “upper management level individuals holding doctoral degrees” (personal communication, September 29, 2014). A unique feature of this program is that graduates of this endorsement are added to the “AACRAO SEM-EP web registry” (AACRAO, n.d.b). This web registry will be a publicly-available webpage within the AACRAO/SEM-EP website (personal communication, J. Head, September 29, 2014). While no individual has earned the endorsement yet, AACRAO expects to graduate the first students in December 2014 (personal communication, J. Head, September 29, 2014).

**USC Certificate: Leadership in Enrollment Management**
The Center for Research, Policy and Practice (CERPP) at the University of Southern California offers an online certificate program in “Leadership in Enrollment Management” (USC CERPP, n.d.a). It was launched in 2012 and individuals from 24 different schools have completed the certificate (USC CERPP, n.d.e). According to the CERPP website, the program was designed for “emerging leaders in the profession” (USC CERPP, n.d.a). This program is thirty weeks and costs $10,000 (USC CERPP, n.d.b).

The curriculum is divided into three sessions (USC CERPP, n.d.c). The first session covers the topics of: enrollment management in the societal context; information and knowledge management; and enrollment management in the institutional context (USC CERPP, n.d.c). The second session covers pricing and aid policy; college admissions policy and practice; retention organization; and leadership (USC CERPP, n.d.c). The third session comprises case studies, which includes the application of theory and content, a professional development plan, and a review of professional portfolio (USC CERPP, n.d.c). One of the program highlights is complimentary registration to the annual Los Angeles conference hosted by CERPP (USC CERPP, n.d.a).

According to the Center’s website, students enrolled in this certificate program are expected to spend five hours a week on the material (USC CERPP, n.d.c). The application process involves an online application, a resume, a personal statement and one letter of recommendation (USC CERPP, n.d.d). Sixteen different faculty teach in this certificate program (USC CERPP, n.d.f). Fifteen Continuing Education Units (CEUs) are also available for completing the certificate program (USC CERPP, n.d.b).

**Certificate in Enrollment Management from Noel-Levitz and Bay Path University**
Bay Path University (2014a; 2014b) is located in Longmeadow, Massachusetts and it offers a graduate-level enrollment management certificate that is comprised of five courses. Four required three-credit hour courses include: The Contemporary College Student, Enrollment Management Principles and Practices, Student Personnel Services in Higher Education, and Higher Education Marketing and Communications (Bay Path, 2014b). Students may choose one elective from among 12 choices (Bay Path, 2014b). The certificate can be earned alone or while pursuing a master’s degree (Bay Path, 24, July, 2014). It is referred to as the “Noel-Levitz Graduate Certificate in Enrollment Management” and it is an 18 credit-hour-program (Bay Path, 24, July, 2014). According to the fact sheet, the curriculum focuses on six areas: “Introduction to enrollment management, financial aid, technology, retention, marketing, and strategic enrollment management planning” (Bay Path, 24, July 2014, p. 5).

This online certificate originated well before it was inherited by Bay Path University. In fact, this certificate is considered a pioneer in online enrollment management credentialing (personal communication, B. Keener, October 4, 2014). It began through the University of Florida’s Department of Educational Leadership in conjunction with Noel-Levitz (personal communication, B. Keener, October 4, 2014). Dr. Barbara Keener served as the lead faculty member in this cutting-edge curriculum at that
time. Keener co-designed the program with Candace Vancko (personal communication, B. Keener, October 4, 2014). In 2005, Capella University in Minneapolis, Minnesota assumed responsibility for offering what became Post Master’s Certificate in Enrollment Management through the year 2013 (personal communication, B. Keener, October 4, 2014). This certificate was launched as a stand-alone certificate, but could also be integrated with the pursuit of a master’s or doctoral degree at Capella (personal communication, B. Keener, October 4, 2014).

**Enrollment Management Concentration at Bay Path University**

Bay Path University (2014c) also offers an enrollment management concentration in its master of science in higher education administration program. It is one of four concentrations (Bay Path, 2014c). According to the website, the enrollment management concentration is created for individuals interested in working in college admissions, financial aid, and enrollment marketing (Bay Path, 2014c). The website indicates that students will learn about: “the fundamentals of student recruitment, changing demographics, the dynamic between admissions and financial aid, federal aid policy, and the marketing of colleges and universities to prospective students and families” (Bay Path, 2014d, n.p.). The concentration has eight required core courses and four elective courses. Students who wish to earn the Noel-Levitz certificate with the concentration have a list of four required courses in place of four elective courses (Bay Path, 2014, July 24, p. 3). This concentration originated at Capella University (personal communication, B. Keener, October 4, 2014).

**Certificate in Higher Education Administration/Enrollment Management (U of Miami)**

The University of Miami (2014a) offers a Higher Education Certificate Program featuring an enrollment management track. This 12-credit hour certificate requires four courses, including two required courses: Enrollment Management Theory and Practice, as well as Advanced Seminar in Enrollment Management (University of Miami, 2014b). According to the University of Miami, this certificate was created for master’s-degreed professionals interested in enhancing their skill set (University of Miami, 2014b). Students enrolling in this certificate will be exposed to these elements: “recruitment and admissions, financial aid and scholarships, market and institutional research, student employment and career planning, records and registration, academic advising, and support services…” (University of Miami, 2014a). Three areas within the University of Miami (2014a) collaborate to offer this credential: School of Education, School of Business Administration, and the Division of Enrollment Management.

**Certificate in Enrollment Management at Abilene Christian University**

Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas offers a 12-hour graduate certificate in enrollment management, which began in Spring 2014 (personal communication, J. Morris, September 16, 2014). While the courses are offered online, the program requires a two-day residency at the Disney Institute in Anaheim, California in the month of May (ACU, 2014a). Prospective students can start four different times of year: May, June, August, or October (ACU, 2014b). The titles of the four required courses are: Foundations of Enrollment Management, Approaches to Marketing, Recruitment, and Selection; Pricing and Financial Aid in Enrollment Management; and Retention and College Student Success (ACU, 2014b). Part of the admission requirements include: “Students should be currently employed with an enrollment management organization or have at least one year of experience working in a university admissions office” (ACU, 2014a). The cost to complete the certificate is $9,200, plus an estimated additional $800 for the cost of the residency (i.e., airfare, hotel, meals, and entertainment) (ACU, 2014c; ACU 2014d). The two-day residency features a Disney seminar on quality service (day one) and a reflection on all elements (day two) (ACU, 2014d). According to the ACU website, three faculty teach the enrollment management courses (ACU, 2014e).
Higher Education Administration with Concentration in Enrollment Management:
Master of Science in Education at the University of Miami
The Department of Educational and Psychological Studies in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Miami (2014c) offers a concentration or track in enrollment management with its Master of Science in Education. This 33-credit hour concentration requires three specific courses in enrollment management: Enrollment Management Theory and Practice, Advanced Seminar in Enrollment Management, and Seminar in Higher Education Administration: Contemporary Issues (University of Miami, 2014d). A capstone project with a team of students requires a written strategic enrollment management plan (University of Miami, 2014d). This program claims to be “the only program of its kind in the nation” (University of Miami, 2014d, p. 5). This program caters to full and part time students, with most of the courses being offered in the evening (University of Miami, 2014d).

Enrollment Management Concentration/Specialization at Vanderbilt University
Vanderbilt University (2014) offers a two-year master’s program in higher education administration with an option to concentrate/specialize in enrollment management. This option is referred as a concentration and specialization simultaneously (Vanderbilt, 2013-2014). Students declare the enrollment management track, like all tracks, at the end of their first semester. The enrollment management track features nine credits (three courses): Introduction to Enrollment Management, the Practice of Enrollment Management, and The College Student (Vanderbilt, 2013-2014). According to the Vanderbilt handbook, “The enrollment management concentration enables students to understand how the tools and techniques of enrollment management can help to recruit, admit and graduate students in a way that enhances the educational mission of an institution of higher education” (Vanderbilt, 2013-2014, p. 26).

Collectively, these seven educational opportunities focus on the various aspects of enrollment management’s functional areas and range great in price and earned credit hours.

FINANCIAL AID/FINANCIAL PLANNING OPTIONS
In the financial aid area, two organizations offer two different types of non-credit bearing certifications.

Certified College Planning Specialist
The National Institute of Certified College Planners (NICCP) offers the Certified College Planning Specialist (CCPS) Certification program. Note that while it is rare that an enrollment management professional would have earned this certification and specialist designation, it could be an option. However, it appears that most of the individuals who have earned this credential are finance/banking professionals. The program was launched in 2002 and claims to be “ONLY college financial planning certification and designation program in the financial industry.” (NICCP, 2013). In this case, it is more affiliated with the financial industry than the field of enrollment management. However, because it is related to “college planning” and paying for college, it is included in this overview of training. The cost to obtain this non-credit-bearing certification is $885 plus a $50 per month fee (NICCP, 2014a).

CCPS has three modules and an examination. The three modules focus on Paying for College, Saving for College, and Advanced College Funding Strategies (NICCP, 2014a). Each module contains 150 pages of material (NICCP, 2014a). According to the NICCP website, “the recurring monthly fee is ongoing as long as you want to use the CCPS™ designation and stay a member of the NICCP” (NICCP, 2014c, n.p.). This certification requires an annual training to remain certified: 24 hours of continuing education each year
to maintain good standing (NICCP, 2014a). The NICCP “find a member” webpage indicates there are 1,257 individuals who have earned this specialist credential (NICCP, 2014b).

**NASFAA Professional Credentials**
The second type of certificates are awarded by the National Association for Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) (n.d.). Under the brand of “NASFAA Professional Credentials,” this training is offered through a series of self-study guides designed to prepare individuals for an examination (NASFAA, n.d.). According to the NASFAA website, “If you pass the examination, you will receive a certificate attesting to your achievement” (NASFAA, n.d.). NASFAA is offering 15 different credentials on these topics: Return of Title IV Funds, Student Eligibility, Verification, Professional Judgment, Packaging, Application Process, Federal Methodology, Campus-Based Programs, Federal Pell Grant, Direct Loans, Consumer Information, Cash Management, Satisfactory Academic Progress, Administrative Capability, and Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grants (NASFAA, n.d.). As of August 2014, 805 credentials have been earned by 445 people among 10 different subjects (NASFAA, 2014). An online PDF contains a list of the names of those 445 individuals (NASFAA, 2014).

Currently, there are no credit-bearing certificates offered through colleges or universities on the topic of financial aid or college financial planning. These credentials through NASFAA and NICCP are filling that gap.

**COLLEGE ACCESS AND SUCCESS OPTIONS**

As college access intersects with enrollment management, it becomes another area of focus with a need for additional training. These are the newest offerings in the field.

**Graduate Certificate in College Access and Success**
One of the newest certificates is entitled, “Graduate Certificate Program in College Access and Success” (COE, 2014). It is the only such certificate currently available (COE, 2014). This certificate is launching in January 2015 through Colorado State University in partnership with the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE, 2014). This 15-credit hour certificate is designed for individuals “working with under-represented student populations in pre-collegiate settings and higher education” (COE, 2014, p. 2). This certificate offers two tracks: pre-collegiate (college access) or postsecondary (college success) (COE, 2014). CSU touts this certificate as “the first of its kind in the nation” (COE, 2014, p.3). The cost to complete this certificate is $8,475 (COE, 2014).

**Fundamentals for College Access & Success Professionals**
In October 2014, the National College Access Network (NCAN, n.d.) launched a set of online modules. While targeted toward those who work in the college access and college advising fields, individuals working in enrollment management could benefit from this information. When it went live, the Financial Aid Fundamentals were provided free of charge, compliments of the United States Department of Education (NCAN, n.d.). This online platform offers 26 different topics in 10 modules (NCAN, n.d.). Members of NCAN (n.d.) will receive a discount and according to the NCAN website, “digital badging to recognize content mastery” is forthcoming (NCAN, n.d.). The content offered by NCAN is delivered in 30 to 120-minute segments, is self-paced and is available on-demand year round (NCAN, n.d.).
CONCLUSION

These more than 30 educational offerings offer enrollment management professionals choices for foundational and continued training, representing an explosion of formal, specialized, educational training leading to a credential. As this research demonstrates, there are currently six different types of trainings that exist to support enrollment management professionals: certificates, endorsements, online programs, concentrations, specialist designation, and credentials. This research revealed that multiple options abound with different foci, providing much variety for professionals who are seeking this type of education and training. Several offerings result in graduate-level credentials while others result in continuing education units. As the field of enrollment management grows, matures and is recognized on college campuses, so too will the certifying of enrollment management professionals. Enrollment management requires specialized knowledge, an understanding of the complex variables, a broad skill set, planning, and the effective use of technology. Research in this field continues to expand which contributes to the body of literature, thus feeding the curriculum content for these educational offerings. For example, Noel-levitz’s published studies, the frequent National Student Clearinghouse data reports, and white papers offered by agencies offer context and support for enrollment management.

Future research opportunities about these offerings exist. Evaluating the content of the training, comparing the rigor and expectations, and assessing the learning outcomes should be further evaluated to learn more about these certifications and credentials.

Noticeably absent from many of these educational programs was significant training on retention issues and enrollment data, research, and analysis. Only four of the offerings specifically referenced retention as a component covered. The complexity of data and analysis in enrollment management requires focused training in this area. It is also anticipated that more college access and college success courses and certificates will emerge as this is a developing and growing area. As enrollment management professionals continue to provide leadership on their campuses, the knowledge gained from these educational offerings will be an expectation of university leaders.

Currently, there are no known MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) offered for enrollment professionals, but that is surely coming – especially since EdX recently created a college admissions course for high school students (Class Central, 2014).

For those individuals considering continuing their education in the field of enrollment management, a variety of options are available. The primary options include these aspects of enrollment management: college admissions counseling, enrollment management as a whole, financial aid/financial planning, and college access and success. Whether offered informally or formally for credit, these programs are striving to meet the education and training needs of practicing and future enrollment management professionals. And I say that as a “certified” author of this article.
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