What is Competency-Based Education?

Heather Mores, Northern Essex Community College

Lee Waldvogel, College for America at SNHU

William Pena, SNHU

Jodi Abad, SNHU

What is Competency-Based Education (CBE)?

FSA HB 2-23

Competency-based education (CBE) is an innovative approach in higher education that organizes academic content according to competencies rather than follow a more traditional scheme, such as by course.

- Competency - What a student knows and can do

What is Competency-Based Education (CBE)?

Types of CBE programs

- Credit- or clock-hour CBE programs
  - Organized by competency but measure student progress using clock or credit hours
  - Must ensure that for Title IV purposes each credit hour in the program requires sufficient educational activity to fulfill the federal definition of a credit hour
  - Title IV aid must be administered under normal provisions for credit- or clock-hour programs

What is Competency-Based Education (CBE)?

Types of CBE programs

- Direct assessment programs
  - Does not use credit or clock hours
  - Progress is measured solely by assessing whether students can demonstrate that they have a command of a specific subject, content area, or skill or can demonstrate a specific quality associated with the subject matter of the program
  - Does not specify the level of educational activity in which a student is expected to engage in order to complete the program

Financial Aid: Resources

2015-2016 Federal Student Aid (FSA) Handbook

- Most recent handbook has been updated to include some of the information released by the Department of Education (ED) relating to CBE programs
  - General overview & definitions
  - Direct assessment nuances and FSA

Financial Aid: Resources

Dear Colleague Letters

- GEN-13-10 – Applying for Title IV Eligibility for Direct Assessment (Competency-Based) Programs
  - General information about direct assessment programs
  - Instructions on the Title IV application process
- GEN-14-23 – Competency-Based Education Programs – Questions and Answers
  - Guidance regarding eligibility of CBE programs (including direct assessment)

Financial Aid: Resources

Experimental Sites Initiative Website

- Experiments from the July 31, 2014 Federal Register notice
  - Competency-Based Education
  - Prior Learning Assessment
  - Limited Direct Assessment
- Provides more insight into the landscape and additional options for program development
- New FedReg due prior to end of 2015 detailing expansion of CBE Experiment

Financial Aid: Milestones & Critical Topics

Conceptual Phase

- Get financial aid involved as early as possible, even in “listen only” mode
- Extensive research, networking and knowledge transfer for CBE in addition to other annual/cyclical financial aid regulatory changes

Financial Aid: Milestones & Critical Topics

Development

- Identify/discuss
  - Credential/degree level
  - Course-based CBE vs. direct assessment
  - Curricular/instructional delivery (mode, pace, structure)
    - Nonterm or not
  - Credit-hour equivalency/full-time definition
  - Academic progress
    - Satisfactory academic progress/academic standing, grading basis, repeats, incompletes, open-entry/open-exit, grade level

Financial Aid: Milestones & Critical Topics

Development

- Identify/Financial Aid: Milestones & Critical Topics
- discuss (cont.)
  - Recording/documenting student engagement (distance ed)
  - Open source vs. required materials
  - Written arrangements
    - 3rd party content/assessment provider
    - Other school(s)
  - Interruptions in enrollment (withdrawals, leave of absence)

Financial Aid: Milestones & Critical Topics

Operational Planning

- Technical considerations
  - Financial aid systems
  - Manual workarounds
  - Staffing impact
  - Impact on non-CBE program offerings and FA functions
- Knowledge, experience, skills (nonterm)
- Impact on non-FSA programs (institutional, state, private, etc.)
- Admissions processes/timelines
- Registration processes/timelines
- Program launch timeline and the FSA award year

Financial Aid: Milestones & Critical Topics

Approvals/Deployment

- State agency approval
- Accreditor approval
- Department of Ed Title IV Approval (direct assessment programs)
  - ED requires accreditor approval prior to Title IV approval
  - The approval process has lasted 6-9 months from some schools
- Consumer information updates