

8 ways to propel growth through non-traditional programmes

Continuing education and workforce development students are unlike your traditional learners. **Your administrative system should be different, too.**

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an eBook for
institutional
leaders

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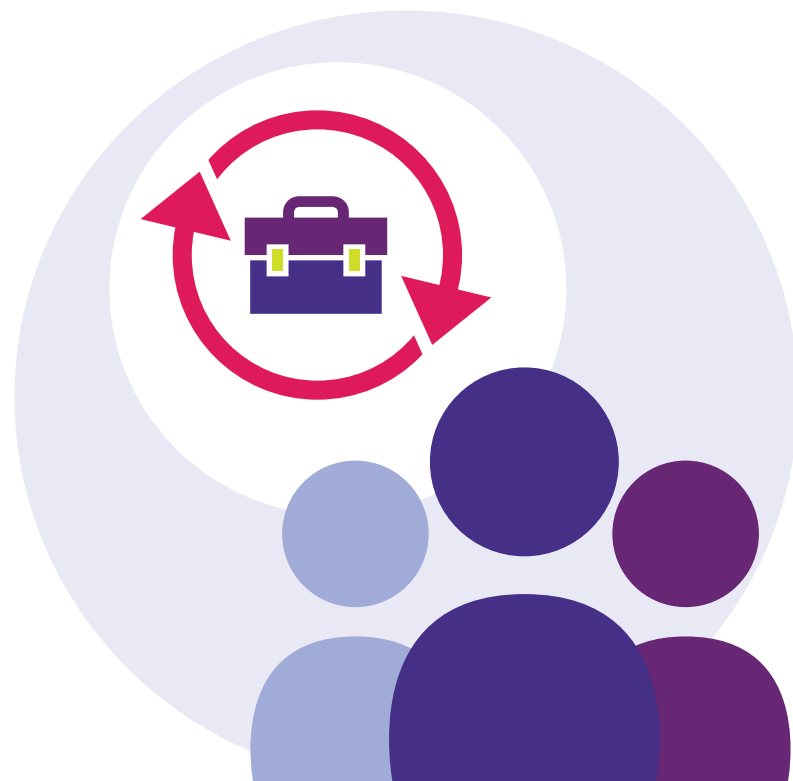
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Introduction

Providing opportunities for lifelong learning is central to the mission of higher education. It can also be a central part of your revenue stream. About 46 percent of American adults are taking formal continuing education that is not full-time enrolment, according to the latest report from the National Center for Education Statistics.¹ In addition, Forbes.com cited workforce development as “one of the top issues facing higher education” in 2014.² Non-traditional learners, rather than traditional 18- to 22-year-old students, are now the bigger market—and opportunity.³ And there is funding behind the need. In 2014, President Obama allocated \$450 million to promote continuing education and workforce development.

Attracting and supporting this growing market requires nimble software designed specifically for the administration of these programmes, and for the students taking them. Shoe-horning your non-traditional students and your processes into your enterprise resource planning (ERP) system impedes your responsiveness, accuracy, and accountability, which in turn, undermines your service to students. What’s holding you back from capturing more of this increasing market?



1. “Participation in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning: 2000–2001”, National Center for Education Statistics, September 2004, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/2004050.pdf>
2. “Top Issues Facing Higher Education in 2014”, Forbes.com, January, 2014, http://www.forbes.com/sites/johnebersole/2014/01/13/top-issues-facing-higher-education-in-2014/?goback=.gde_1949273_member_5828842348603256833#
3. Deil-Amen, Regina; “The ‘Traditional’ College Student: A Smaller and Smaller Minority and Its Implications for Diversity and Access Institutions”, University of Arizona, Center for the Study of Higher Education, 2011.

1. Increase profits

Do you know if you are wasting funds on under-enrolled courses? Are you turning away students during unexpected demand surge? Have you missed enrolment targets from lack of peak time marketing support? Your institution's ERP does not capture the data from non-traditional courses to let you answer these questions.

A solution designed for this market gives you the robust analytics you need to deliver a more profitable programme. Performance dashboards let you track funds, course performance, and return on investment, and also gauge resource allocation. Make go/no-go decisions based on income potential and on the availability of staff and facility resources.

The insights you gain from your non-traditional programmes can be included in broader strategic decisions and plans when the software integrates directly and in real time to your ERP. You can factor dollars spent on non-traditional education into overall spending when reporting to state, federal, or private funders. The integration also lets you do further cost/benefit analyses and pull comprehensive demographic information and unified transcripts across all course offerings.



2. Be customer focused—on the right customer

In 2005, individuals age 16 or older participated most in:



27%

work-related courses



21%

personal interest courses



5%

part-time degree programmes



3%

other activities⁴

Non-traditional students are a diverse group. Some are taking certificate courses. Corporate executives are taking required training. Senior citizens are taking photography and gardening courses for fun. Their studies stop and restart, their entry points don't follow your semester, and they aren't necessarily looking for courses when your admissions department is promoting them. But, like your traditional students, they want a great experience with your administrative processes.

Adult students expect a consumer-friendly shopping experience. Some are browsing course offerings and making decisions solely on what interests them. For others, time and location are as important as the content. Give them a platform with easy search capabilities. How about microsites for specific programmes or types of courses? And make them accessible on mobile devices of all kinds.

Just like in retail, your prospects want a quick checkout experience. Your registration system for traditional students is information heavy with multiple fields that aren't necessary for non-traditional programmes. Why ask for more than you need? Offer a lightweight registration process with one-touch student enrolment and easy document uploads and validation.

How about options to add books, childcare, parking, and supplies to the shopping cart? Then offer easy payment options like payment plans and perhaps even early-bird discounts. Send an automated email confirmation when payment is received, and make the refund process equally painless. If your enrolment process is cumbersome or slow, some of your applicants might lose interest before completion.

4. "The Condition of Education 2007", U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2007.
<http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=89>

3. Customise the corporate experience

Your local business community can be a source of valued and repeat customers. Make it easy for employers to participate in your great programmes with a corporate-friendly enrolment process that offers streamlined onboarding and integrated enrolment options. Enable employers to post course information and registration and payment capabilities on their own company website. Track and roll up all expenses into a single company invoice to make payment easier on their staff. Then automatically notify the right people when employees have completed their training.

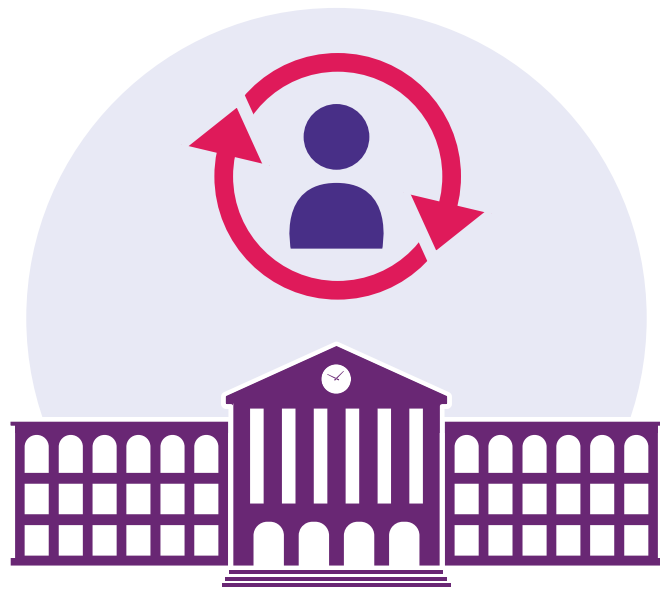
4. Build a lifelong relationship

Some of your continuing education and workforce development learners are former traditional students. Some begin on the non-traditional path and cross over to degree programmes, and they all have the potential to become engaged alumni and donors. Can your software track the full and changing student lifecycle of non-traditional learners?

Track students' interactions and changing interests, then share it with your marketing leaders who can proactively highlight courses that are relevant to students' evolving needs and interests. Staff can increase conversion to the "next-step" programme by communicating the right opportunities at every stage of the relationship cycle. Capturing this information is easy when your administrative system for continuing education and workforce development is integrated with your customer relationship management (CRM) solution.

The right software also lets you deploy marketing tactics that are effective in the consumer marketplace. These include Google ad buys, catalogs, and email marketing. On the back end, your staff can promptly respond to questions, and remarket courses to students who abandoned their shopping carts, possibly offering an added incentive like a discount code. With the right tools, staff also can set up discounting policies by course, student type, or corporate partner.

Continue the great customer experience throughout the course by giving students easy access to their attendance and grades. Send their notification of completion promptly when their feeling of achievement is at its peak.



5. Provide an easy pathway

Make it easy for students to switch paths from traditional to non-traditional and back again. Tight alignment between the non-credit and credit sides of the institution gives students more entry points and flexibility. It also gives your institution easy, single-source data capture and reporting across programmes, and transparency into the contribution of each programme. It is possible—and easy—to integrate your continuing education/workforce development solution into your ERP. This lets you maintain a single system of record and meet the needs of all your learners on any path they choose.

6. Improve flexibility

The demands of the workforce and corporations change. The interests of the casual learner are fluid. The right technology lets you document and analyse consumer trends and patterns so you can tailor your course offerings and seize new opportunities. The tools necessary for rapid deployment include the ability to enter and create courses, manage class size, schedule rooms and professors, and change fee structures—all in real time.

Also be prepared to make decisions quickly near start dates. Many non-traditional students register two weeks prior to the start of the course. Can you add instructional capacity as needed, not as scheduled? The right software captures the right data and makes it easy to ramp up, alter, or retire courses within hours. Break-even dashboards with go/no-go modelling give transparency into course key performance indicators prior to launch so you can eliminate poor performing courses before they even get started—increasing your profitability and improving resource management. Automated workflows can provide real-time course cancellation and take care of the after-effects like faculty re-assignment, room management, and student refunds.



7. Enable IT resources to focus on other core initiatives

Shoehorning your programme for non-traditional students into your existing ERP leaves everyone dissatisfied. Students have a poor administrative experience; your staff members are less efficient because the software does not fit their processes; and your administrators do not have the tools they need to create, market, or measure course offerings. Why spend scarce IT resources building or customising a solution that leaves everyone unhappy?

Off-the-shelf solutions are designed specifically for the needs of students and staff in non-traditional programmes. The solutions can be integrated into your ERP with minimal time investment for installation or ongoing programme management, reducing bottlenecks and increasing programme agility. Choosing a product that is delivered in a Software-as-a-Service model eases the demand on IT even more.



8. Raise your game with Ellucian Elevate™



Higher education plays an essential role in keeping employees and communities well equipped to seize new opportunities and fill workforce gaps. As demand and funding grow for continuing education and workforce development, institutions that move quickly to install technology-driven solutions for managing these programmes will remain competitive.

Ellucian Elevate™ is one of the only management software applications designed specifically for continuing education and workforce development programme administrators. It gives users the power to be customer focused, nimble, and informed so they can manage, report, and market their programmes, their way—driving maximum programme performance and increased enrolment.

Ellucian Elevate integrates with institutions' existing Banner® by Ellucian products, so student data is managed and maintained in a single system of record—making for consistent and efficient programme management and reporting across the institution. An integrated SaaS solution, Ellucian Elevate requires little to no IT staff attention for installation or ongoing programme management.

About Ellucian

Ellucian helps education institutions thrive in an open and dynamic world. We deliver a broad portfolio of technology solutions, developed in collaboration with a global education community, and provide strategic guidance to help education institutions of all kinds navigate change, achieve greater transparency, and drive efficiencies. More than 2,400 institutions in 40 countries around the world look to Ellucian for the ideas and insights that will move education forward, helping people everywhere discover their potential through learning.

To learn more, visit www.ellucian.com/emea-ap.



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