“If we care about learning, we should hold constant the level of learning expected and vary the amount of time it takes to get there vs. now when we hold time constant and vary the level of learning – which we summarize as grades.”

Sal Kahn, 2012
Problem Identification

- Better Prepared Workforce and Community
  - Align to industry and citizenship needs
  - Improve attainment rates
- Greater Affordability of Higher Education
  - Reduce direct costs
  - Shorten time to degree
- More effective education
  - Transparent learning goals
  - Assessment process that enhances learning
CBE Promises

• Industry and Employers’ demand met by solid, talented supply.
• More students get access and support for completion.
• Credentials signify demonstrated professional success factors.
• Less student debt and fewer opportunity costs.
• Improved transferability of learning and immediate value.
• Diversified portfolio of Title IV-eligible offerings.

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CBE History 1970s

One of the first brochures published by Alverno College on Competence Based Learning, ca. 1974.

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Defining and Assessing Learning: Exploring Competency-Based Initiatives

Report of the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative Working Group on Competency-Based Initiatives in Postsecondary Education

NATIONAL POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COOPERATIVE (NPEC)
A competency is:
“combination of skills, abilities and knowledge needed to perform a task in a specific context”

National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC) (2002)
"There’s really a danger of people just repackaging what they’re doing and calling it competency-based education because it’s the buzzword du jour."

-Amy Laitinen, Dec. 2013

“There is no “one specific thing” called competency based education. Further, related terms are used in different ways by different people, often causing confusion.”

-Deborah Everhart, August 2014

“There is still no consensus definition of CBE, even among the institutions that provide it.”

-Robert Kelchen, Jan. 2015
CBE Definition, by key concepts

- Students advance upon mastery, few time requirements
- Competencies are explicit, measurable, and transferable
- Assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience
- Students receive rapid, differentiated support based on their individual needs
- Competencies include application and creation of knowledge along with the development of important skills and dispositions
CBEN

- Competency-based education is a flexible way for students to get credit for what they know, build on their knowledge and skills by learning more at their own pace, and earn high-quality degrees, certificates, and other credentials that help them in their lives and careers.

- Students in these programs show what they know and how well they know it by participating in multiple ways of evaluating learning.

- This is another choice for learning that many colleges and universities offer through a variety of programs, with a full array of support services to help students as needed.
C-RAC

“An accreditor will consider a program to be competency-based when all of the courses (for the program, for general education, for the major) have learning goals expressed as competencies approved at the program level (i.e., any instructor teaching a course will teach it as a competency-based course) and each student is required to demonstrate mastery of every competency in a course to earn credit... for such course.”
“...an instructional program that, in lieu of credit hours or clock hours as a measure of student learning, utilizes direct assessment of student learning, or recognizes the direct assessment of student learning by others.”
What is Competency-Based Education?

A Combination of Theory + Practical Application
Delivered Through Three Elements

CURRICULUM
Grounded in the academic standards of the field and built to meet today’s employers’ needs

AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENTS
Mastery of skills, abilities, and knowledge measured through real tasks in real contexts, not multiple choice tests

FACULTY
Scholars with professional expertise tuned in to professions’ current and future needs

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Shared Design Elements

CLEAR, CROSS-CUTTING AND SPECIALIZED COMPETENCIES

COHERENT, COMPETENCY DRIVEN PROGRAM & CURRICULUM DESIGN

EMBEDDED PROCESS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

LEARNER CENTERED

MEASURABLE AND MEANINGFUL ASSESSMENTS

ENABLING & ALIGNED BUSINESS PROCESSES & SYSTEMS

ENGAGED FACULTY AND EXTERNAL PARTNERS

FLEXIBLE STAFFING ROLES AND STRUCTURES

NEW OR ADJUSTED FINANCIAL MODELS

PROFICIENT AND PREPARED GRADUATES
Regulatory and Accreditation Realities

- Accreditation landscape is unstable
- Regulatory constraints: Title IV Eligibility
  - Educational Activity:
    - Program designed to offer weekly educational activity
    - Assessments, scheduled learning sessions, faculty-guided independent study, consultations with faculty mentor, etc.
  - Distance Education: Regular and Substantive Faculty Interaction
    - Qualified Faculty
    - Program designed to offer weekly faculty interaction
    - Interaction must be academically meaningful
- Regulatory opportunities
  - Experimental Sites Initiatives
    - Prior Learning Assessment
    - Competency-based education
    - Limited Direct Assessment
    - Educational Quality through Innovative Partnerships (EQUIP)
CBE Realities

• Need more high quality CBE programs in the market
• Need better technologies and scalable business models
• Need more empirical research on effectiveness and efficiency of CBE models
• Need greater awareness among (prospective) learners, higher education, and employers