



## 2020 State of the Field Postsecondary CBE in the US

In Fall 2020, amid the ongoing COVID-19 transitions, American Institutes for Research surveyed colleges and universities across the United States to better understand their interest in and adoption of competency-based education (CBE).<sup>1</sup>

This survey—the third in a series of three—indicates that, despite major disruptions to institutional operations, CBE programs are growing and institutions are optimistic about continued growth. In some cases, the need to shift operations due to the pandemic appears to have increased institutions' interest in CBE.

Of the 488 institutions that responded ...

Have full CBE programs	13%
Are in the process of adopting	47%
Are interested in adopting	26%
Have no interest	14%

### Equity: How do students in CBE programs compare to students in traditional programs?

CBE student populations were similar to those in traditional programs in terms of race/ethnicity and Pell status, but CBE programs had larger shares of students with prior credit and adult students (ages 25 and older).

<sup>1</sup> To capture the diversity of CBE programs, we defined these as entire programs of study typified by at least one of the following: learning is measured in competencies; students advance between courses or complete the program based on mastering all required competencies; or courses or programs offer students flexible pacing.

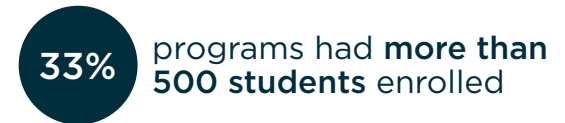
This survey builds on 2016 and 2017 Deconstructing CBE reports (conducted by Eduventures® Research) and the 2018 & 2019 National Survey of Postsecondary CBE reports.

Over **3** years of the survey,

**128 institutions** with full CBE programs reported a total of:



In the last academic year ...



### The Most Common Undergraduate Disciplines

1. Nursing/Health Professions
2. Business Administration
3. Computer and Information Science

# CBE and COVID-19

“Our CBE enrollment is booming. CBE seems less radical to many who previously opposed it now that we all live in the digital realm. They are more open to development, and multiple new courses are in development as a result.”

Over half of institutions said the COVID-19 pandemic affected their institution’s motivation to adopt or expand CBE.

**Top factor:** perceiving a long-term shift happening in the higher education landscape.

### Other key factors:

- CBE models could help institutions respond to future disruptions or uncertainties.
- Campuses gained experience with an online or hybrid approach.

For those interested but not adopting, institutions also commonly cited that faculty gained comfort with technology tools.

## Institutions perceive substantial internal and external barriers to CBE implementation.

For institutions with existing programs or those that are in the process of implementing programs, perceived barriers included:



For those interested but not adopting, another top barrier was on-campus expertise for developing CBE programs.

## What are institutions’ most common motivations for adopting CBE?

For institutions interested in adoption but not yet adopting, their most common motivations include viewing CBE as a:

- desire to expand access for nontraditional learners (67%)
- response to workforce needs (59%)
- desire to improve learning outcomes (56%).



## Future of CBE

Despite barriers and disruptions, institutions are optimistic about the future of CBE.

82%

said they expect the number of CBE programs nationally to grow in the next 5 years.

### Of those with CBE programs:

64%

said they plan to **increase** the number of CBE programs at their institution.

34%

expected the number **will stay the same.**

