

# Competency-Based Education: A Higher Return on Investment?

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#CompetencyEd

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# How widespread is competency-based education?

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- How many higher education institutions have expressed interest in it?
  - A few hundred are interested
- How many institutions are actually offering CBE programs?
  - CBEN has 30 institutional members and four public university systems
- Number of students enrolled in these programs?
  - Tens or low hundreds of thousands (~ 20 million enrollments)
- Number of grads to date?
  - Likely thousands (~ 6 million awards)

	Traditional Program	Competency-Based Program	
		Credit Hour Program	Direct Assessment
How does program organize academic content?	Content organized by course. No explicit statement of competencies to which instruction leads.	Content organized by competencies – explicit and transparent statements about what students know and can do  Proficiency demonstrated through assessments required to complete course or program	
How do students progress through the program?	Time is fixed, learning variable	Learning fixed by competency requirements, time largely fixed  Competencies embedded in courses and terms, result in credits, with duration and rate of instruction regulated  Little variation in progression - only within course	Learning fixed, time variable  No specified duration or rate of instruction  Learners progress at own pace to program completion by demonstrating command of subject, content area, skill

# Only six institutions are approved for direct assessment CBE...

- Direct assessment programs decouple time and learning – fully exploit CBE’s potential and drive re-engineering.
  - How do we price instruction?
  - If each learner is at different point in a program, how should we monitor their progress and organize appropriate advising and student support?



# What limits CBE direct assessment adoption? Challenges on campus...

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- Challenges *every* business process and information system on campus
- May raise concern among administrators and faculty about quality or comparability to traditional educational programs

Consequence?

- CBE innovation taking place in units outside the “core” of the university, such as continuing education or extension service

# ...and challenges off-campus

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- Dept. of Education guidance on use aid in CBE programs
  - Guidance is recent (Dear Colleague Letter, December 2014)
  - Guidance is varied (policy officials vs. IG)
  - Institutional confusion and uncertainty remain (“regular and substantive interaction”)
- Accreditors -- in combination with ED -- are required to authorize direct assessment programs
  - Recent joint guidance provided by the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (CRAC) (June 2, 2015)
  - Peer review system now lacks capacity to review CBE programs (e.g. does institution follow good practice in assessment and measurement?)

# How well is CBE working for students who participate in it?

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CBE *could* make a difference in these ways:

- **Learning** – since all students must pass all competencies associated with the program, the bar will be a bit higher than at present for *some* students;
- **Access and Retention** – since direct assessment CBE can provide very high levels of flexibility, *some* students may enroll, persist, and complete who wouldn't otherwise have done so;
- **Time and Cost.** Allow *some* learners able to navigate programs more swiftly than traditional programs.

Is this happening?

- **We don't know -- yet.** This work is planned. AIR and partner institutions to commence in early 2016.

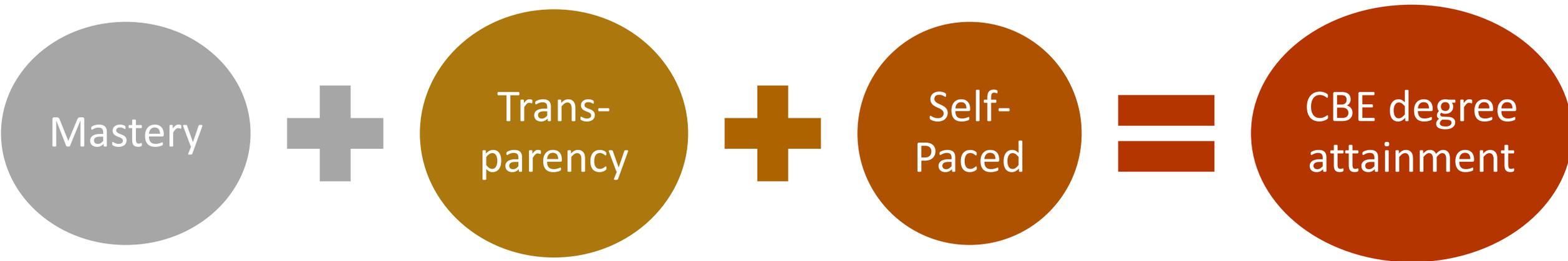
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# CBE – Student Experience



# Mastery - Competencies Defined



What do I need to *know*? What theories or ideas?

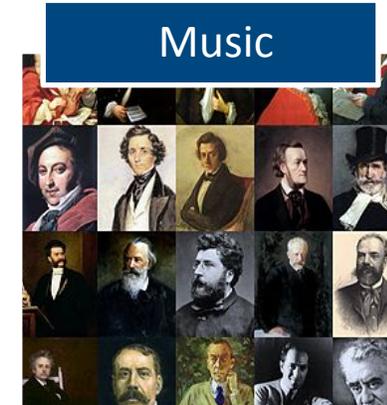
What do I need to be able to *do*?

What dispositions must I display?

Where must I be able to apply these KSAs, and at what level?

Understands the theory of XXX, and has the skills and dispositions to successfully apply all of these at the *beginning* level in XXX situation.

Focus on what's needed to be successful - outcomes.



## History Competencies:

- Analyze significant issues in American history from the Progressive Era through World War I and the 1920s.
- Describe the social, economic, cultural, and political developments of American history from the Progressive Era through World War I and the 1920s.
- Discuss historical literature significant to the Progressive Era through World War I and the 1920s and develop an awareness of the historical sources

Assessment description: Analyze this visual source: "Bull Moose Campaign Speech." What does this video clip of campaign film footage reveal about running for political office in 1912, the level of interest in the 1912 presidential election, and Roosevelt's campaign style? How does this film clip of Roosevelt's 1912 campaign compare to what you know about modern presidential campaigns?

# Transparency - Key components of CBE curricula

## Curricular architecture

- Maintains Gestalt of credential
- Backward design
- Strong definition of competencies
- Supports self-paced approach
- Content supports competency acquisition

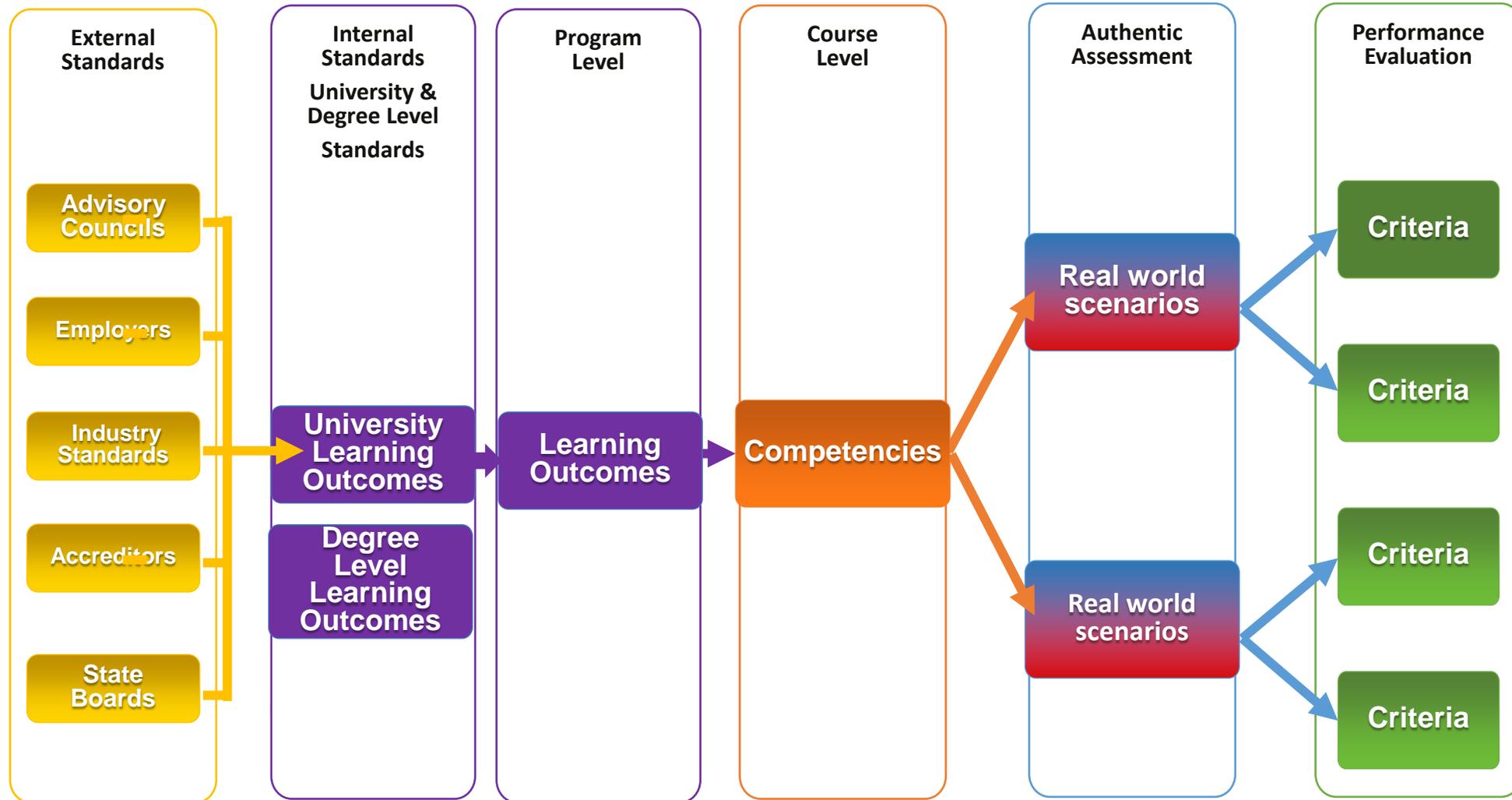
## Assessment

- Authentic
- Reliable
- Embedded in curriculum
- Formative and summative

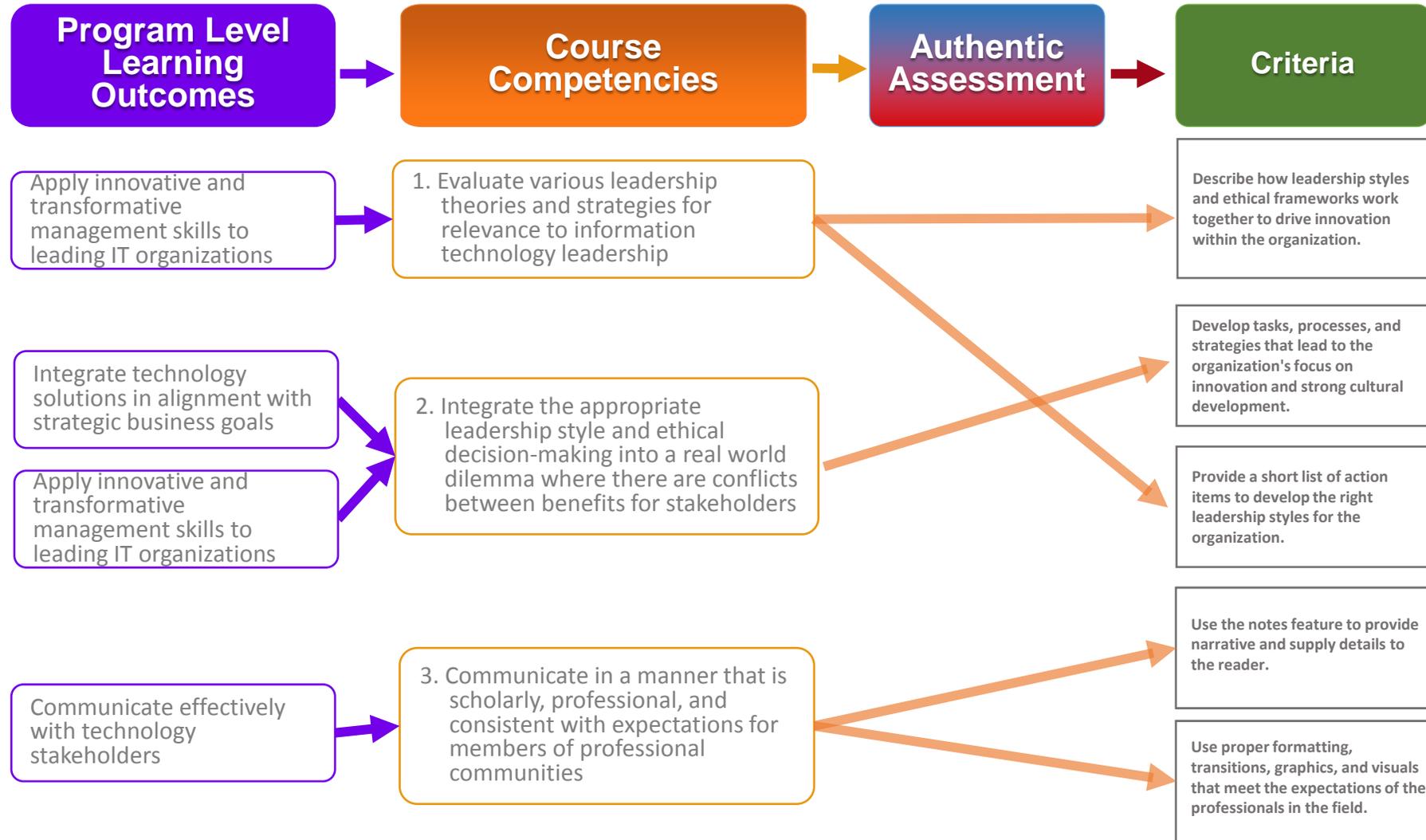
## Faculty Role

- Shift from “my course” to “our curriculum”
- Central in definition of competencies
- Central in assessment development and delivery

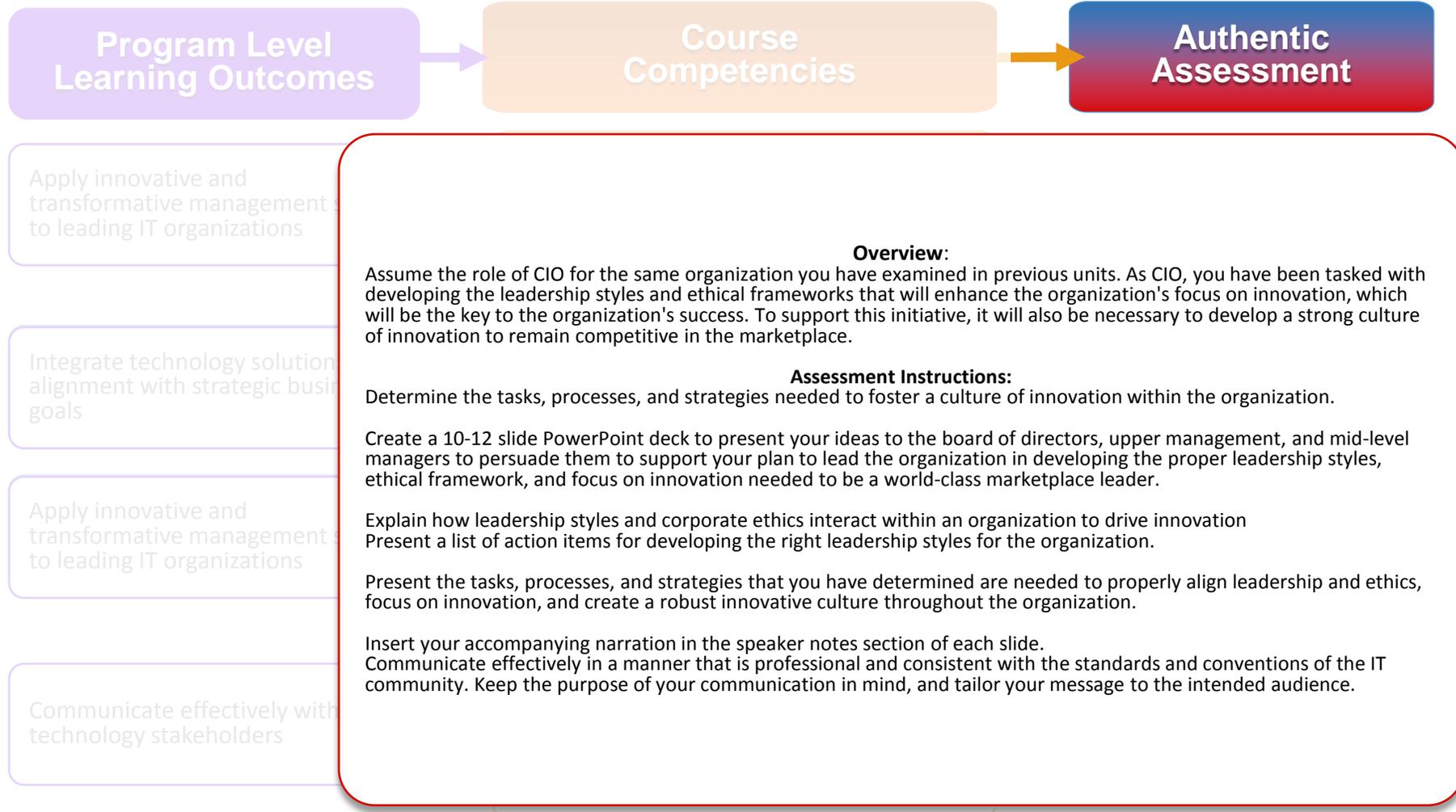
# Competency-Based Curriculum Structure



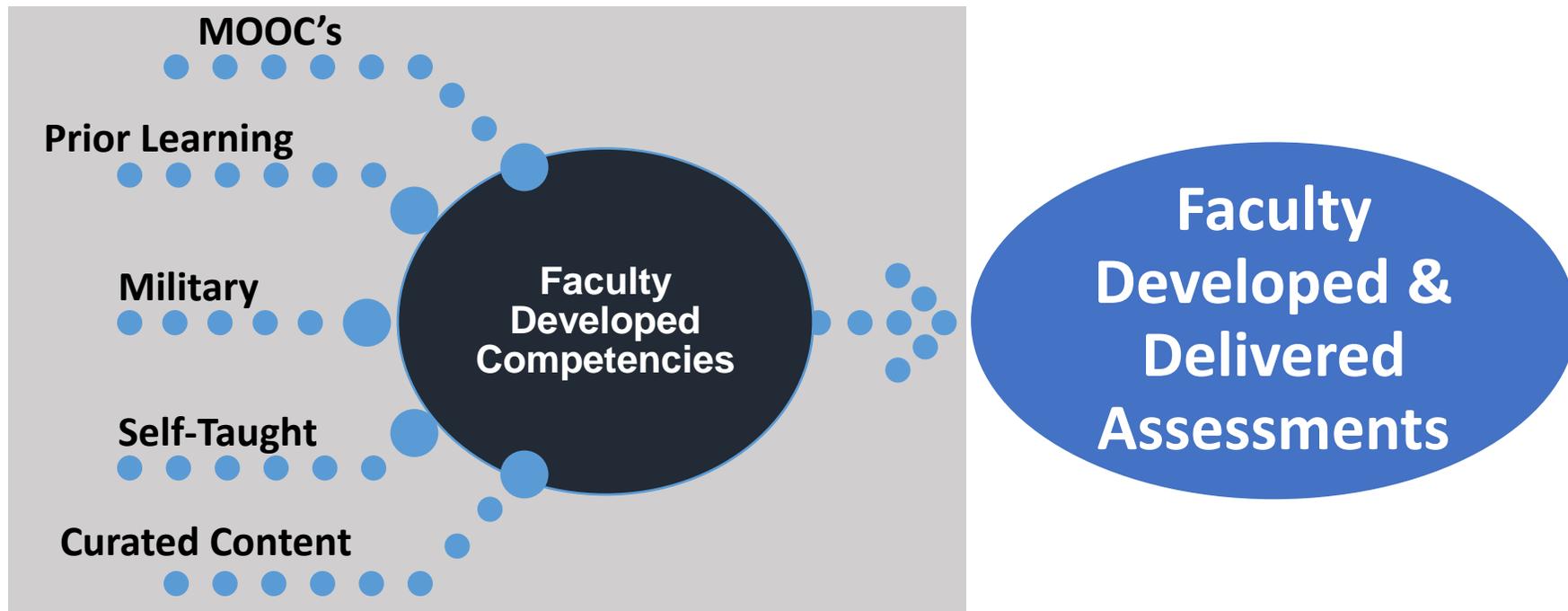
# Example: Master's In IT Innovation, Leadership & Ethics



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# Transparency – Another approach



# Self Pacing:

## Broward College Student Handbook

- You'll **focus on demonstrating competence** — proof that you understand concepts and can translate this understanding into usable knowledge and skills.
- Often, we find that adult students like you have already developed many of the competencies you need for degree completion. So **instead of making you attend classes, we ask you to prove your knowledge through assessments.**
- You have the opportunity to complete your courses in the time frame you choose. In each course there will be a **recommended (4 week) Pace Chart** to complete that course. There will also be a **longer time period (6 week) pace chart** for those who might need more time to absorb the material, and a **shorter period (2 week) pace chart** for those students who have already mastered many of the competencies for that course.

THE *Higher Education*  
**MINDSHIFT**

**CREDIT-HOUR**

**FOCUS ON TEACHING**

**COMPETENCY-BASED**

**FOCUS ON LEARNING**

TIME IS  
**CONSTANT,**  
BUT  
LEARNING IS  
**VARIABLE**



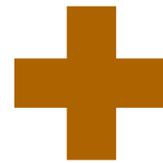
TIME IS  
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 **UW flexible option**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM

Mastery



Trans-  
parency



Self-  
Paced



CBE degree  
attainment