

November 2013

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### Recommended Citation

Hura, Gerri (2013) "A New Model for Executive Education," *Journal of Executive Education*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 2 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/jee/vol2/iss2/1>

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# A New Model for Executive Education

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Gerri Hura

## Abstract

The availability of accessing nationally recognized educators for customized executive education for the corporate population is an expensive proposition for many colleges and universities. A new model for executive education can achieve the learning needs of the corporate community while maximizing shared costs through a partnership process. This partnership, formed between local colleges and universities and area businesses provides a venue of customized curriculum taught by world-class providers of executive education for minimal cost and time away from work for executives as well as superb local networking opportunities.

## Introduction

The top, non-degreed, executive development and leadership programs in the United States and abroad are widely known and accepted. Annually these programs are ranked in publications such as *BusinessWeek*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Financial Times*. The specific attributes of these top-rated programs include world-class faculty, curriculum that is redesigned on a regular basis to respond to the current trends and ideas for today's dynamic business environment, and programs that provide a powerful peer networking environment with executives attending from around the world. It is the position of some educational institutions that

it is impossible, if not ludicrous, to compete against these nationally ranked programs when their own programs are not perceived to have the depth, breath, and reputation of faculty, infrastructure, and curriculum. The business community also may not perceive the college or university as having the credibility or reputation to deliver executive training (Prince & Stewart, 2000). With a little creativity, a bit of hard work, and a willingness to step outside the institutional walls, any management or executive education department can develop and produce a world-class executive development and leadership program for their local corporate community.

## Growth of executive education

Historically, non-degreed or non-credit EE has evolved from a variety of degree and non-degree programs such as the MBA, the executive MBA, and special interest topics. The programs initially began in universities as functionally specific programs (marketing or finance) to augment company-sponsored, technical education. The early pioneers of the non-degree programs included short courses at Harvard and MIT followed by a fifteen week Harvard program focusing on war production competencies during World War II (Crotty & Soule, 1997).

Immediately following the war the formalization of company developed EE was evident in companies such as GE, IBM, and Motorola. Many of these early company-sponsored programs were modeled after or designed by faculty from the universities (Crotty

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& Soule, 1997). During the 1950s period, the university-based management and executive education departments began as the need grew for giving specific, functional training to individuals leaving the military.

The market for EE is evident in the growth of both custom and open enrollment executive programs offered around the world. Leadership retention is an issue in today's business environment and practices to retain top leaders are one of the most critical human resource tools (Solomon, 1997). A company can lose one million dollars per year for every ten professional or managerial employees who leave (Fitz-enz, 1997). Executive development is a critical component of executive retention planning. Annual executive training expenditures by corporations are estimated to be over \$800 million (Schneider, 2001). While in-house, corporate-developed programs meet the needs for company-sponsored initiatives and basic management education, the expertise to grow their organizations and to drive change initiatives internally can best be found through external experts and education. These learning opportunities are available through university-sponsored executive education programs (Crotty & Soule, 1997; Prince, 2000). The "strategic imperatives" of growth, competitiveness, continuous change, reinvention, and core competencies have driven this growth for securing effective leadership development external to the organization (Prince & Stewart, 2000; Vicere, 1995). The value of having exposure to external experts as well as having the ability to network with peer executives is a tremendous value in an executive development process.

Qualities that a corporation look for in determining which university program to choose include: attractiveness of the program, provider credibility, pricing, track record, marketing, flexibility of program customization, currency of content, and relationships with the

university/executive education department (Goodwin & Fulmer, 1995). In addition, the ability of a learning experience to be internalized by the executive through action learning opportunities, role-playing, improvisation, simulations, and pilot projects is also necessary (Lippert, Apr-Jun 2001).

## **Executive Education Models**

University based management development departments and corporations have partnered in a number of ways that include in-house or custom programs, corporate universities, and partnerships or alliances. The core elements of these programs are a flexible and a cutting edge curriculum, a faculty with functional expertise, and an integrated partnership between the corporation, institution, or department that decreases the program's developmental learning curve. The benefits of these partnerships include financial savings, control over content, and internal networking for company employees in addition to access to faculty experts with strong functional competence and broad curriculum perspectives. However these programs also risk perpetuating the status quo as well as losing the cutting edge capability through limited access to the intellectual capital, i.e., faculty resources (Myrsiades, 2001).

The EE department has the advantage of expanding relationships with area corporations and thereby providing consulting opportunities for their faculty (broadening faculty's individual experience and competencies) and financial support for the institution. The downside for the EE department is that the time to develop these relationships can be lengthy and these custom programs can initially be labor intensive, both for the faculty and EE staff and for the corporation. Smaller EE departments can be seriously challenged by this process and realistically form only two or three close alliances with local corporations.

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Executive education programs, especially those developed by the nationally ranked institutions, have effective core elements that include access to top educators, flexible curricula, diverse (including international) participant populations, and exceptional executive facilities. However these programs, outstanding as they are, also may have a downside. Many of the nationally ranked programs are often time intensive for the participant (ranging from four to six weeks) rather than one or two days, which translates to time spent away from the business and family. They are also expensive (multi-week fees range from \$25,000 to \$49,000 per individual), and unless an organization can send teams of executives, the transfer of knowledge is limited especially to lead major corporate changes. While shorter length programs exist, the top rated programs tend to be multiple days in length. Senior leaders are also beginning to question if these existing programs are responding to the leadership gap (Barrett & John, 2002). With the influx of globalization, technology, in addition to the need for speed in product development, innovation, service delivery, and organizational change, current EE programs must respond with the speed and flexibility. This need for speed and flexibility also impacts MBA programs that often are often slowed down due to catalog and curriculum committee deadlines and issues. The need for speed, flexibility, AND creativity is fundamental in today's executive education arena which is complicated by executive attrition, competition for talent, boards, customers and employee expectations, and demographic trends (Barrett & Beeson, 2002).

Chart #1 summarizes the key components of two models utilized for executive education: open enrollment programs and corporate partnerships. These EE models, while exceptional educational experiences, are not within the capability of most management development departments affiliated with colleges and universities.

In addition, companies are not just looking to develop individual talent but also to expand an organization's capability for growth and change (Myrsiades, 2001). The exception would be if the need for individual development is a critical strategic goal (Prince & Stewart, 2000). While EE programs are exceptionally invigorating and developmental for the individual, the impact one individual can make on the organization can be limited. To date, executive programs are as varied and individualistic as are the character and mission of the corporations and business schools. The one common element is the active (and growing) involvement of the corporation (Crotty & Soule, 1997).

The benefits of the open enrollment program include a wide diversity of choice for the corporation in terms of content, delivery, location, timing, peer networking, and provider or university reputation. The downsides include: program length, cost, time absence from the job/home, large class sizes (in general), variable knowledge transfer, and lack of customization. And yet, even with these limitations, these EE programs are growing in strength and popularity. Perhaps it is time to investigate a different approach that could accomplish both the individual and organizational needs without excessive time, travel, and dollars.

To compete effectively in the EE environment, business schools and management development departments must have a focused agenda, must know their corporate market, must have the ability to focus on specific areas of internal expertise or competencies, and must build relationships with a critical mass of corporations (Prince & Stewart, 2000). For a college or university to be successful, faculty need to be knowledgeable to teach to a variety of levels including undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate (targeting business men and women), conduct research, and demonstrate the ability to consult (Macfarlane, 1995). Traditionally colleges and universities are not known for their

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ability to be flexible, progressive, and change oriented to respond to the changing corporate partner's needs (Fulmer, 1997). Given these constraints and characteristics, it is questionable if colleges can meet all the needs of their corporate partners unless they utilize new models for the delivery of executive education. Some form of multi-level partnerships may be an answer.

### **Center for Leadership & Executive Development Program**

A new model for EE was initiated four years ago through a partnership between a local corporation and a mid-western university. This concept expands the basic premise of EE into another dimension and has the potential to equalize the playing field between the nationally recognized executive programs and those offered by colleges and universities that do not have the resources or clout to break into the top 10, 20 or even the top 100 programs.

This EE model's structure is a unique entry into the established programs in play. The four key elements are custom curriculum, access to nationally and internationally known providers of EE, development of an infrastructure through a "shared" corporate university, and provider partnerships. The beauty of this program is that it is "boundaryless." The model is called the Center for Leadership & Executive Development (CL&ED) by the University of Dayton and was developed by Rich Walsh, Assistant Dean and Executive Director of the Center during discussions with the Small Business Association and the Business Advisory Council at the University. This model was replicated by Baldwin-Wallace College in Cleveland, Ohio by the staff of the professional development department in an alliance formed with the University of Dayton.

### **Overview of CL&ED – model three**

The CL&ED executive program is truly a "partnership" program that is uniquely different from the current models of corporate universities or university partnerships. This program can be based in a business school or management and executive education department. The goal of the EE staff is to secure commitments from local companies to partner with them in this enterprise. The recruitment of companies is accomplished through leveraging relationships with businesses and executives and developing a business case that shows how this EE program responds to the strategic learning needs of executives within the organization or business. Once a critical mass of partnerships is contracted (start-up programs can have as few as six to eight corporate partnerships), the EE department conducts planning meetings attended by representatives from each of the corporate partners. These "partner reps" are typically one or two executives (usually a senior human resource or a training/organizational development executive) that represent the company at all partnership-planning meetings. The partner reps also spearhead the internal marketing and oversight of the program within their organization.

The planning meetings between the partner reps and the EE staff include discussions of strategic learning objectives for each organization in the partnership. Company needs assessments, succession planning results or data from a performance management system help to support these discussions. Based on these learning objectives, the partner representatives discuss topics that would help their organization achieve the strategic learning objectives. Once the broad topics are determined, discussions take place as to who is the best individual (provider) in the United States (or in some cases the world) that can facilitate learning on aspects of the broad topics. The choices of providers are restricted by availability of providers, fees, number of programs the

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partnership wants for a program year, and the size of the partnership that dictates available funds. The EE staffs' responsibility is to make the learning process happen. The EE staff serves as both project managers and relationship managers with both the partnered organizations as well as the providers. The EE staff manages all program logistics for the partnership. Through the alliance with the University of Dayton, their EE staff handles all negotiations of contracts for the Baldwin-Wallace partnership. This helps to leverage the strength of the two schools using some of the same providers and potentially securing lower fees.

### **Partnerships**

Every business school and/or management development department has unique relationships with local corporations, and it is through these initial relationships that the seeds of the partnership program are planted. Companies are invited to join this program for an annual fee. As partners they can be actively involved in the discussions and decision of topics, recommend the appropriate learning design, and recommend and select the providers of the EE curriculum. In addition the partners are given multiple seats to each executive education program scheduled for the year. The partnered organizations also provide access for the EE department to deepen the relationship through additional custom and open enrollment programs that are part of the EE department's services. Referrals from the executives at a partner company also help to expand the entire program to other area organizations and businesses.

Fees for entry into the partnership can vary based on the overall design of the program. For the two schools described in this article, the fees differ since each program has unique partner needs. Baldwin-Wallace College (BWC) presents ten programs in 2003-04 for fees of \$16,000 (half - gold partnership) to \$30,000 (full - platinum partnership). The University of

Dayton's fees are slightly higher with 16 to 20 programs conducted annually. The University of Dayton's program is now in the fifth year and has grown to seventeen companies while Baldwin-Wallace College is in its second year and has eight companies as partners.

### **Curriculum Design**

In the CL&ED model, the program topics are based on specific learning needs of the partner organization's executives. Through the planning meetings facilitated by the CL&ED staff, the partner's representatives meet and discuss themes, topics, and specific learning objectives that would achieve the strategic learning needs of the member organizations. Thus the partners and not the business school or the management development staff drive the curriculum. If partner reps feel that the provider should structure the programs with case activities or real life examples, this becomes the primary design; if they want each participant to walk out of the sessions with a specific, implemental action plan, that becomes the learning objectives for the session. The one and two day programs follow the trend for executive education to be shortened from the traditional, multi-week models (Crotty & Soule, 1997). The EE staff works with the providers to insure they are willing to tailor their program to the specific learning needs of the partnership.

Each provider develops a list of pre-questions that are emailed to all executives prior to a specific program. The answers to these pre-questions are sent to the provider that enables them to know the expectations and concerns of the specific executives who are attending their upcoming session. This allows for last minute customization of the program by the provider.

The ability to develop a customized curriculum, targeted at specific learning needs provides the best of all educational worlds. Corporations are stating they need customized

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programs to respond to their leaders' needs (Fulmer, 1997). This component allows companies to match the learning process with the organization's learning priorities (Kovach, 2000). At any time in the CL&ED model new programs can be added to the curriculum as a response to the fast-changing business environment.

### **Providers**

A unique feature of the CL&ED model is that the providers are not on the faculty of the business school or university. The main premise of this model is to find the provider that is considered the leading executive educator for a specific topic and bring them from the nationally-ranked business schools or the top-consulting firms.

The providers are selected from those individuals that are considered the best in a particular subject area; ones that are willing to customize their program to meet the needs, expectations, and learning design of the partnership. In 2001, *BusinessWeek Online* rated the top management gurus for EE and the top ten came from University of Michigan (Dave Ulrich, Noel Tichy, and C.K. Prahalad), independent consultants (Ram Charan, Peter Drucker, Stephen Covey, and Tom Peters), Harvard Business School (John Kotter and Michael Porter), London Business School (Gary Hamel and Jay Conger), and MIT (Peter Senge) (Schneider, 2002). Through the CL&ED model, the partnership is not constrained or limited to the local faculty of one institution or program. The partnership hires whom they want within the financial limitations of the partnership. Providers who fees typically range from \$7,000 to \$40,000/day become affordable with the pooled resources of the partnership. Training dollars are spread throughout the partnership.

The providers also agree to this arrangement since they are given access or

exposure to a variety of new corporations (potential clients) with minimal time and effort expended. A sample of the programs and providers utilized by the UD or BWC partnership appear in *Chart #2*.

The key in selecting providers is to understand what executives want or need for their own development. Do they want "talking heads" or do they want someone who can relate the topics to their business and interests as well as help insure the transfer of learning. One of the typical failures of EE is the inability of the participant to apply that learning back on the job (Crotty & Soule, 1997). Through a program like CL&ED where the education is based locally and in shorter time segments, more executives from one organization can attend and make this transfer of learning or implementation of new ideas possible. In the Winter 2000 issue of *CFO*, 303 of 706 respondents reported that time away from the job is the greatest barrier for expanding job skill training (Myers, Winter 2000).

The college or university's faculty does play an active and important role in the CL&ED program. For each program, a faculty member who has an interest in the topic may be designated as the "host" faculty member. The host faculty could be involved in meeting and greeting the provider; they attend the program as a participant (and have a chance to hear the discussions, comments, concerns, ideas of the other participants for their own enrichment), and interact with company executives (with the potential of future consulting opportunities for themselves). This format serves a dual role. It provides a "local" expert in the room that area companies can utilize after the "thought leader" is gone. In addition the faculty host can take the knowledge back to his or her classroom and leverage not only the provider's ideas, but also the thoughts and concerns of the executives. To achieve faculty buy-in for this model may take a little negotiation and finesse, but most faculty see

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that the benefits of this model outweigh their egos.

### ***Program participants***

Within the partner organizations typically the chief human resource or organization development professional decides on the process for signing up executives for each program. Organizations have the flexibility to market the programs internally to their executives and have the executives self-select the topics of interest. Another strategy used is for an organization to look at the year's curriculum and target several programs for the entire senior management team to attend. This helps in the transfer of knowledge and ultimate implementation and acceptance of new ideas since the entire team is on the same page. Another option is for senior executives to be scheduled for specific topics that address corporate or individual strategic learning needs.

The CL&ED model fully supports the need for the senior executives to be participating in EE with their executive peers and not a diverse population of managers. This is one of the major selling points and success factors of the program. Executive participation in CL&ED programs is limited to one or two levels below the senior management team. Target populations are discussed for each program by the partner reps.

Every partner organization receives two to four seats for each program in the schedule (number of seats depends upon the size and structure of the partnership), thus limiting class size. With eight companies as partners, the BWC program may have sessions with as few as 20-30 participants while the larger UD partnership could have a class size of up to 50 executives. A constraint for class size is ultimately the curriculum design. As space permits for a specific session, organizations can purchase additional seats (at a substantially reduced fee). This facilitates organizations sending entire

executive teams to selected programs. The EE staff also has the flexibility of inviting guest executives to "experience" the program as part of the marketing efforts to grow the partnership.

Chart #3 compares the key components of the CL&ED model with the traditional executive education models.

### ***Benefits to the partners***

Beyond the obvious benefits of selecting the topics, curriculum design, providers, and having top quality EE in the local area, the CL&ED model includes a variety of opportunities for the partners. They have individual exposure with many of the providers (dinner or executive breakfast briefings prior to the many of the full-day sessions), opportunities to host the program at their corporate training facilities (a chance to show off), the potential to hire the providers at reduced fees for in-house programs, significant networking and benchmarking opportunities, and exposure with area executives.

The nationally recognized EE programs are well known and the demand for EE has given rise to a flotilla of consultants. In the CL&ED model, companies have the ability to pick and choose the topics, the learning design and the providers for their executives leveraging the learning dollars. Custom programming without the custom costs.

### ***Benefits to the university / business school***

The benefits to the college or university are numerous, the most important being a cherished partner with key local corporations. The CL&ED partnership gives companies a tangible, valued return, rather than just being approached by the college or university for financial support. The colleges and universities are developing relationships with area companies that enhance the recruitment efforts for both undergraduate and graduate students, provide



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locations for student internships, and finally provide the potential for development funding for the institution. In addition, the relationships with area corporations give the management development department the ability to supplement and complement corporate education. The visibility and reputation of the college or university is significantly enhanced in the community as a result of these programs.

### ***Value to the Corporations***

The commitment from both the University of Dayton and the Baldwin-Wallace College program is that every executive attending a program receives value. Current measurement is by participant response to the programs and testimonials from organizations that have experienced changes as a result of ideas learned and implemented. Partner reps also provide feedback that helps in the continuous improvement of the program. The CL&ED program has a money back guarantee, something that is often unheard of in an educational environment.

A University of Dayton partner who is a chief financial officer commented that their organization “used many of the concepts from the ‘Strategies to Create Top Line Growth’ to develop a new internal education class entitled, ‘leading through growth’. The learning from the (CL&ED) program became the cornerstone in developing a class that focuses upon methods for cultivating and implementing growth initiatives” (Source information available upon request from authors). Another marketing executive partner commented that, “in addition to having great speakers and educational programs locally, this program has also provided many networking opportunities. An added value is hearing from other professionals in other industries. I have had the opportunity to meet many individuals who can relate well to concerns for local market and local marketing projections” (Source information available upon request from

authors). And finally, a senior OD professional from a technology services, Fortune 500 company stated “We recognize that only through our people will we grow and prosper with our customers. We have found the CL&ED to be right on target with programs that provide new approaches to staying ahead of the curve in the marketplace. ‘Time relevant’ educational programs and consulting service that can be applied in the real world have helped us focus on speed of thought and execution. With the accelerating pace of change and the complexities in the marketplace, the Center has been a true partner in developing our executives for the future” (Source information available upon request from authors).

### ***Cost of the program***

The incremental cost to design, develop and market this program is not overwhelming for a college or university through its existing management development department. Both UD and BWC had a staff of four when the program was initiated. Start up time depends upon the depth and breadth of relationships between potential corporate partners and the business school and/or the management education department. In the CL&ED model, non-competing schools can also form an alliance with the University of Dayton. Through an alliance, the knowledge of providers, provider negotiations (potential to secure desired providers for a series of dates rather than isolated dates), curriculum design, marketing strategies and materials, infrastructure environment (user friendly web registration and record keeping) can be leveraged between the alliance schools to significantly reduce costs and staff time. The alliance partner pays a negotiated fee to the University of Dayton for that support.

The initial start-up costs to an institution or department can be as little as \$3,000 with the payoffs being limitless to the executive education department and institution. To the corporate

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partners, the cost of the program is minimal for their training dollars. These fees can be funded by the corporate training department or by individual cost centers. In contrast to the estimated millions of dollars that corporations spend on executive education, the fees for the CL&ED partnership are minimal compared to the value received.

## Concluding Thoughts

The CL&ED model this article describes and is making available to others works and works successfully! An executive education model that caters to the needs and wants of its corporate partners with the intent to provide a top quality program is an ideal relationship.

The University of Dayton initiated the Center for Leadership and Executive Development Program with a minimal history in executive development four years ago. As a result of this program, the Center for Leadership & Executive Development and the University of Dayton have begun to achieve national recognition for this program with citations in *Financial Times* and *Business Week*. The initial CL&ED program at UD has grown from eight partnerships to seventeen with twenty programs planned for the 2003-04 curriculum year.

Two years after the very successful UD launch, the CL&ED staff formed an alliance with Baldwin-Wallace College in Cleveland, Ohio, a city 200 miles away from Dayton, thus leveraging infrastructure and expertise from UD. Baldwin-Wallace pays a fee (based on the number of corporate partners) to UD, in return B-W receives access to proven executive providers (based on intensive screening by the UD staff), curriculum design, provider negotiation support, and marketing and program templates. The alliance between the two schools has enhanced and strengthened both the University of Dayton and Baldwin-Wallace College's executive education programs.

With the alliance, both schools are able to work as a consortium and leverage knowledge and resources. Both school are growing a successful executive education program and reputation in their respective markets. As with any synergistic relationship, the whole is stronger than the parts!

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**Chart 1: Executive Education Programs**

	<b>Model One</b> Open Enrollment Programs	<b>Model Two</b> Corporate Partnerships
<b>Curriculum</b>	Set annually	Customized for client or partnership
<b>Curriculum Design</b>	Designed by EE department and/or business school	Co-designed by organizations and EE department and/or business school
<b>Faculty/Provider Source</b>	Business school faculty with occasional guests from business community	Business school faculty with occasional guests from business community
<b>Length</b>	1 – 3 days up to 4 – 6 weeks	Typically 1-3 days
<b>Class Size</b>	25-150	Varies
<b>Enrollment</b>	Open with minimal filtering process	Restricted to client employees
<b>Target Population</b>	Senior executives	Management and senior executives
<b>Cost</b>	Wide range with averages of \$950 up to \$1500 for one day programs up to 25,000-49,000 per individual for multiple week programs (not including, travel and time away from job)	Variable depending upon the fees of the faculty member/guest speaker and size of the executive population attending the program

**Chart 2: Sample CL&ED Programs and Providers**

Program Title	Provider
Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most	Sheila Heen, Triad Consulting and Lecturer, Harvard Law School
Current Best Practices in Talent Attraction & Retention	Ed Gubman, Ph.D. author of <i>The Engaging Leader: Winning with Today's Free Agent Workforce and Talent Solutions</i>
Preparing for the Future: What Needs to Happen in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century	Edie Weiner, author of <i>Insider's Guide to the Future</i>
The Executive Leading Innovation	Chris Miller, Ph.D. founder of Innovation Focus
Executing and Driving Results	Ram Charan, D.B.A. co-author of <i>Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done</i> and <i>Every Business is a Growth Business</i>
Strategic Planning and Implementation: Seizing the Competitive Advantage in Today's Marketplace	Fariborz Ghadar, Ph.D. Center for Global and Business Studies, Penn State University
Value Innovation	Ralph Trombetta, Value Innovation Associates
Leadership Authenticity: Credibility Amidst Change	James Kouzes, Ph.D. author of <i>The Leadership Challenge</i> and chairman emeritus of the <i>tompeters!company</i>

**Chart Three: Open Enrollment Programs & CL&ED**

	<b>Model One: Open Enrollment</b>	<b>Model Two: Customized Program</b>	<b>Model Three: CL&amp;ED</b>
<b>Curriculum</b>	Set annually	Customized for client or partnership	Customized by the partnership
<b>Curriculum Design</b>	Designed by EE department and/or the business school with consideration of business needs and issues	Co-designed by the organization and the EE staff and/or the business school driven by the learning needs	Driven by learning needs of partner organizations
<b>Faculty Source</b>	Business school faculty with occasional guests from business	Business school faculty with occasional guests from business	Access to nationally and internationally respected educators and consultants
<b>Length</b>	1 – 3 days and 4 – 6 weeks	1-3 days	1 –2 days
<b>Enrollment</b>	Open with minimal filtering process	Restricted to client employees	Limited to partnership
<b>Class Size</b>	25-150 Varies	Varies	25-50 Varies
<b>Target Population</b>	Senior executives	Management and senior executives	Senior executives
<b>Cost</b>	Varies based on length: \$950 to \$1500 and 25,000-48,000/person	\$1,500-\$4,800/person	\$450 to \$1000 per person per program (depends upon the size of the partnership)